Gartner for HR

Evolve Culture & Leadership for the Hybrid Workplace

A 12-month roadmap for CHROs and their leadership team

Gartner®

Reshape Culture and Leadership for the Hybrid Workplace

Today's workplace is hybrid by default, raising concerns that culture and leadership will suffer. They don't need to. In fact, accepting hybrid as a permanent feature of the modern workplace creates an opportunity for organizations to evolve their approach with an emphasis on two key areas:

1. **Reshaping culture.** For culture to succeed in a hybrid world, leaders must work intentionally to align and connect employees to it.

2. **Equipping leaders.** Effective hybrid leaders are human leaders who are authentic, empathetic and adaptive to individual employees.

Ready to get started? This action plan lays out a 12-month roadmap for HR leaders to reshape culture and leadership for a sustainable hybrid workplace.

The Top Three Challenges When Setting Strategy for a Hybrid Workforce

1 Adjusting current culture to support a hybrid workforce

2 Enabling managers to manage a hybrid workforce

3 Upskilling leaders to lead in a hybrid environment

90% of HR leaders say that to succeed in the future, leaders need to operate in a more human way.
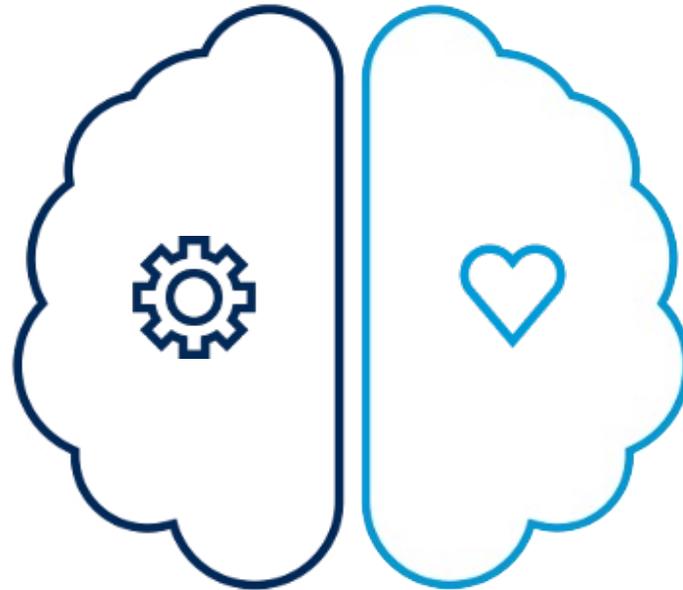
n = 210; 235
Source: Managing Reopening Plans and Retaining Talent Amid New COVID-19 Variants and the Great Resignation (23 February 2022); 2022 Gartner Culture in a Hybrid World HR Leader Survey

Two Components of a Successful Culture

Alignment and connectedness operate like the left and right sides of your brain — rational and emotional. Both contribute to culture's impact on outcomes, such as performance and retention. Connectedness suffers in a hybrid world, however, without intentional efforts to cultivate it.

