

## LEADERSHIP

# Top 5 Leadership Trends of 2025

Leadership continuously evolves. By staying ahead of the trends, you can develop the kind of leaders you'll need for future success.

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# Leadership Development Trends to Build a Future-Forward Mindset

To remain competitive, businesses need to have razor-sharp clarity around current and future opportunities. And this means their leaders need to keep up to speed with the latest trends affecting the business landscape.

In 2025, adaptability, collaboration, and authentic leadership are key for leadership success.

Korn Ferry's Workforce 2025 Global Insights Report, which examined attitudes affecting employee sentiment, emphasized the growing need for leaders to be agile learners, inclusive visionaries, and tech-savvy innovators.

By embracing these trends, organizations can develop the kind of leaders who are well-prepared to navigate tomorrow's challenges and drive organizational resilience.

Here are the top five trends shaping the future of leadership—along with practical guidance for cultivating effective leadership.

## 1 Rapid Technological Advances and the AI Revolution

To navigate rapid technological changes, leaders must adopt a mindset of continuous learning and integrate AI into strategic decisions. Success will depend on adaptability and proactive skill development.

### Technological Adaptation and AI Proficiency

In a competitive market, leaders must anticipate change and drive technological innovation. Artificial intelligence is a big part of this. So how are today's executives feeling about tech and AI?

They're slowly but surely getting on board, according to Korn Ferry's Global Workforce 2025 Survey:

- Most global CEOs (71%) and senior executives (78%) said they think AI will bolster their value over the next three years.
- Three-quarters of global business leaders said they are excited about AI's impact on their work.
- Leaders in India (85%), Saudi Arabia (84%), UAE (82%), and Brazil (80%) were most positive about how emerging technologies like AI will change the way they work.

No matter how executives feel about it, it's increasingly clear that understanding and [using AI within leadership](#) is becoming essential for driving efficiency and making informed decisions.

Korn Ferry research shows that CEOs with higher overall assessment scores drive [technological transformation](#) and achieved 8.7% annual revenue growth compared to 3.2% for those with lower scores.

Leadership programs that embrace digital transformation and technology will be the most effective, ensuring continuous learning and adaptability.

Organizations should provide hands-on workshops to help leaders understand and apply AI tools effectively, building confidence and encouraging experimentation among leaders.

By fostering an environment where ongoing education and skill enhancement are prioritized, organizations can prepare their workforce to meet future challenges head-on.

Implementing regular webinars and online courses focusing on emerging AI trends and technologies will help keep leaders informed about the latest developments, enabling them to stay current—ahead, even—and integrate new technologies into their strategic planning more effectively.

## 2 Adaptive Leadership and Innovation

The best leaders cultivate a culture where agility and experimentation are not just encouraged but are essential to the organization's success. They know that innovation is no longer confined to R&D departments—it must permeate every level of the business.

### Creating a Culture of Innovation

Adaptive leadership is about creating an environment where quick, iterative decision-making is the norm. Leaders need the skills to be able to clarify the vision for innovation, align it with the organization's core purpose, and make it understandable and actionable for teams across the business. This includes leveraging metrics, championing data-driven decisions, managing change, eliminating obstacles, and connecting the dots between different functions vital to innovation.

The importance of these leadership skills is highlighted by the fact that learning agility and curiosity are the top priorities for the 2025 World's Most Admired Companies (WMAC) when hiring for leadership roles. These companies recognize that leaders who can adapt and innovate are crucial for driving organizational success.

About two-thirds of WMAC leaders consider their organizations change-ready, with clear transformation plans and teams capable of leading or adapting to change. Can the leaders at your company navigate and drive change?

To cultivate a leadership culture that rewards adaptability and continuous innovation, leaders must focus on several best practices:

- **Encourage a growth mindset:** Promote learning and curiosity at all levels.
- **Empower teams:** Give them the autonomy to make decisions and experiment.
- **Champion data-driven decisions:** Use metrics to guide innovation efforts.

- **Align vision and purpose:** Ensure that the innovation strategy is clear and aligned with the organization's core values.

By adopting these practices, leaders can create a dynamic and innovative culture that not only drives performance but also positions their organizations for long-term success.

## 3 Equipping Leaders to Manage the Evolving Workplace

Leaders will need to inspire and guide their teams through the complexities of remote and [hybrid work environments](#). Embracing change with agility and maintaining a clear vision of the future will be critical.

Leaders must be adept at managing remote and hybrid teams effectively. According to Korn Ferry's Workforce Survey, flexible working hours are valued by employees around the world, with 80% of respondents considering it a top priority.

When it comes to where they work from, almost two-thirds are working full time in the office—but of that group, only 19% want to be there. Yet, more and more employers are trying to enforce return-to-work mandates.

What do people want instead? For 48%, hybrid would be ideal, and 25% want to be fully remote.

The preference for work arrangements varies dramatically across regions, with some being much more anti-office than others.

