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Human Resource Management In The Age Of Digitalization And Hybrid Work : New Challenges, And Strategic Perspectives

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Abstract :
The transition to hybrid work represents a major shift in contemporary organizations, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and enabled by digitalization. This article examines the role of human resource management (HRM) in response to this new paradigm. Through a systematic literature review and the development of a conceptual framework that integrates multiple theories (social exchange, job demands-resources, boundary theory, communities of practice, capabilities), we analyze how the HR function can transform itself to meet the challenges of hybrid work. Our study posits that the success of this model depends on a reinvention of managerial and evaluative practices, centered on trust and results-based assessment. We propose strategic recommendations to support the digitalization of HRM while preserving social connectedness and employee well-being.

Keywords:human resource management (HRM), hybrid work, remote management, digitalization
Jel Classification Codes:

Introduction

The shift toward hybrid work represents a major paradigmatic transformation in the organization of contemporary work. Accelerated by the global health crisis, which forced companies to urgently reorganize their working methods toward remote and hybrid arrangements, this spatial and temporal reconfiguration takes place in a rapidly changing technological context. The emergence of sophisticated digital ecosystems and the widespread use of collaborative platforms create both unprecedented opportunities for cooperation and complex challenges for the human resources (HR) function. At the same time, the massive arrival of digital natives in the workforce intensifies the need for a profound adaptation of management styles and HR policies. The convergence of these dynamics: digital transformation, generational shifts, and organizational reconfiguration; places human resource

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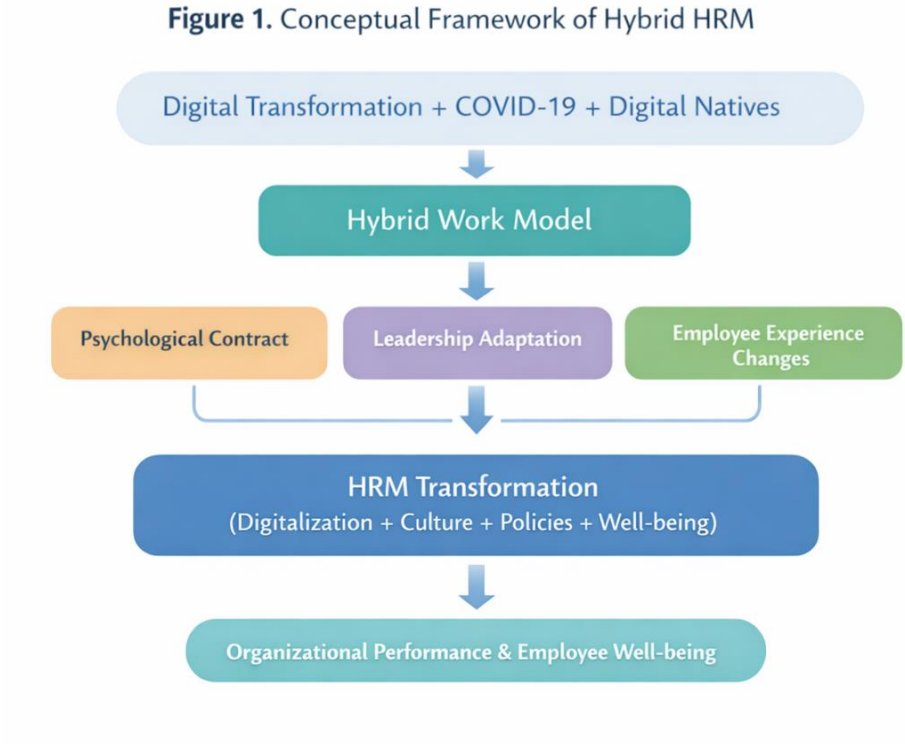
management (HRM) under an imperative to innovate. Traditional HRM models, designed for a predominantly on-site environment, reveal their limitations when confronted with the demands of the new world of work. In this context of accelerated change, the central question guiding this research is: how can the human resources (HR) function adapt to hybrid work in order to simultaneously meet the challenges of digitalization and the expectations of digital natives? To address this question, we develop a conceptual framework based on a systematic review of the scientific literature. Our analysis is structured around three theoretical propositions derived from the literature:

- Hypothesis 1: Hybrid work requires a new psychological contract that balances autonomy and responsibility.
- Hypothesis 2: Leadership in a hybrid context demands new relational and technological competencies.
- Hypothesis 3: Employees who work mainly remotely perceive reduced access to informal career development opportunities.

