

# Six paradoxes of leadership 1/51/21



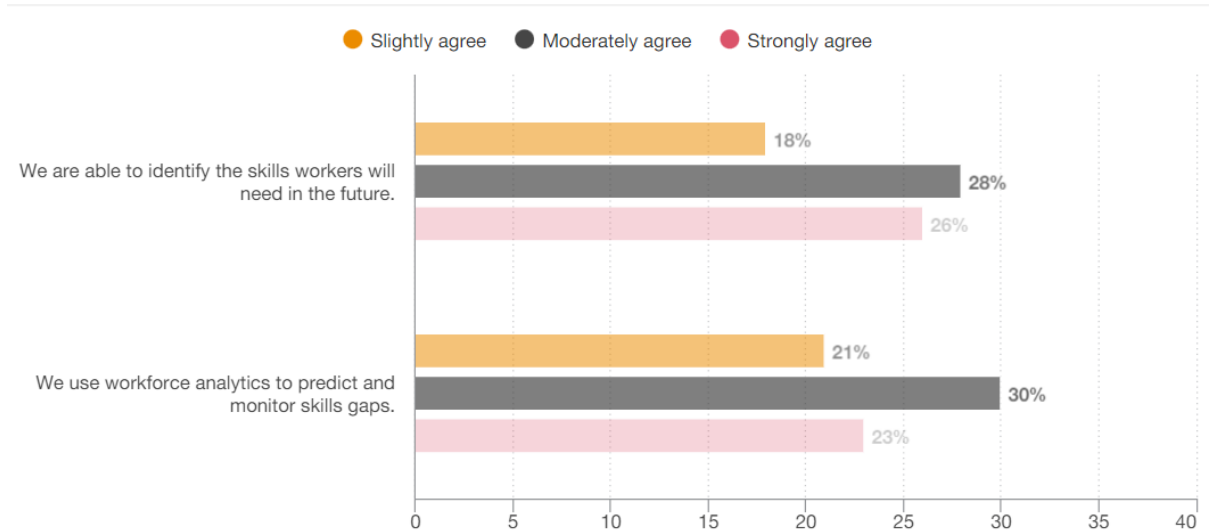
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The world is facing significant and increasingly urgent challenges that are affecting individuals, organisations, governments and society alike.<sup>1</sup> These trends are coming fast and impacting decision-making today. The challenges facing business leaders are significant and complex, with a substantial rise in the expectations people place on decision-makers as leaders.

## A PwC survey

A study of future jobs and skills PwC conducted in September 2021 surveys almost 4,000 business and human resources leaders. The study defines no-regrets moves that are important to consider when designing a workforce strategy in order to prepare and adapt businesses for work in the future. Interestingly, the study highlights a number of trends suggesting that the hopes people are pinning on leaders are huge but their overall readiness to lead these changes is still fairly low. Here are a few facts from the survey:

- The need to build trust in your company – only 30% of leaders said they are doing everything it takes to foster mutual trust between workers and their supervisors.
- Skills of the future – only one in four leaders can define the skills they will need in the future.



Data used: All respondents (3,937).

Explanation: The percentage shows the respondents who have chosen the answer "agree".

Source: PwC's Future of Work and Skills Survey

- Preparing for and implementing new technologies with due regard to the human factor – only 21% of respondents said they can identify risks of replacing human labour with technology, a factor that emerged from the survey as the most critical.

As for leadership, there are **six paradoxes that are becoming increasingly important** for leaders to navigate. These paradoxes should be considered as a system because they impact each other and all need to be balanced simultaneously. To differentiate yourself as a leader, you need to learn how to comfortably

inhabit both elements of each paradox. Let us take a closer look at these paradoxes.

## Tech-savvy humanist

How do you become increasingly tech savvy and remember that organisations are run by people for people?

*Tech-savvy:* Driving technology enhancement that generates future success.

*Humanist:* Understanding deeply human effectiveness in any given system.

## Globally-minded localist

How do you navigate a world that is increasingly both global and local?

*Globally-minded:* Being agnostic about the belief system and the market structure and being a student of the world.

*Localist:* Being fully committed to the success of a local market.

## High-integrity politician

How do you navigate the politics of getting things to happen and retain your character?

*High-integrity:* Maintaining integrity and building trust in all interactions.

*Politician:* Accruing support, negotiating, forming coalitions and overcoming resistance to maintain progress.

## Humble hero

How do you have the confidence to act in an uncertain world and the humility to recognise when you are wrong?

*Humble:* Fostering deep personal resilience in self and others and recognising when they need to help and be helped.

*Hero:* Oozing confidence with a competitive flair and seriousness.

## Strategic executor

How do you execute effectively while also being highly strategic?

*Strategic:* Finding insights and observations by looking to the future in order to inform decision-making today.

*Executor:* Delivering exquisitely on today's challenges.

## Traditioned innovator

How do you use the past to help direct your future success?

*Traditioned:* Connecting deeply with the purpose of the original idea and bringing this value to the present day.

*Innovator:* Driving innovation and trying out new things, as well as having the courage to fail and allowing others to do so.

Leadership is crucial beyond the traditional understanding of a role that involves leading people. Leadership is an essential skill at all levels, from the ability to manage yourself personally to a role that can take a team, company or society to a new level.

Blair Sheppard, PwC Global Leader for Strategy and Leadership, says: “If leaders around the world want a better future for our children and grandchildren, they need to find within themselves the capacity to navigate the six paradoxes or surround themselves with people who can. The stakes are simply too high for them not to.”

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<sup>1</sup> PwC ADAPT Framework – Asymmetry, Disruption, Age, Polarisation, and Trust <https://www.pwc.com/adapt>