- In Brazil, only 12% are happy with full-time office life.
- In Japan, 36% are content to work full-time in the office.

To address these evolving needs, organizations should provide remote management training to equip leaders with the skills necessary to manage remote and hybrid teams successfully.

Flexibility is key to retaining the best talent, with many employees indicating they would stay in their current roles if given flexible hours or remote work

Integrating collaboration and productivity technology into daily workflows and ensuring leaders are proficient in these tools is crucial. Providing training and sharing best practices on how to use these tools can help leaders integrate them into their daily workflows.

## Agile Leadership and Building Trust

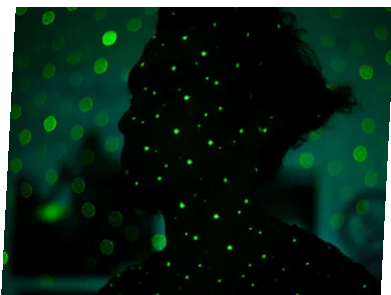
Developing flexible and adaptive leadership skills is essential for responding to rapid changes in the workplace. According to the survey results, preferences for flexible work options are strong across all age groups.

- In the UK, 30% of respondents aged 18-24 and 43% aged 45-54 said they prioritize flexible hours when looking for a new job.
- In Australia, 36% of younger respondents and 52% of the oldest group (55-65) said they put a high value on flexibility.

The move towards hybrid and remote work represents a fundamental shift in workplace expectations. Organizations should focus on leadership development programs to enhance leaders' ability to be agile and adapt swiftly to changing circumstances.

Leaders must [build trust within remote and hybrid teams](#) to maintain engagement and productivity. The data shows that embracing flexibility is a crucial aspect of modern work culture.

Organizations should implement regular virtual team-building activities to foster trust and maintain team cohesion. These activities not only help remote and hybrid teams feel more connected and engaged, but they also lead to higher productivity and job satisfaction.



### Leadership Development

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## 4 Embedding a Culture of Continuous Learning Within Leadership Development Programs

Continuous learning is a top priority for job seekers and a key factor in retention.

- In Brazil, 92% of respondents to the Korn Ferry Workforce 2025 Survey said learning opportunities are a reason they stay with their organization.
- India, the US, and the UK follow, with 87%, 78%, and 74%, respectively.

Beyond retention, organizations should promote a culture of learning to help leaders and employees stay current and adapt to challenges.

Leaders who commit to ongoing personal and [professional development](#) set a positive example for their teams. Global workers have an appetite for learning across all age groups, emphasizing its universal importance.

By promoting curiosity and innovation through regular knowledge-sharing sessions, organizations can cultivate a learning culture. This benefits individual leaders and fosters a more informed and innovative team culture.

Companies should also make learning a part of daily workflows and performance reviews. This ensures that learning is not just an occasional activity but a continuous process that empowers leaders to excel in their roles.

## 5 Cross-Functional Alignment at the Executive Level

Siloed decision-making makes an organization's ability to execute swiftly almost impossible. To overcome this, companies are prioritizing cross-functional collaboration and alignment at the executive level.

### Breaking Down Silos for Faster Execution

It goes without saying that senior executives need to communicate and work together effectively. So why doesn't it always happen?

- **Organization complexity:** At big companies, leaders might have different goals and processes, making it harder to align and work together.
- **Human nature:** People tend to focus on their own responsibilities. It can take a [mindset shift](#) to prioritize cross-departmental collaboration.
- **Communication barriers and cultural differences:** Leaders from different teams may have varying working and communication styles that don't meld without some effort.
- **Imposter syndrome:** According to the 2025 Korn Ferry Global Workforce Survey, 43% of senior executives struggle with impostor syndrome, which can make them hesitant to speak up, challenge ideas, or fully engage in high-level discussions.

Silos may be good for storing grain, but in business, they slow down progress. The senior leadership team is empowered to make business transformation happen. It's critical that their organizations are promoting cross-functional collaboration at the highest levels.

## Developing Executives Who Collaborate

Senior executives need to master skills like strategic communication, active listening, and cross-functional influence to collaborate effectively. They must learn to navigate high-level conflict, build trust, and adapt their leadership style for different teams.

These aren't just innate abilities—they're teachable, developable, and essential for success. [Enterprise leadership development programs](#) provide the structured training, coaching, and real-world simulations executives need to refine these skills.

Cross-functional alignment at the executive level isn't just a nice-to-have but a necessity. By investing in collaboration as a leadership capability, organizations can ensure their top teams work seamlessly across functions, driving stronger alignment, faster decision-making, and better business outcomes.



# Embracing Leadership Trends for Future Success

Leadership development must focus on adaptability, inclusivity, and continuous learning to ensure success in a changing business environment. This is what leadership of the future looks like.