Research Objectives this study pursues the following objectives:

1. To analyze the main challenges faced by HRM in the context of digital transformation and hybrid work (evolving skills, resistance, security, equity).
2. To identify the opportunities offered by hybrid work for the new generation (flexibility, work-life balance, innovation, attractiveness).
3. To evaluate innovative HR practices and strategies that support successful adaptation to the digital era (continuous training, process digitalization, agile organizational culture).
4. To propose recommendations to accompany the digital transition of HRM and optimize talent management in a hybrid environment.

Our methodological approach is based on a systematic review of recent scientific literature. We consulted the following databases: Cairn.info, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and Wiley Online Library, covering the period from 2015 to 2024. The keywords used included combinations of “hybrid work,” “human resource management,” “remote work,” “digital transformation,” “HRM practices,” and “psychological contract.” After screening for relevance and quality, a corpus of articles was selected for in-depth analysis. This literature review was complemented by key theoretical frameworks: social exchange theory, the job demands-resources model, boundary theory, communities of practice, and the capabilities approach, in order to build an integrative conceptual framework. This framework enables us to analyze contemporary managerial practices and to better understand the conditions for effective and sustainable hybrid HRM.



source: author's work, AI-assisted

1. From Traditional to Hybrid Work: Redefining Reference Points

The advent of hybrid work marks a profound break with traditional organizational models. This model, alternating between in-person and remote work (Gratton L. , 2021), necessitates a reconfiguration of the spatial, temporal, and organizational reference points that previously governed the collective (Drucker, 1999) .

1.1. The Triggers of the Hybrid Paradigm

The COVID-19 Shock: An accelerator of transformation, the crisis imposed remote work, forcing companies to rethink their communication strategies (Kniffin, et al., 2021).The disappearance of physical spaces (meeting rooms, hallways) weakened social cohesion (Fayard, 2007), leading to a loss of cultural unity (Gálvez, Tirado, & Martínez, 2022) Work, which has become asynchronous and decentralized, is fragmenting collective structures (OCDE, 2021).

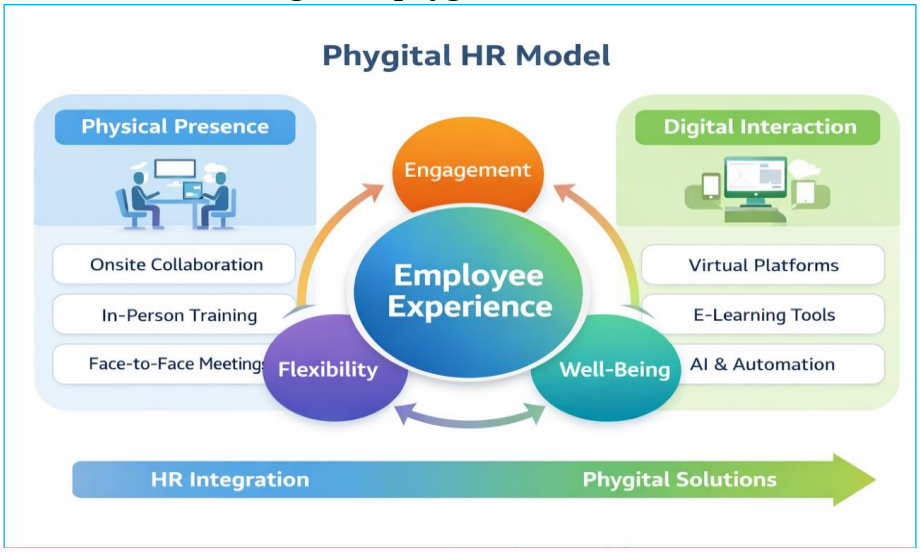
The rise of digital technology: Collaborative platforms and the cloud have become the nerve center of coordination (Messenger & Gschwind, 2016). While digital technology fosters productivity, it also intensifies hyper-connectivity and blurs the lines between work and private life (Derks, 2004). It demands new skills: autonomy and digital literacy (Moussa & El Arbi, 2020).

"Digital Natives": This generation embraces a fluid conception of work based on flexibility and meaning. Favoring horizontal structures (Ng, Lyons, & Schweitzer, 2017), their relationship to time can create intergenerational dissonance (Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010) .

