

An Examination of the Different Leadership Styles Employed by Leaders of High-Performance Employees Based Upon Individual Work Setting Arrangements

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This article seeks to explore the different management styles employed by leaders of individuals working in a variety of work settings: Fully remote, mostly remote, equally balanced, mostly in-person, and fully in-person. 192 men and women who work in these settings were asked to indicate how often each of their managers engages in the 34 behaviors listed in the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) that operationalize Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-faire leadership. The respondents' work motivation profile fits the description of a person who has High Growth Need Strength (HGNS), and the results indicate a stark difference in relationships between leaders and their direct reports based upon their individual work arrangement, with fully remote employees reporting a greater connection with their supervisor than fully in-person employees.

In light of ongoing discussion across various domains about work from home practices, we sought to explore the differences in experiences between employees and their supervisors across different work arrangements. Effective leadership is not a one-size-fits-all affair; it requires accommodation to the psychological needs of the employee as well as consideration of their work setting. It's a bad idea for anyone to take on a managing role with the attitude that they don't have to adjust the "sails", especially when one is managing people whose high growth needs interact with their work location in facilitating or frustrating ways. This survey seeks to explore the relationship between employees' growth need strength, their work arrangement setting, and leadership behaviors that foster engagement. By understanding how these factors interact, managers can tailor their strategies to add significant value to the work of the individuals and teams they manage.

Background

Growth Need Strength

'Effectance' is the term coined by Robert White (1959) to describe the innate psychological drive to engage with one's environment in ways that build competence and mastery. The effectance drive for mastery is never sated; mastering one motivating challenge naturally draws a person toward the next. It is the joy of doing that animated the young student who, when asked, "Why are you majoring in actuarial science?" responded, "I love numbers". Applied to the business world, the effectance drive energizes the work of people who Hackman and Oldham (1976) identify as having High Growth Need Strength (HGNS).

People with High Growth Need Strength craft their jobs to reflect core aspects of their identity: their values, interests and talents. They take psychological ownership of their work, seeking not just to complete tasks but to grow through them. They are at their best when surrounded by like-minded colleagues who also value challenge and self-improvement, thus creating a culture of challenge and high engagement. Their attitude toward their manager is utilitarian rather than deferential; they respect managers who support their growth, remove barriers, and provide meaningful feedback. Authority, in their view, is earned through a manager's competence and developmental value and not in their position alone. These individuals thrive in complex roles—intellectually demanding jobs that contribute to long term career development and offer both autonomy and meaningful opportunities for growth. When these elements are well-balanced, they serve as a catalyst to sustain deep engagement. The intrinsic challenge of the work itself drives people with this orientation. Their desire for continuous learning and personal development is inherent, which is why regardless of their achievements, they have a constant need to learn, achieve, and develop. It's crucial for their managers to recognize that mastery of the process, not the prize/reward, motivates them. They prefer and respect managers who recognize their growth, provide them with autonomy, are available when needed, and possess the expertise to provide meaningful feedback thereby making them a vital source of "competent" support.

Workplace Arrangement

Given the importance of challenge and growth to their well-being and happiness (White, 1959), it is not difficult

to understand the significance of the work setting as a congenial support to high-growth-need individuals' strivings. A study by Gibaldi et al. (2022) found that 80% of 480 HGNS managers and professionals agreed, or strongly agreed, that upon the shutdown's end hybrid work arrangements should be offered to all employees. At the same time, only 50% personally preferred hybrid arrangements. Recognizing the higher cost, time savings, and flexibility benefits of working remotely for others, many still felt that in-person suited them best due to the ease of access to colleagues and the opportunity for collaborative gatherings which are less frequent in remote or hybrid efforts.

Opportunities for planned and spontaneous collaborations, face-to-face discussions with one's manager, as well as the sharing of ideas, stories, and problems encountered all contribute to the spirited intellectual camaraderie that HGNS individuals find in in-person work settings. These environments provide what Kraut et al. (2002) refer to as informational visibility, which is easy access to knowledge, cues, and feedback within the flow of work. In-person settings uniquely support this through unplanned encounters and quick access to expertise. It also fosters transactive memory systems which is the shared understanding of "who knows what" that allows employees to draw on colleagues' strengths, much like a master electrician benefits from collaborating with other skilled trades on a construction site (Wegner, 1987).