Alignment

1. I know what the culture is.

2. I believe the culture is right for us.

3. I demonstrate our cultural behaviors.
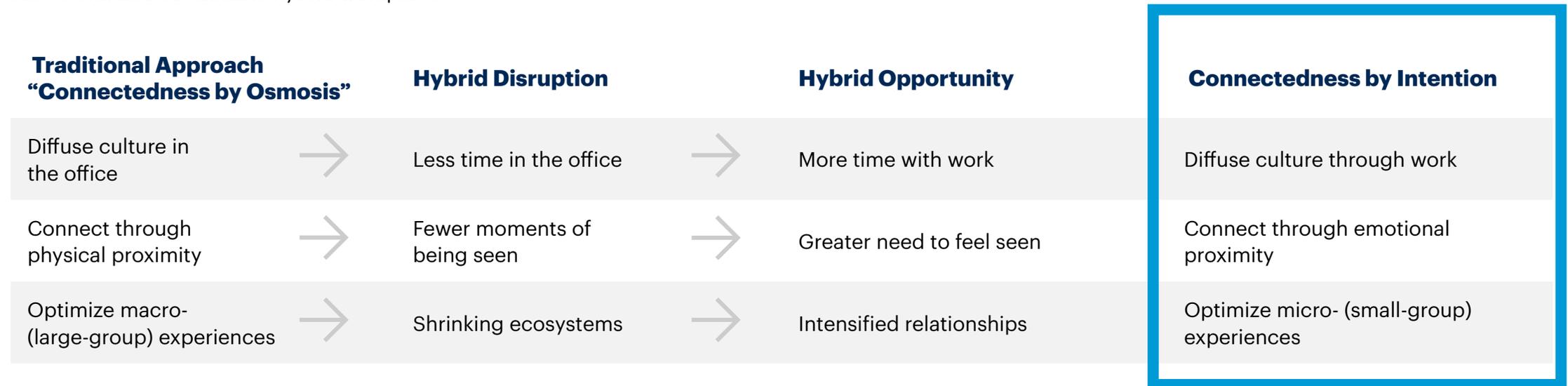
Connectedness

1. I identify with the culture.

2. I care about the culture.

3. I belong within the culture.

Culture connectedness is in crisis and must be accounted for in the hybrid workplace.

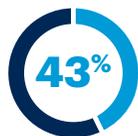# Employees Experience Culture Differently in a Hybrid Workplace

Office spaces and face-to-face proximity have long been the default way to foster connectedness among employees. Hybrid has done away with that, creating a gap leaders must fill given that 76% of employees say organizational culture is important for them to be effective in their jobs. Strengthening **culture connectedness,** therefore, is key for a successful and sustainable hybrid workplace.

Traditional Approach "Connectedness by Osmosis"		Hybrid Disruption		Hybrid Opportunity	Connectedness by Intention
Diffuse culture in the office	→	Less time in the office	→	More time with work	Diffuse culture through work
Connect through physical proximity	→	Fewer moments of being seen	→	Greater need to feel seen	Connect through emotional proximity
Optimize macro- (large-group) experiences	→	Shrinking ecosystems	→	Intensified relationships	Optimize micro- (small-group) experiences

Three Strategic Approaches to Strengthening Culture Connectedness

Through Work

- Make employees aware of the value their role provides the organization and the extent to which this value is (or is not) tied to a location.

- Equip employees to discover the personal value they gain from work and empower them to shape their experience to maximize it.

- Audit work processes against the values and belief systems of your culture to ensure they are reflective of them.

Through Emotional Proximity

- Create empathy, not just interest, for the mission of the organization by making its impact tangible.

- Identify the "moments that matter" when employees are most likely to feel seen by others in the organization, and create these more intentionally.

- Guide teams to identify which moments are enhanced when they are shared in person.

Through Micro-Based Experiences

- Adopt a minimalist approach to macro-culture to ensure it is more easily adaptable to diversified work contexts.

- Equip teams to create their own micro-cultures using macro-culture as a diagnostic to steer away from toxic behaviors.

- Recognize and reward individualized culture approaches rather than pure compliance.

43% Employee culture connectedness can increase by up to 43% when culture is diffused through work.

27% Employee culture connectedness can increase by up to 27% when employees experience emotional proximity.

19% Employee culture connectedness can increase by up to 19% when achieved through micro-based experiences.

Drive Culture Connectedness

Immediate Action Steps	90-Day Action Steps	12-Month Action Steps

Monday Morning: Initiate Change

Review and Reflect on Your Current Approach to Culture Connectedness

☐ Identify how your organization currently connects employees to culture.

☐ Review the modes of working in which employees feel most engaged with work and compare them to the modes on which your current culture strategy focuses.

Start the Conversation

☐ Share key take-aways with senior leaders to gauge readiness and generate support for diffusing culture through work, connecting through emotional proximity and optimizing for a micro-based experience.

☐ Identify leaders and managers who can help champion intentional efforts to drive culture connectedness.

Potential Partners

• HR leadership team

• Senior business leaders (e.g., CEO, CFO, CIO, COO)

• Representatives from HR, IT, legal, internal communications

Drive Culture Connectedness

| Immediate Action Steps | **90-Day Action Steps** | 12-Month Action Steps |

Next 90 Days: Plan New Drivers for Culture Connectedness

Identify Opportunities to Diffuse Culture Through Work

☐ Gather employee feedback about work processes that conflict with the desired culture.