1.2. Towards a Phygital HR: Principles and Transformations

The convergence of these forces is driving HR to orchestrate a phygital model (Gibbs, Mengel, & Siemroth, 2021), merging physical presence and digital interactions to enrich HR processes without dehumanizing them. This approach is underpinned by three foundational pillars:

Figure 2: phygital HR Model



source: author's work, AI-assisted

- **Omnipresent Accessibility & Flexibility:** Empowering the workforce with seamless, ubiquitous access to HR infrastructure.
- **Hyper-Personalized Employee Journeys:** Harnessing Big Data and Artificial Intelligence to calibrate development and recognition programs to individual profiles.
- **Hybrid Interaction Modalities:** Synthesizing face-to-face engagement with virtual collaborative spaces to sustain organizational social capital.

1.2.1 Structural Transformations in the HR Function

The transition toward a phygital HR model redefines traditional functional missions through a multifaceted integration of technology and human interaction. First, talent acquisition evolves into a data-driven process, leveraging AI-powered e-recruitment and virtual assessment centers to streamline selection. In parallel, Learning & Development (L&D) shifts toward blended pedagogical frameworks, effectively integrating asynchronous digital modules with synchronous interpersonal learning. Furthermore, performance management no longer relies on static annual reviews but instead centers on continuous feedback loops and collaborative KPIs, significantly augmented by real-time analytics. Finally, internal communication becomes increasingly digitized to ensure organizational agility;

nonetheless, it strategically preserves high-touch physical interactions to reinforce and sustain the core corporate culture.

1.3.1 Challenges and Conditions for Success

The success of the phygital model depends on several conditions: a shared digital culture within the organization; appropriate training for managers and employees on new tools; upportive leadership capable of guiding change; and finally, HR data governance that guarantees ethics, transparency, and security.

The challenge lies in avoiding dehumanizing digitalization. The phygital model must not reduce professional relationships to virtual interactions, but rather restore meaning and fluidity to the work experience.

This model is based on three interdependent principles:

1. Establishing a culture of trust and autonomy, replacing time management with performance evaluation; 2. Deploying technologies as levers for collaboration, not as surveillance tools; 3. promoting empathetic and connected leadership capable of uniting dispersed and multicultural teams

The transition from traditional to hybrid work is part of a global movement of economic, technological, and cultural transformation.

Accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis, this shift has profoundly redefined the spatial, temporal, and organizational frameworks of work.

The widespread adoption of digital technologies has ensured business continuity but has also generated new challenges: cognitive overload, isolation, hyper connectivity, and constant adaptation.

At the same time, the rise of digital natives, who bring new expectations regarding autonomy, flexibility, and meaning, is pushing organizations to rethink their management practices and coordination methods. Thus, hybrid work represents not just a logistical evolution but a profound cultural shift based on three key principles: trust as a substitute for control, flexibility as an organizational norm, and technology as a catalyst for professional connection.

Faced with this reshaping of the world of work, the Human Resources function is now confronted with the need to reinvent itself. It must develop new approaches to managing and supporting employees, reconciling physical presence and digital interaction, while preserving the human dimension of work. It is with this in mind that the concept of phygital HR emerges, an integrative approach that aims to harmonize the technological, managerial, and relational dimensions of contemporary work.

2 The theoretical framework of the study

The study employs a multi-dimensional theoretical triangulation to decode the hybrid experience:

2.1 Social Exchange Theory: Reconfiguration of the Psychological Contract

Social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) where 68% of psychological contract breaches occur due to unmet reciprocity expectations posits that the employment relationship is based on symbolic and material reciprocity. This system of informal mutual obligations constitutes the psychological contract, where the employee's commitment and loyalty are met with the recognition and security offered by the organization.

However, hybrid organizations weaken this balance by introducing an asymmetry of visibility. Remote workers report 42% higher "invisibility" perceptions vs. on-site. The lack of physical proximity obscures traditional signals of involvement (presenteeism, informal interactions), potentially generating a feeling of injustice or professional invisibility for remote workers (Gálvez, Tirado, & Martínez, 2022)
To restore perceived reciprocity, the HR function must pivot toward results-oriented management, institutionalized digital recognition, and the promotion of hybrid soft skills (autonomy and digital literacy). Organizations with digital recognition see 29% higher remote engagement (Gálvez et al., 2022) Ultimately, maintaining engagement in a hybrid context depends on the organization's capacity to safeguard the perceived equivalence between individual contributions and organizational reward