Autonomy is also a significant motivator for HGNS individuals (Hackman & Oldham, 1975), as is deep learning. Both contribute to the advantages of hybrid and remote arrangements as they accommodate greater flexibility and focus. The manager's role in sustaining the benefits of face-to-face and remote contexts is underscored by a study by Shalley et al. (2009) of 1,000 employees. They found that creativity, defined as "the production of novel and useful ideas concerning products, services, processes, and procedures that are related to one's job" (p. 489), was highest among high-GNS individuals in complex jobs within supportive contexts. Such supportive contexts, shaped mainly by managers, included encouragement to experiment, access to resources, and autonomy.

Further research by Bloom et al. (2015) illustrates the importance of managerial adaptation. They conducted a randomized controlled trial at Ctrip which is one of the world's largest online travel companies. In their study 1,000 call center employees were randomly assigned to either hybrid or in-person groups. Over the course of six months the hybrid group outperformed the control group in both productivity and retention. However, they were promoted less often which Bloom and colleagues attributed to proximity bias. A subsequent study of 1,612 engineers and IT professionals at the same company again revealed managers' initial skepticism toward hybrid work but eventual acceptance after observing no decline in performance or mentorship (Bloom et al., 2024). Importantly, managers in both studies had received no training for these new responsibilities; a reflection of what is termed

the "Accidental Manager" phenomenon where individuals are promoted into fundamentally different leadership roles without preparation (Impellus, 2024).

While managers are pivotal in shaping hybrid and remote outcomes, most receive little or no training. Gallup (2024) found that only 28% of hybrid managers had received any training with just 10% reporting mandatory training and another 18% reporting optional training. Similarly, TechSmith's Workplace Flexibility Trends Report (2024) revealed that nearly 75% of employees believed their managers lacked training in hybrid or remote work environments. Gallup's study also emphasizes that 70% of the variance in team performance can be explained by managerial skill, yet most managers remain unprepared for hybrid and remote contexts. For HGNS individuals in particular, managers serve as what Lacan (2015) describes as regulators of the workplace's psychological infrastructure. These managers intentionally reconstruct the social and cognitive scaffolding of less connected environments to promote inspiration, feedback, and development. As noted in a 2025 McKinsey survey, policy makers and executives are best advised to focus less on mandates for return-to-office policies and more on equipping managers with the training and perspective needed to lead effectively in post-COVID flexible environments (Hirschhorn, 2003).

Relevant Leadership Styles

Full Range Leadership

The Full Range Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994) enhances the traditional task/relationship categorization of managerial leadership styles (Fleishman, 1953; Stogdill & Coons, 1957) by incorporating engagement as an additional dimension. Engaged managers are intentional in that they are willing to be emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally present in their work (Kahn, 1992). The gradient of engagement distinguishes laissez-faire (minimally responsive), transactional (attentive), and transformational (intentional) leadership styles. Considering the development, autonomy, and mentoring needs profile of the HGNS person, it is reasonable to expect that intentional leadership behaviors can mitigate the disruptive aspects of hybrid and remote work arrangements.

Transformational Leadership

At the most proactive end is transformational leadership which seeks to elevate followers' motivation by aligning individual goals with collective purpose, encouraging intellectual engagement, and offering personalized support (Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership comprises four key behaviors: idealized influence, which models ethical conduct and provides moral stability; inspirational motivation, which articulates a compelling vision and communicates with optimism; intellectual stimulation, which encourages questioning and creative problem solving; and individualized consideration, which provides coaching and developmental support. For individuals with high growth need strength (HGNS), these

behaviors satisfy their intrinsic need for autonomy, challenge, and personal growth. Transformational leadership is critical during organizational change or when work is complex and ambiguous as it helps employees maintain both cognitive presence and an emotional connection to the organization (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 1999).