☐ Solicit suggestions for how to redesign work processes to increase their connection to values.

☐ Reexamine your flexible work approach to identify constraints on the ability of employees to adapt work to their values and goals.

Reexamine the Employee Life Cycle to Identify "Moments That Matter" for Connection

☐ Audit "moments that matter" (e.g., onboarding, coaching one-on-ones, recognition) to identify when employees feel seen.

☐ Gather feedback from new employees on whether your onboarding process builds emotional investment in the organization.

Develop Leader Buy-In for Micro-Cultures

☐ Gather input from leaders to understand potential pushback against micro-cultures.

☐ Discuss which micro-cultures (e.g., team level, function level) are most salient.

☐ Review your organization's cultural framework and look for opportunities to simplify it to make space for micro-culture.

Potential Partners

- Senior leadership
- Business unit leaders
- IT
- Internal communications
- Employees
- Managers
- HR business partners

Recommended Resources (Available to Gartner Clients)

- Virgin Money's Value-Driven Future of Work
- Royal DSM's Culture for a Flotilla Future

Drive Culture Connectedness

| Immediate Action Steps | 90-Day Action Steps | **12-Month Action Steps** |

Next 12 Months: Implement Culture Connectedness by Intention

Redesign Work Processes to Reflect Your Desired Culture

☐ Establish a clear framework for work process redesign.

☐ Create an assessment that allows employees to identify personal and professional values and design workplace experiences around them.

☐ Provide resources for leaders and managers to work with teams to co-create flexibility patterns.

Embed Emotional Proximity in the Employee Experience

☐ Create empathy and emotional connection to your organizational mission through the stories of people positively impacted by it.

☐ Help employees and managers link goals to the organization's mission and values.

Rebalance Culture Ownership to Support Micro-Scale Experiences

☐ Create opportunities for employees and teams to share how they live the organization's culture.

☐ Use peer support to upskill managers on team culture, help connect to one another and socialize insights and learnings as each team evolves a set of norms, behaviors and rituals.

☐ Create a diagnostic that allows managers to identify obstacles to their team's ability to fulfill the macro-culture's principles.
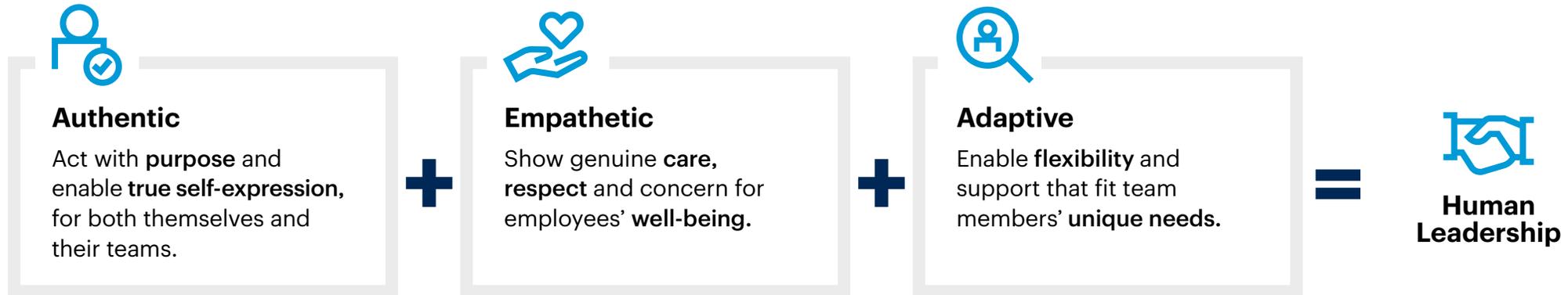
Potential Partners

- Cross-functional hybrid culture team
- Senior leaders
- Business unit leaders
- Managers
- Employees

Recommended Resources (Available to Gartner Clients)

- Foundations of Organization Design Part 3: How Workflows and Role Design Best Support Strategic Goals
- TBS's Onboarding Experience for Emotional Investment
- Royal DSM's Culture for a Flotilla Future

Three Components of Human Leadership

Authentic

Act with **purpose** and enable **true self-expression,** for both themselves and their teams.