2.2 The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model: Balance and Hybrid Well-being

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, theorized by (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), where job demands explain 65% of burnout variance and resources 72% of engagement,posits that well-being and performance result from the balance between two dimensions: job demands (physical, psychological, and organizational effort) and resources (motivational levers and means of achieving objectives).
Hybrid organizations redefine this balance by introducing new critical demands: "Zoom fatigue," affecting 62% of remote workers with 37% higher exhaustion scores (Shockley, Clark, Dodd, & King, 2021) information overload linked to hyper-connectivity, and the increasing blurring of boundaries between private and professional life. These stressors, if left unaddressed, deplete employees' cognitive energy. At the same time, hybrid work requires the activation of specific resources such as organizational autonomy, managerial support based on trust, and clear objectives.
To safeguard workplace health, the HR function must adapt its regulatory levers by mitigating demands (e.g., digital disconnection policies, ergonomic support) cutting boundary-blurring stress 28% (Dell'Oste et al, 2022)and strengthening resources (e.g., psychosocial risk training, continuous feedback). Trust-based support boosts hybrid engagement +41% (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017)(.Ultimately, applying the JD-R model requires a proactive HR strategy capable of transforming digital constraints into sustainable, motivating work environments.

2.3 Boundary Theory

Boundary Theory,developed by (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000), where boundary permeability explains 58% of work-family conflict variance posits that individuals establish physical, temporal, and psychological boundaries to separate their different life roles, particularly their professional and personal spheres. These boundaries help maintain a sense of identity and prevent role conflicts. In the context of hybrid work, these traditional markers tend to disappear: the home becomes a workspace, with 73% of hybrid workers reporting blurred boundaries vs 42% office-only (Shockley, Clark, Dodd, & King, 2021) and the continuity of digital tools extends activity beyond working hours. This blurring of boundaries can lead to psychological imbalance, cognitive overload, and emotional exhaustion hybrid workers show 31% higher exhaustion when boundaries blur (Allen, Cho, & Meier, 2014). Therefore, managing boundaries becomes a strategic challenge for hybrid HR, which must support employees in redefining their transitions between

professional and personal life. Recommended practices include training employees to establish demarcation routines (e.g., a daily closing ritual), raising managers' awareness of the importance of leading by example (not contacting employees outside of working hours), and providing material support for the creation of dedicated spaces through financial assistance or ergonomic equipment. These initiatives help restore symbolic and functional boundaries, thereby promoting well-being, productivity, and more sustainable working relationships in hybrid environments (Shockley, Clark, Dodd, & King, 2021)

2.4 Communities of Practice: Challenges of Social Capital and Learning

The communities of practice approach (Wenger, 1998)where informal interactions drive 70% of workplace learning highlights the importance of social learning in organizations. These groups, united by shared expertise or a common problem, foster the transmission of tacit knowledge and the construction of a collective identity through regular, often informal, interactions. In a hybrid environment, the disappearance of physical meeting spaces (coffee machines, shared offices) weakens these dynamics. Hybrid workers report 47% fewer spontaneous exchanges and 35% higher isolation feelings (Microsoft, 2022).Distance limits spontaneous exchanges, essential for informal innovation, and can lead to feelings of social isolation or an erosion of organizational culture. To address this deterritorialization, HR must institutionalize new mechanisms for digital socialization:

- Design of virtual informal spaces: Creation of thematic channels (e.g., industry monitoring) or "virtual coffee breaks" without an agendaboosting connection 52% (Microsoft, 2022) to restore the spontaneity of exchanges.
- Boosting knowledge transfer: Encourage mentoring and reverse mentoring increasing knowledge sharing 41% (CIPD, 2021)to foster intergenerational reciprocity and digital literacy.

In conclusion, the vitality of communities of practice in hybrid contexts depends on the organization's ability to transform collaborative tools into vectors of social connection and intellectual capital, thereby ensuring continuous organizational learning.

2.5 The Capabilities Approach: From Formal Freedom to Real Autonomy

Inspired by the work of (Sen, 1999)Amartya, the capabilities approach shifts the focus from skills (what the individual knows how to do) to effective freedom (what they can truly be and do). where 63% of remote workers report "formal flexibility" without real capability support. Within an organizational framework, capability represents an employee's actual ability to transform resources (tools, rights, time) into concrete accomplishments that are meaningful to them.