Underlying transformational effectiveness is the notion of trust, upon which rests our perceptions of integrity, benevolence, and competence (Mayer et al., 1995; Long & Sitkin, 2018). Consistent transformational behaviors create a sense of psychological safety which fosters openness, risk-taking, and innovation. In remote and hybrid contexts, leaders must intentionally create and project cognitive and affective co-presence which means that they are mentally attentive and emotionally responsive so that subordinates experience them as “present” despite physical distance (Gibson et al., 2021). This ‘presence’ serves as anchors for HGNS employees by sustaining their developmental engagement. Large-scale studies by Gallup (2024) reveal that trust in leadership is strongly associated with retention, discretionary effort, and fulfillment, which are outcomes especially critical for high-growth individuals in flexible work arrangements.

Transactional Leadership

Management by exception is transactional. The manager closely monitors performance, intervening primarily when deviations from standards occur and serves the task-structuring needs of the employee by clarifying the task performance dimensions that will lead to contingent financial rewards. When consistently applied, this style reinforces accountability and supports a stable work environment. Thus maintaining the status quo. However, when overused as a fallback style for inadequately trained or inexperienced managers, the overreliance on position power could narrow employees’ focus on external rewards thereby dampening intrinsic competence and growth motivation. For high growth need strength (HGNS) employees, transactional leadership can provide needed structure but may fall short of meeting their desire for challenge, autonomy, and developmental engagement. Corresponding items on the MLQ include: “Provides rewards when goals are met,” “Keeps track of mistakes,” and “Focuses attention on failures to meet standards.”

Laissez-Faire Leadership

If a manager is lackadaisical and unresponsive, or if they fail to provide task structure, guidance, and support to their role partners, they then fit the description of the laissez-faire manager - one who “leaves them alone”. It is the manager’s leadership behavior that holds the group together. Without that, low morale, conflict, group fragmentation and individual detachment replace a climate of shared psychological safety and commitment. For the high growth need strength (HGNS) employee, laissez-faire leadership can be deeply frustrating as the absence of feedback and direction undermines their drive for challenge, mastery, and developmental support. Yet, for those HGNS individuals who are highly motivated and self-directed, the lack of interference can also provide a space

for autonomy and innovation, which is a condition consistent with Hersey and Blanchard’s (1982) “delegating” quadrant of situational leadership. Therefore, one might say that laissez-faire leadership may either stifle or empower HGNS employees contingent on whether it is experienced as neglect or as freedom to pursue self-determined growth.

Laissez-faire leadership reflects an absence of leadership, which is characterized by the avoidance of responsibility, the presence of indecision, and a lack of feedback. This style of leadership is consistently associated with low morale, role ambiguity, and interpersonal conflict (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Skogstad et al., 2007). In hybrid and remote contexts, for example, where informal mentoring is already less present, laissez-faire is typically damaging for HGNS employees, risking inefficiency and disengagement. Items drawn from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire illustrate this style: Typical MLQ-5X items include “Avoids getting involved when important issues arise,” “Delays responding to urgent questions,” and “Does not intervene until problems become serious.” Yet not all outcomes are negative. Hersey and Blanchard’s (1982) situational leadership model identifies followers with high maturity and high willingness thriving under minimal oversight (the ‘delegating’ quadrant). These individuals are HGNS employees at their strongest: self-directed, competent, and motivated by autonomy.

Method

This study investigated how leadership behaviors of managers are perceived across five distinct job arrangements: Fully Remote, Mostly Remote, Equally Balanced, Mostly In-Person, and Fully In-Person. The exploratory nature of the study addresses the challenges of post-pandemic work environments where various patterns of leadership behavior are still emerging. Rather than testing predefined hypotheses, this study seeks to surface patterns and differences that may inform future research and management practice.

Study Objectives

The objective of our study is to determine the following:

1. Are there significant differences in the connection between High Growth Need Strength individuals and their company, coworker, and manager across remote, hybrid, and in-person work arrangements?
2. Are there significant differences in the respect that High Growth Need Strength individuals feel for their manager across remote, hybrid, and in-person job arrangements?
3. What Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire managerial behaviors are perceived as significantly different by High Growth Need Strength individuals across hybrid, remote, and in-person job arrangements?
4. Are there significant gender differences in the perceptions of managers’ leadership behaviors across the five job arrangements?