+

Empathetic

Show genuine **care, respect** and concern for employees' **well-being.**

+

Adaptive

Enable **flexibility** and support that fit team members' **unique needs.**

=

Human Leadership

Source: Gartner
Note: Human Leadership is measured via an index of 9 survey items. Human Leaders are defined as those who score highly on the index.
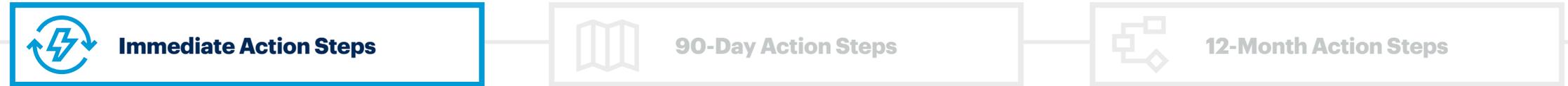
Common Leadership Approaches Must Adjust

The majority (90%) of HR leaders say that future success requires leaders to operate in a more human way. Although on average, just over 1 in 4 are likely to be human leaders; when HR uses a human approach to support leaders, the number goes up to nearly 1 in 2.

3 Types of Leaders Prevent Human Leadership	Common HR Approach to Overcome Leader Doubt, Fear and Uncertainty	Why It Doesn't Work	New Human Approach HR Must Take to Drive Change
Doubtful Achievers 28% of leaders **doubt** that human leadership is important to achieve business objectives.	Build **commitment** by making an **HR-led,** data-driven case for change.	Leaders find peers and employees more convincing than HR data.	Build **commitment** by leveraging **trusted sources** to make the case for change.
Fearful Believers 21% of leaders **fear** the vulnerability and risk associated with human leadership.	Build **courage** and **eliminate fear** through coaching and training.	Fear is unavoidable but manageable.	Build **courage** by teaching leaders how to exhibit positive behaviors **despite fear.**
Uncertain Strivers 22% of leaders **feel uncertain** about how to effectively deliver human leadership.	Build **confidence** by creating **prescriptive guidance** to help leaders navigate interactions.	The complexities of human leadership make precise prescriptions impossible.	Build **confidence** by **supporting leaders' judgment** by limiting scope and ambiguity.

n = 3,392 employees
Source: 2022 Gartner Leadership Success in the New Environment Employee Survey

Creating Human Leaders

Immediate Action Steps	90-Day Action Steps	12-Month Action Steps

Monday Morning: Identify Barriers and Opportunities

Evaluate the Current State of Human Leadership

☐ Review the three types of leaders ineffective at human leadership and assess which types are most common in your organization.

☐ Take stock of current HR leader support to determine which leader types it is primarily designed to address.

☐ Compare existing HR support to common approaches to achieving commitment, courage and confidence to flag improvement areas.

☐ Focus initial efforts on prevalent leader types where existing HR support is limited or similar to common approaches.

Identify Key Opportunities and Resources to Build Commitment, Courage and Confidence

☐ Identify successful human leaders in high-impact roles as trusted sources to define and support your organization's human leadership vision.

☐ Determine equitable selection criteria to identify employees who can share diverse perspectives with leaders as mentors to expand leader mindsets.

☐ Catalog high- and low-stakes opportunities for leaders to display vulnerable human leadership.

Potential Partners

- C-suite

- Business unit leaders

- Leaders (in particular, those who exhibit human leadership behaviors)

- A diverse and selected set of employees

Recommended Resources (Available to Gartner Clients)

- Broadridge's Reverse Mentoring Program to Expand Mindsets

- FibroGen's Failproof Vulnerable Leadership Support

Creating Human Leaders

Immediate Action Steps	**90-Day Action Steps**	12-Month Action Steps

Next 90 Days: Establish Resources for Change

Set the Stage for Leader Discovery

☐ Establish employee-leader mentorship groups where employee mentors share how their perspectives impact the business directly with leaders.

☐ Appoint successful human leaders to an annually evolving group that defines the new leadership style the organization needs in today's environment.