In a hybrid context, this approach highlights the risk of "superficial autonomy." Only 41% of hybrid employees convert flexibility into productivity gains without proper resource conversion (Bloom, Han, & Liang, 2021).Offering the possibility of remote work without providing the necessary tools for conversion can transform flexibility into a source of isolation or cognitive overload. Therefore, the mission of HR is to convert formal freedom into real capability by acting on two levers:

- The link between resources and opportunities: Ensuring that spatial and temporal autonomy is supported by an enabling environment (ergonomic equipment, proficiency in digital tools, and managerial support).

- Developing empowerment: Strengthening self-direction skills and asynchronous communication (contextualized writing, prioritization) to enable genuine mastery of remote work.

In short, the capabilities approach encourages HR to move beyond simply managing human resources and instead build an environment that maximizes individuals' potential for choice and action, thereby guaranteeing sustainable performance and genuine well-being.

Figure 3: Théorical framework for hybrid HRM



source: author's work, AI-assisted

Thus, these 5 approaches form an integrated framework where Social Exchange ensures engagement, JD-R balances well-being, Boundary Theory protects health, the communities of practice preserves social capital, and Capabilities guarantees real autonomy.

3. Major Challenges and Necessary Adaptations for Human Resource Management in a Hybrid Context

HRM is indeed being profoundly tested and transformed by the advent of hybrid work. This new model, which blends in-office and remote work, is not simply a logistical change; it is a cultural and managerial upheaval that requires the HR function to reinvent itself. This analysis examines the main challenges and necessary adaptations for HRM in the era of hybrid work.

3.1. Major Challenges for HRM

HRM in the Face of Hybrid Work: Challenges and Transformations The advent of hybrid work represents much more than a simple logistical evolution; it constitutes a cultural and managerial upheaval that compels the HR function to undergo a profound reinvention (Gratton L. , 2021). Meta-analyses reveal moderate telecommuting (<2.5 days/week) boosts autonomy (+0.33 SD) but degrades colleague relationships beyond this threshold). This new paradigm, accelerated by the pandemic and driven by digitalization, generates multidimensional challenges while paving the way for necessary transformations. Structural and Human Challenges: The dilution of corporate culture and the weakening of social bonds are emerging as major concerns. A randomized experiment shows hybrid work cuts turnover 35% without productivity loss (p=0.84) (Bloom, Han, & Liang, 2021).**

The risk of creating divisions between on-site and remote employees, coupled with the difficulties of integrating newcomers, threatens collective cohesion (Wang, 2020).

Traditional management, based on visual control, is becoming obsolete, requiring a transition to leadership based on trust and results (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). This transformation is accompanied by equity challenges, with increased risks of proximity bias and unequal access to career opportunities (Bloom, Han, & Liang, 2021). At the same time, performance evaluation must be rethought in the face of the disappearance of traditional benchmarks, while mental health and well-being issues are becoming more critical with the blurring of work-life boundaries (Charalampous, Grant, Tramontano, & Michailidis, 2019).

3.2. Adaptations and New Missions of HR in the Face of These Challenges

HR must undergo a profound transformation towards a role as a designer of the employee experience and a strategic business partner ,76% of hybrid firms report higher retention when HR leads experience design (CIPD, 2021).This transformation notably involves redefining the role of the manager through the development of skills in hybrid leadership and facilitating remote teams. Reinventing organizational culture requires the deliberate creation of opportunities for connection and the adaptation of rituals to ensure the inclusion of all employees, regardless of their workplace (Microsoft, 2022). Teams with structured hybrid rituals show 58% higher collaboration scores (Microsoft, 2022). Formalizing a clear and equitable hybrid policy, establishing a "social contract" that defines the rules of the game, becomes essential to guarantee the consistency and fairness of practices (SHRM, 2022). The evaluation system must evolve towards a results- and skills-based approach, with the implementation of continuous feedback and the development of learning opportunities adapted to new ways of working. Continuous feedback systems boost hybrid performance ratings 22% (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016). Finally, well-being must be a central concern, with managers being trained to detect psychosocial risks and the right to disconnect being actively promoted. Disconnect policies cut burnout 31% in hybrid workers (Oakman et al., 2020).