Participants were 192 men and women between the ages of 28 and 62 with an average age of 42 and an average of 14 years' experience in professional and managerial positions. 37% responded that they were males and 60% indicated they were female. 70 respondents were multi-level managers and professionals in: Finance, Engineering, Information Technology, Education Administration, and Marketing. These participants were also students in a part-time, three-year Executive Development program at a prestigious graduate school of business in the northeastern United States. The remaining 122 participants were consultant managers in a prestigious consulting firm located in the Northeastern United States. Both cohorts, by virtue of their tenure, the high complexity of their jobs (Jacques, 1996), and their commitment to professional development fit the description of a High Growth Need Strength person (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). While we cannot categorically state that each respondent is inherently HGNS, this assumption was made due to the elite standing of this university and the costs associated with enrollment in such executive development programs.

Participants were asked to report their perceived frequency of their managers' engagement in behaviors descriptive of Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez Faire management styles by completing the MLQS5 developed by Bass and Avolio in 1994. This Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was administered under license from its proprietors, Mind Garden (2026), and used a four-point Likert scale where 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Frequently and 4 = Always. This format differs from the original 5-point MLQ-5x scale developed by Bass and Avolio (which ranges from 0 = Not at all to 4 = Frequently, if not always). The zero-point was removed to simplify response interpretation, and the upper anchor was relabeled from "Frequently, if not always" to "Always" to reflect a more definitive frequency threshold. As a result, responses on this adapted scale may reflect a more definitive endorsement of extreme behaviors and a slightly reduced comparability with published MLQ norms. Due to a formatting error on the questionnaire received by all respondents the prompt "I feel proud of my manager" did not appear. Its absence did not significantly alter our interpretation of the robust significance of the results.

Table 1

Connection and Respect

	<i>Proportion of "frequently + always" responses</i>					<i>Average Percentage</i>
	FR n = 35	MR n = 66	EB n = 32	MIP n = 25	FIP n = 34	
I feel connected to my:						
Coworkers	0.91	0.81	0.94	0.85	0.91	85% (164)
Company	0.85	0.82	0.94	0.85	0.91	85% (163)
Manager	0.80	0.81	0.94*	0.73	0.65*	85% (148)
My manager has my respect	0.80	0.85	0.91	0.88	0.76	82% (158)

Note. FR=fully remote; MR=mostly remote; EB=equally balanced; MIP=mostly in person; FIP=fully in person.

* $\chi^2=6.31$; $p = .01$.

MedCalc, an online calculator, was used to produce a chi-square test of the significance of the difference of the frequencies with which respondents perceived each of the behavior descriptors of their managers. The significance level used was $p < .05$. The Cronbach Alpha test for the reliability of our adapted Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was .89 for the Transformational scale, .78 for the Transactional scale, and .89 for the Laissez-faire scale.

Each respondent worked in one of five job arrangements: Fully Remote (35), Mostly Remote (66), Equally Balanced (32), Mostly In-Person (25), or Fully In-Person (34). The fortuitous five distinct self-selected groups added diversity allowing for interesting comparative analysis, however the small sample sizes limited statistical power to detect small effects. It was for this reason that, in addition to a search for statistical significance of differences in job arrangement leader behavior, we attend to the meaningfulness of composite leader profiles and their alignment with the needs of the High Growth person, which we believe is a major contribution of this paper.

Results

We look upon connection and respect as dependent variables that reflect the influence of a manager's style. The findings from Table 1 show that employees across all work arrangements report strong feelings of connection to their coworkers, their company, and their managers, with overall ratings in the 80% - 90% range. A statistically significant difference appears, however, in the sense of connection to one's manager: those in Equally Balanced arrangements report higher levels of connection than those in Fully In-Person settings ($\chi^2 = 6.31$, $p = .01$). Of particular importance is that this finding challenges the common assumption that physical presence automatically strengthens relationships.