Lay the Groundwork for Managing Negative Emotions

☐ Provide leaders with intensive preparation before they participate in high-stakes opportunities for human leadership.

☐ Design fear-awareness workshops to teach leaders about managing their behaviors when afraid.

Prepare Leaders for Expanded Scope and Ambiguity in Decision Making

☐ Review your employee value proposition to define specific employee experience attributes that leaders can impact.

☐ Help leaders understand available options for acting on employee needs to help them prioritize what actions to take and when.
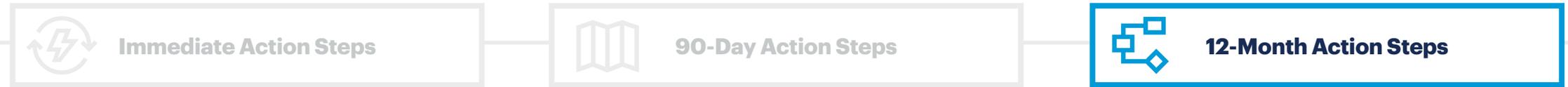
Potential Partners

• Leaders (in particular, those who exhibit human leadership behaviors)

• A diverse and selected set of employees

• Legal team

• Employee resource groups (ERGs)

Recommended Resources (Available to Gartner Clients)

• Akebia's Fear-Awareness Leadership Workshops

• Heartland's Gamified Leader-Employee Experience Conversations

Creating Human Leaders

Immediate Action Steps	90-Day Action Steps	**12-Month Action Steps**

Next 12 Months: Implement a More "Human" Approach

Ask Leaders to Actively Commit to Clear Expectations for Human Leadership

☐ Give leaders the option to actively choose between people leadership and non-people leadership pathways.

☐ Ask leaders who choose people leadership to recommit to a new leadership style, defined and supported by the trusted group of successful human leaders.

Enable Leaders to Courageously Navigate Vulnerability

☐ Reduce the level of support during vulnerable human leadership when you observe tangible evidence that leaders' confidence and competence are increasing.

☐ Implement fear-awareness workshops to teach leaders to understand their personal fears and the impact of their fears on their leadership approach.

☐ Provide ongoing support for leaders to establish their own behavior management strategies when afraid.

Support Leaders to Use Their Judgment to Deliver on New Expectations

☐ Create tools that help leaders quickly identify and deliver on what matters most to employees using forced choice.

☐ Establish coaching and feedback based on leader-employee interactions to help leaders adapt in real time, preparing them for scenarios where there is no applicable guidance.

Potential Partners

- Leaders (in particular, those who exhibit human leadership behaviors)

- IT leaders and managers

Recommended Resources (Available to Gartner Clients)

- Rolls Royce's Leader-Developed Leadership Evolution

- Sanofi's Cues-Driven Development for Interactive Skills

How Gartner Is Helping HR Leaders Adapt and Stay Ahead

The decisions HR leaders make today can impact their company brand for the next five years. It's critical to have trusted support. With our insights, actionable tools and advice, we help HR leaders adapt their strategies across a variety of mission-critical priorities to set up their organizations for success.

Diagnostics and benchmarks

Guides and toolkits

Expert inquiry

Expert research

In-person events

Peer connections

Case studies and best practices

Live webinars and online learning events

Document reviews

Culture and Leadership Support You Receive as a Gartner Client

Diagnose current state

Understand how moving to more distributed work modes creates three significant culture shifts.

Ensure you explore all facets of the current culture using Unpack 5 Dimensions of Culture With the PRISM Model.

Develop your approach and measures for culture based on our culture measurement essentials.

Develop your plan

Explore potential development approaches using our Leadership Development Tactics Database.

Meet with an expert to discuss concrete action steps to execute a successful hybrid workplace strategy.

Understand the organizational barriers that prevent the workforce from fully living the culture.

Execute and drive change

Measure your organization's culture with our Ignition Guide.

Drive implementation of the culture through team-based adaptation of corporate principles.

Co-create customized and actionable development plans with Development Plan Templates for Managers and Leaders.

Connect With Us

Get actionable, objective insight to deliver on your mission-critical priorities. Our expert guidance and tools enable faster, smarter decisions and stronger performance. Contact us to become a client:

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