HR, Driver of Transformation: Hybrid work is not a passing fad. It is a lasting transformation of the world of work. For the HR function, it is a demanding challenge, but also an extraordinary opportunity to demonstrate its strategic value. The HR of tomorrow will not simply manage policies; it will have to co-create the work environment in which every employee, wherever they are, can thrive, collaborate, and perform. It becomes the architect of a new form of organization, more flexible, more human, and more resilient. Its success will be measured by its ability to reconcile economic performance and individual well-being in a dematerialized ecosystem.

4. Strategies and Recommendations for Hybrid Human Resource Management

Faced with the operational challenges identified in the previous section, it is imperative for the HR function to deploy innovative strategies and concrete recommendations. As (Gratton L. , 2023) emphasizes, "the transition to hybrid work is not limited to a technical adaptation, but requires a complete overhaul of managerial practices and HR processes." This section presents an integrative strategic framework, drawing on feedback from pioneering companies and the

latest academic research, to guide organizations in building a high-performing and sustainable hybrid model.

4.1. Overhauling HR Policies: From Formal Framework to Implementation Faced with the identified challenges, an overhaul of HR policies is essential. IBM France illustrates this approach by establishing a "hybrid social contract" that clearly defines expectations, as recommended by CIPD (Wheatley, 2022). This framework specifies the expected on-site presence days, generally 2 to 3 days per week, and the mandatory availability periods. L'Oréal complements this approach with a standardized equipment policy, providing all remote workers with a €500 budget to set up their workspace, in accordance with (SHRM,2022) recommendations.

4.2. Management Transformation through Training and Evaluation: Orange implemented a hybrid leadership training program, training 80% of its managers in 2022. As highlighted by Gartner (2023), this training includes facilitating inclusive hybrid meetings and detecting signs of distress in remote work. In parallel, Danone revolutionized its evaluation system by focusing on results rather than attendance, with collaboration indicators measured quarterly, following the recommendations of (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016) .

4.3. HR Innovation: Digital Recruitment and Skills Development: Société Générale has digitized 90% of its recruitment processes, integrating asynchronous video interviews. Its hybrid onboarding program, cited as an example by Deloitte (2023), combines in-person sessions for cultural integration with remote technical training. Capgemini, for its part, has developed a hybrid skills training program, with a mandatory module on self-management, validating the work of (Gibbs, Mengel, & Siemroth, 2021) on the importance of continuous skills development.

4.4. Measurement and Continuous Improvement Through Data: Accenture has implemented a hybrid HR dashboard measuring 15 performanceand well-being indicators. As demonstrated by (McKinsey, 2023), this tool allows for quarterly adjustments based on employee climate surveys. BNP Paribas complements this approach with collaborative working groups which have already generated 30 process improvements in 2022, illustrating the importance of continuous improvement mechanisms advocated (Gratton L. , 2023)

Conclusion:

Hybrid work is now emerging as a major and lasting transformation of the professional world. This research aimed to understand how the Human Resources function can adapt to this new model to simultaneously meet the challenges of the digital age and the expectations of digital natives. Through an in-depth literature review and the integration of fundamental theoretical frameworks, our analysis has provided several insights.

Our analysis validates the three research hypotheses and provides a structured answer to the initial problem.

• A new psychological contract, based on trust and performance evaluation, is essential to balance autonomy and responsibility.

• Leadership in a hybrid environment requires new skills, both interpersonal and technological, to lead remote teams and maintain cohesion.

• Remote employees perceive reduced access to informal opportunities, which necessitates the implementation of dedicated spaces and equitable recognition

mechanisms. Thus, our study demonstrates that the success of the hybrid model hinges on a profound reinvention of HR, which must integrate digitalization, generational shifts, and cultural transformation at the heart of its strategy. The HR function is repositioning itself as the architect of the employee experience, orchestrating a work environment that is simultaneously phygital, collaborative, and human-centered.

Several practical directions emerge:

• The implementation of a hybrid social contract defining everyone's rights and responsibilities;

• Ongoing training for managers in hybrid leadership and managing remote teams;

• The promotion of digital well-being and the right to disconnect;

• As well as the recognition of digital skills and the new expectations of digital natives.

In conclusion, hybrid work is not simply a matter of spatial and temporal adjustment: it embodies a profound cultural and organizational shift, in which HR plays a strategic role in transformation and change management. This study paves the way for future empirical research aimed at measuring the concrete effects of hybrid HR practices on team performance, motivation and cohesion.

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