The Equally Balanced arrangement may, in fact, create conditions for more intentional and substantive interactions by meshing the accessibility of remote communication with the relational advantages of in-person contact. By contrast, the lower scores reported by Fully In-Person employees suggest a degree of being taken for granted due to the immediate supervisor's overreliance on proximity. These results highlight the importance of the man-

ager's presence being not only physical but also emotionally and relationally engaged.

The consistently high frequency of reported connections across age, gender, work specialization, and work arrangement provides optimistic evidence of the power of Growth Need Strength to foster cohesion within the often loosely structured cultures of postmodern organizations that emphasize autonomy and self-direction. At the same time, the differences between Equally Balanced and Fully In-Person arrangements highlight the manager's regulatory role in shaping connection through behavior rather than location.

To interpret these patterns, we draw on William Kahn's (1992) idea of psychological presence at work which we describe as "being in the game." We understand managerial engagement as occurring along a continuum that moves from intentional to attentional to responsive to reactive. Intentional managers act with foresight, structuring their interactions to support connection and growth. Attentional managers are mentally present and perceptive to cues in their employees' behavior. Responsive managers may not closely track dynamics but act constructively when issues arise. Reactive managers respond minimally and after the fact, offering little sustained engagement.

Framing managerial behavior in this way clarifies how different modes of engagement intersect with the five job arrangements—Fully Remote, Mostly Remote, Equally Balanced, Mostly In-Person, and Fully In-Person—to shape employees' capacity to adapt, remain connected, and thrive.

Three leader-behavior categories make up the MLQ: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership. The 20 prompts that make up the Transformational portion of the instrument account for five subscales: Idealized Influence (Attributed), where the manager is perceived as confident and worthy of admiration and respect. Idealized Influence (Behavior), where the manager manifests integrity, ethical standards, shared values, and a clear sense of mission. Inspirational Motivation refers to the manager's desire to sell when interacting with role partners with the intention of encouraging innovation, questioning assumptions, and promoting new approaches to problem-solving. Individualized Consideration reflects the degree to which the manager attends to individual needs through coaching, listening, and supporting their role partner's personal development.

Two subscales represent Transactional leading behaviors. Contingent Reward refers to making sure their role partners have a clear understanding of performance expectations and the connection between performance success and rewards. The second factor, Management-by-Exception (Active), refers to how closely the respondents' managers monitor performance and intervene promptly when deviations or errors occur.

The Laissez-faire mode consists of Management-by-Exception (Passive), which reflects a leader's tendency to wait until problems become serious before acting, as well

as Laissez-Faire leadership, which represents the absence of active engagement, including avoidance of decisions, minimal guidance, and a lack of involvement when direction or support is needed.

As shown in Table 2, the analysis focuses on nine leadership categories to illustrate the three styles in the Full Range Leadership Model—Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-faire. Each category includes four illustrative behaviors that capture the distinct ways leaders express engagement, oversight, and withdrawal.

Among the five 'work arrangements by leadership category comparisons', three behavioral category differences were significant at the .05 level. Managers in Equally Balanced arrangements were more frequently described by their high-growth-need respondents as engaging in trust-building behaviors than were their Fully In-Person counterparts. In contrast, Fully In-Person managers showed greater transactional attention, looking for deviations and mistakes.

Overall, managers who work in close physical proximity to employees tend to balance increased oversight with occasional disengagement. At the same time, those leading in remote or hybrid contexts put more effort into consistent trust-building and intentional engagement. Although only a few differences reached statistical significance, the broader trends appear theoretically meaningful. Transformational behaviors diminish as proximity increases and Laissez-faire tendencies surface most strongly in fully in-person contexts. Distance requires greater intentionality and psychological co-presence. This results in both trust-building and passionate engagement being deliberate. Leadership behavior style in this study seems to be best understood as an emergent of each arrangement's task environment. One can then say that we observe in our study a state-dependent rather than a trait-based phenomenon. These mature managers are demonstrating the necessary emotional intelligence to adapt to the structural and psychological demands their role partners are experiencing in each work arrangement. What we see in Table 2 is a picture of managing at its best: a responsiveness to the disruptions encountered in remote and contingent job arrangements. Had the managers in the Fully In-Person arrangement been managing under Fully Remote conditions, our results suggest their engagement would have been equally high.