To learn more about the best ways to cultivate powerful leadership within your organization, check out [Three Hallmarks of Effective Leadership Development](#). Discover how you can empower your leaders to thrive in the face of tomorrow's challenges.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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- How to embrace technology and empower leaders to drive innovation
- Why promoting a culture of learning can empower leaders with the skills to navigate rapid changes
- The importance of developing leaders with flexible and adaptive leadership skills

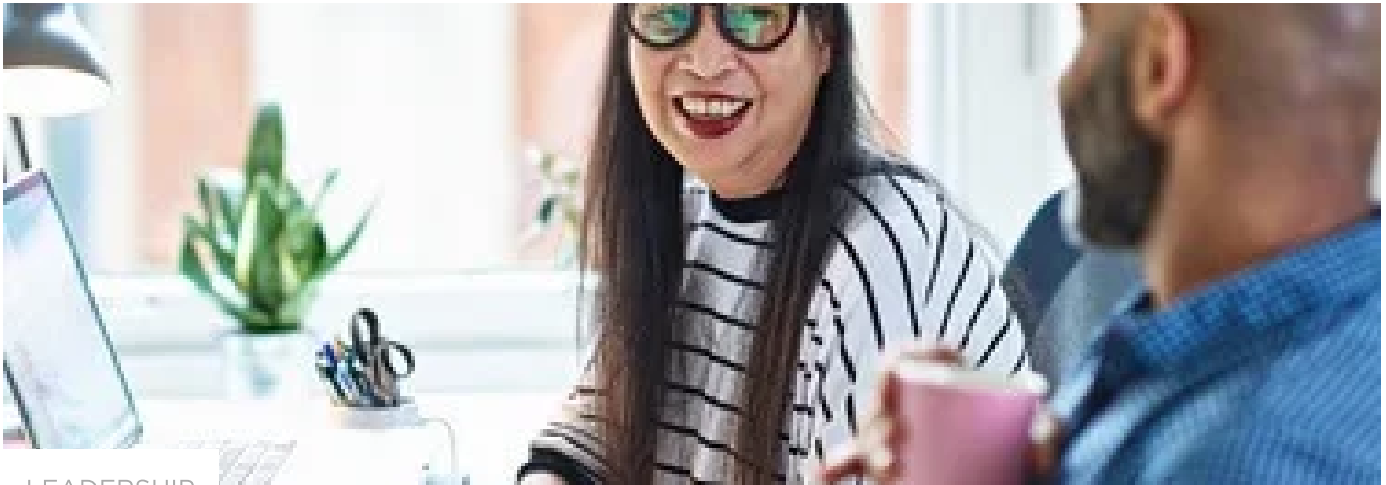
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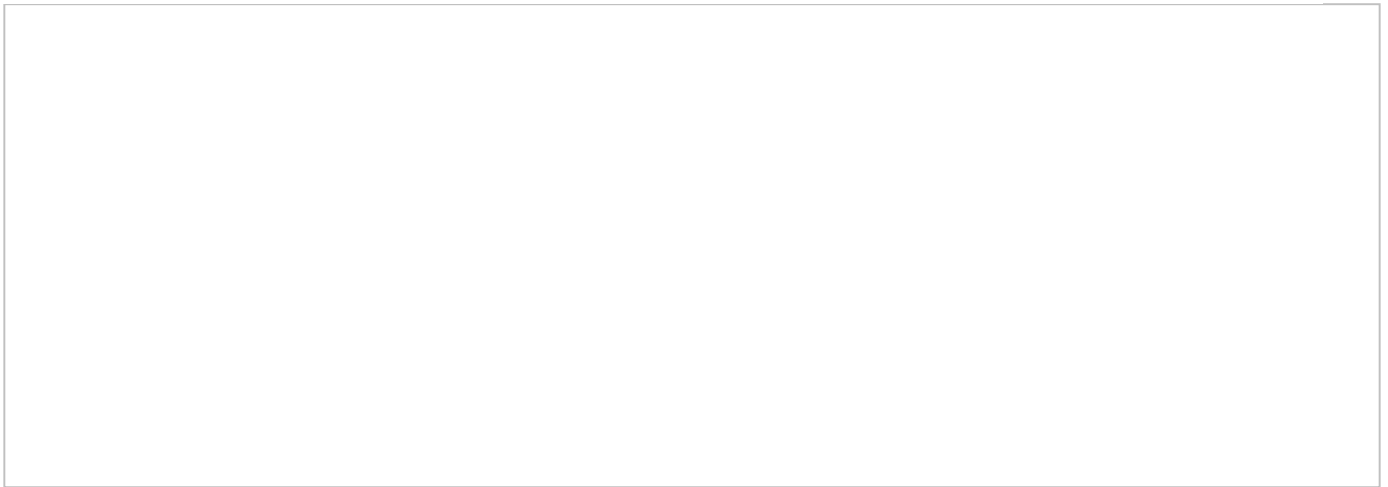
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