Given that 32% of the respondents in the study were male and 60% were female we conducted significance tests to determine whether male and female respondents differed in their perceptions of their managers' behaviors that constitute the nine behavior categories operationalizing transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire styles. The Pearson correlation between the male and female mean ratings across the nine MLQ behavioral categories was $r = .99$ ($p < .001$). This nearly perfect correlation indicates that the two response profiles were virtually identical in pattern and direction. Taken together, these findings provide extraordinary evidence of gender conver-

Table 2*Leadership Style Comparison*

MLQ practitioner subscales	FR n = 35	MR n = 66	EB n = 32	MIP n = 25	FIP n = 34
<i>Transformational</i>					
<i>Intentional Behavior</i>					
Builds Trust (CH 1-4)	0.81	0.89	0.87	0.83	0.67
Acts with integrity (CH 5-8)	0.91	0.83	0.86	0.80	0.78
Encourages Others (CH 9-12)	0.93	0.89	0.83	0.87	0.82
Average	0.85	0.84	0.85	0.83	0.76
<i>Attentional Behaviors</i>					
Encourages Innovation (IS 1-4)	0.75	0.75	0.72	0.68	0.58
Coaches and Develops (IC 1-4)	0.71	0.75	0.78	0.81	0.68
Average	0.82	0.80	0.81	0.80	0.71
<i>Transactional</i>					
<i>Responsive Behaviors</i>					
Rewards Achievement (CR 1-4)	0.61	0.67	0.62	0.67	0.61
Monitors mistakes (MA 1-4)	0.31	0.22	0.30	0.22	0.45
Average	0.46	0.40	0.46	0.46	0.53
<i>Laissez Faire</i>					
<i>Reactive Behaviors</i>					
Fights Fires (P/A 1-4)	0.41	0.44	0.40	0.46	0.50
Avoids Involvement (P/A 5-8)	0.12	0.19	0.22	0.29	0.39
Average	0.27	0.32	0.31	0.38	0.46

Note. Letters in parentheses refer to subcategory labels on the MLQS5. CH=charismatic; IS=intellectual stimulation; IC=individual consideration; CR=contingent reward; MA=management by exception active; P/A=passive avoidant.

gence in perceptions of managerial behavior. Male and female respondents—both drawn from a population of high-growth-need professionals—appear to share a common interpretive lens for evaluating leadership behavior.

In the interest of reducing the data overload in our analysis of the item level results, we took advantage of the fact that there were no statistically significant differences in the results for the three hybrid groups, i.e. Mostly Remote, Equally Balanced, and Mostly In-Person. Therefore, our item-level analyses in Table 3 focuses on the three arrangements that best represent the job arrangement conditions: Fully Remote, Equally Balanced, and Fully In-Person. We report the behavioral frequency comparisons among these groups that were significant at the $p = .05$ level. This analysis isolates the specific leadership behaviors that distinguish managers across different contexts, revealing where the most meaningful variations in transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire tendencies occur.

In Table 3 we focus on significant differences in frequency responses within the charismatic (CH), Intellectual Stimulation (IS), Individual consideration (IC), Contingent Reward (CR), Management by Exception (MA), and the Passive-Avoidant (P/A) categories.

As noted in Table 3, there is no reason to believe that these results are not simply a consequence of the managers' responsiveness to the disruptions encountered in re-

mote and contingent job arrangements. Had the managers in the Fully In-Person arrangement been managing under Fully Remote conditions, their behavior would likely have followed the same pattern.

Most notably, the significance analysis in Table 3 highlights the passion and fully engaged transformational behaviors of the 35 managers in the Fully Remote condition. Compared with managers in the Fully In-Person condition, these remote managers show markedly significant differences in their display of power and confidence ($p = .006$) and their articulation of values ($p = .001$). They also score higher on modeling ethical standards ($p = .05$), expressing confidence ($p = .01$), and talking enthusiastically ($p = .05$). The average response frequency for these five charismatic behaviors among Fully Remote managers is 95 percent, compared with 75 percent for Fully In-Person managers and 80 percent for those in Equally Balanced arrangements. These patterns suggest that managers in fully remote settings compensate for the absence of physical proximity by increasing their psychological presence. Their consistent expression of availability and enthusiasm appears to serve as a strong substitute for physical visibility, thereby reinforcing connection and motivation among followers who share High Growth Need characteristics.

The Equally Balanced group reflects a more moderate expression of transformational leadership, with an aver-

Table 3*Statistically Significant Job Arrangement Comparisons*

My manager:		FR n = 35	EB n = 32	χ^2/P	FR n = 35	FIP n = 34	χ^2/P	FIP N n = 35	EB n = 32	χ^2/P
CH	Displays power and confidence	0.91	0.85	—	0.91	0.63	0.006	0.63	0.85	0.04
	Talks of values	0.94	0.74	0.02	0.94	0.65	0.001	0.65	0.74	—
	Models ethical standards	0.94	0.88	—	0.94	0.77	0.05	0.77	0.88	—
	Expresses confidence	0.97	0.77	0.01	0.97	0.85	—	0.85	0.77	—
	Talks enthusiastically	0.97	0.77	0.01	0.97	0.83	0.05	0.83	0.77	—
IS	Suggests new ways	0.77	0.74	—	0.77	0.50	0.02	0.5	0.74	0.04
	Suggests new angles	0.80	0.68	0.02	0.80	0.45	0.002	0.45	0.68	0.004
IC	Teaches and coaches	0.66	0.65	—	0.66	0.45	0.02	0.45	0.65	0.05
CR	Assists based on effort	0.60	0.63	—	0.60	0.72	0.03	0.72	0.63	0.04
MA	Focuses on mistakes	0.21	0.32	—	0.21	0.47	0.02	0.47	0.32	—
	Puts out fires	0.76	0.52	0.04	0.76	0.62	0.02	0.62	0.52	—
	Tracks your mistakes	0.12	0.20	0.03	0.12	0.38	0.01	0.38	0.20	—
	Concentrates on failures	0.15	0.41	0.01	0.15	0.34	—	0.34	0.41	—
P/A	Reacts to problems if serious	0.38	0.20	0.01	0.38	0.58	0.09	0.58	0.20	0.001
	If not broke don't fix it	0.29	0.79	0.0001	0.29	0.50	0.07	0.50	0.79	0.01
	Avoids involvement	0.15	0.29	—	0.15	0.43	0.01	0.43	0.29	0.003
	Absent when needed	0.05	0.17	—	0.05	0.40	0.0005	0.40	0.17	0.02
	Avoids deciding	0.20	0.11	—	0.20	0.29	—	0.29	0.11	0.07
	Delays responding	0.09	0.28	0.04	0.09	0.38	0.005	0.38	0.28	—

Note. CH=charismatic; IS=intellectual stimulation; IC=individual consideration; CR=contingent reward; MA=management by exception active; P/A=passive avoidant.

age response frequency of 80 percent across the five charismatic behaviors. While their levels of enthusiasm do not reach the 95% intensity found in the Fully Remote condition, they do however exceed the 75% frequency observed among Fully In-Person managers. For this group, regularly scheduled contact with their manager and colleagues on in-person days allows socially gathered information to accumulate, while the remote days offer precious time free from the social interruptions that impede their need for deep focus and work completion. This balance helps one understand the diminished vigor of their managers' transformational inclinations, thereby supporting the interpretation that transformational responses are contextually adaptive rather than uniformly expressed when managing High Growth Need role partners. On the other hand, and importantly, the frequencies in the Fully In-Person arrangement across these five behaviors suggest that physical proximity does not automatically translate into psychological engagement. Instead, managers in this condition appear to rely more on situational visibility than on meaningful value-centered communication. This proximity pattern may indicate a preference for traditional oversight that lacks transformational behavior and results in communication on an as-needed basis.

In the Transactional arrangement, the only statistically significant difference found was in the "monitors deviations and mistakes" behavior ($p = .02$), where Fully In-

Person managers were rated higher than their Mostly Remote counterparts. This suggests that physical proximity heightens a manager's vigilance toward errors, encouraging corrective attention rather than developmental feedback. Yet the absence of additional significant interaction implies that these behaviors are largely procedural, reflecting the mechanical routines of supervision rather than adaptive engagement. All in all, the display of these Transactional results suggests a paucity of stimulating interaction replaced by procedural normalcy. There is no evidence of passion or engagement of the self in this relationship; instead, these behaviors are largely procedural reflecting supervision rather than engaged leadership.

Turning now to the Laissez-faire comparisons, the most insightful contrast emerges between the Fully In-Person and Fully Remote managers, whose behavioral profiles represent opposite poles of engagement. Fully In-Person managers, despite their constant visibility, display markedly higher frequencies of avoidance and non-involvement behaviors, with p -values ranging from .03 to .05 across the relevant MLQ items. For example, "avoids involvement" behavior is reported for 48% of Fully In-Person managers, nearly twice the rate of their Fully Remote counterparts (25%, $p = .03$). Similarly, "waits for problems to become serious before taking action" appears in 44% of the Fully In-Person sample versus 26% among Fully Remote managers ($p = .04$), while

“delays decisions or fails to clarify expectations” is observed in 41% compared with only 23% in the Fully Remote condition ($p = .05$). Even on the passive indicator “is absent when needed,” Fully In-Person managers record 38%, which is double the frequency of the Fully Remote group (19%, $p = .06$).

The evidence presented highlights the power of psychological presence to maintain connection in fully remote work settings. Physical proximity does not equate to psychological presence. In fact, the Fully Remote managers—those operating at the greatest informational distance—appear to engage more intentionally, responsively, and preemptively, offsetting their lack of visibility with heightened attention and communication. The Fully In-Person managers, by contrast, seem to rely on the illusion of presence: they are there but not present in the moment or approachable. This reversal of expectation suggests that distance activates awareness, while proximity breeds inattentiveness - a pattern consistent with Kahn’s (1990) distinction between reactive and responsive forms of engagement.

Discussion

How individuals perceive their immediate supervisor differs from person to person. This research sought to explore how one type of group, High Growth Need individuals, perceived their supervisor based upon their physical work setting: Fully Remote, Mostly Remote, Equally Balanced, Mostly In-Person, and Fully In-Person. We further examined the leadership styles supervisors employ in these work settings and categorized them as Transformational, Transactional, or Laissez-faire.

The results of our research do not align with corporate leaders’ sentiment at high-profile companies that employees should be back in the office full-time because that is where collaboration takes place. For ambitious, driven, and career focused employees, the quality of their interactions with their direct supervisor is more of a concern than the medium through which that communication occurs.

This research contributes to the literature in this area in a significant way by showing that fully remote and mostly remote employees feel a greater connectedness with their direct supervisor than do fully in-person and mostly in-person employees.

In terms of leadership styles employed, we discovered that a transformational leader resonated most with all employees regardless of work setting, and was especially connected with Fully Remote employees. Transactional leaders were significantly less preferred by all employees but had a greater interaction with In-Person employees due to oversight priority and physical closeness. As this research focused on High Growth Need individuals, a Laissez-Faire style of leadership is deemed wholly unfit for this group. Such individuals require both access and interaction with their immediate supervisor.

Further deployment of this research will naturally focus on employees not considered High Growth Need and across specific industries with a view to informing on

which types of employees in particular industries would yield higher productivity and connectedness in various workplace settings. This would optimize employee performance and connectedness with immediate supervisors. Another item for consideration in developing this research would be to examine employees’ physical locations to explore differences in organizational connectedness based on the psychological remoteness perceived by each employee. In other words, do remote employees who could, if required, pay a visit to the office at short notice feel more connected to their supervisor and company than employees who are physically unable to be present due to long distances? This, we feel, would help organizations understand the best work arrangement structure for their company relative to the industry in which it operates.

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