

JUNE 2025

Thriving hybrid teams

*The P.A.T.H. framework for High
Performance and Well-being*



Meet our panellists and presenters

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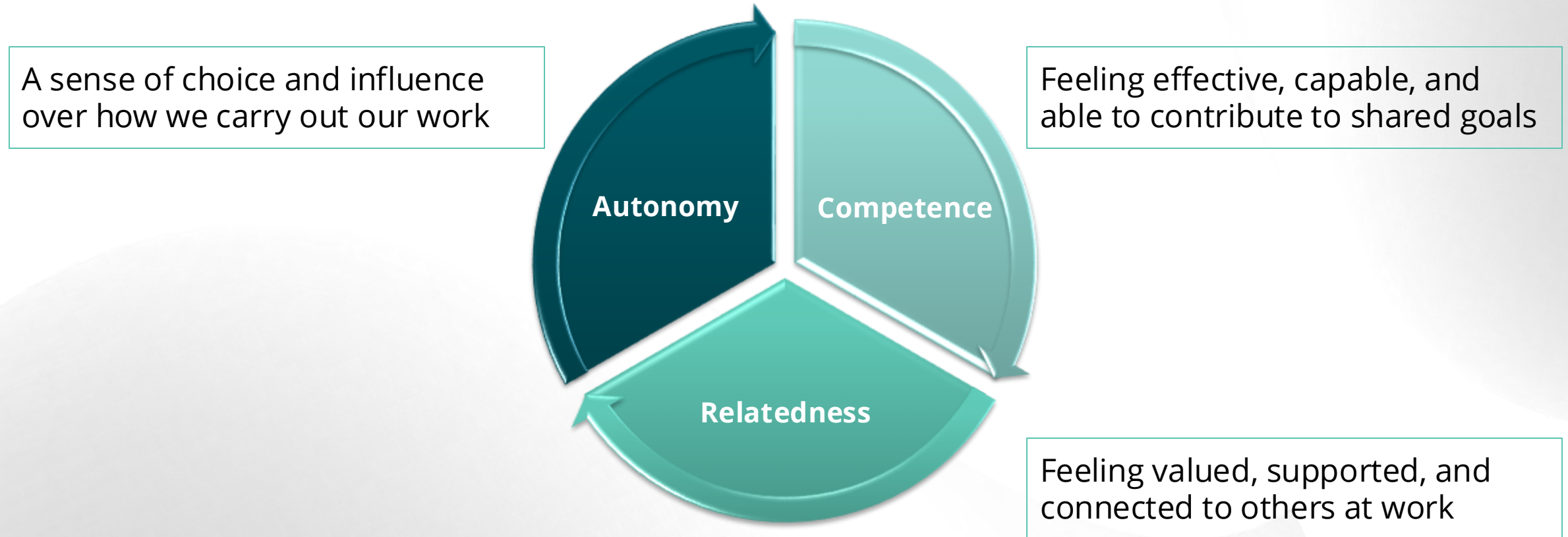
What you'll learn today

- Why **well-being is essential** for team performance
- What **latest research** reveals
- **The P.A.T.H model**: Four research-based pillars for thriving teams
- **Practical, evidence-informed strategies** for teams and leaders
- **Q&A** - reflections and next steps



What is Work-Related Well-being?

How people **experience, function, and thrive at work**

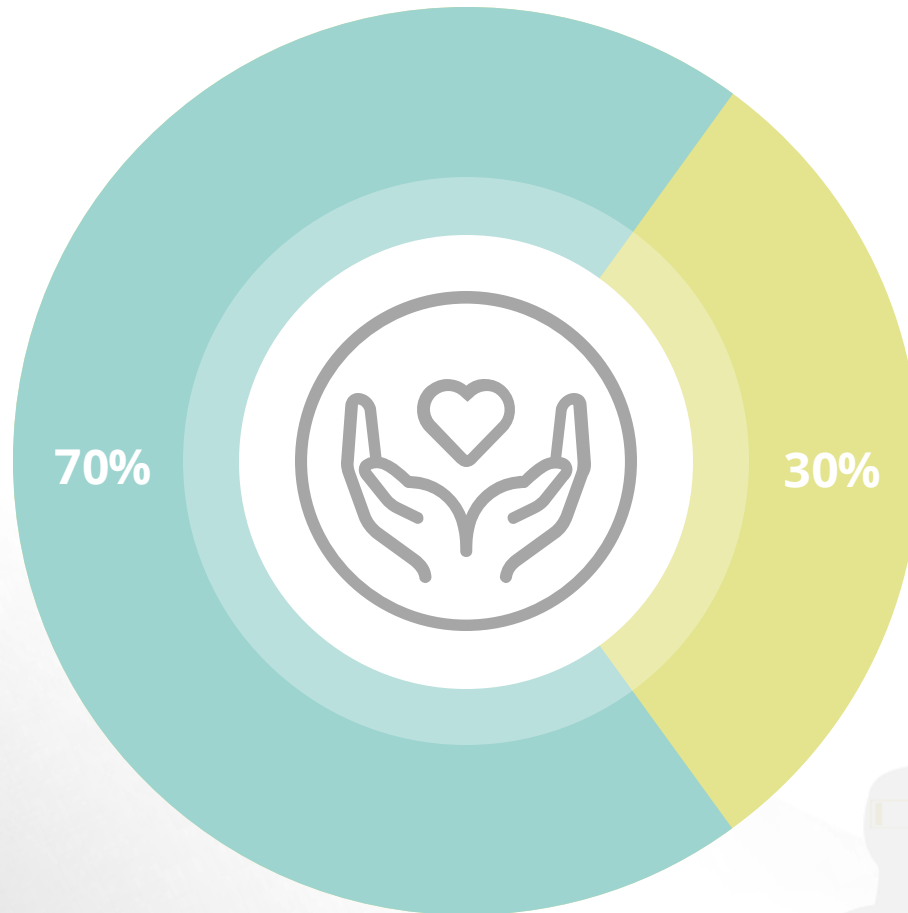


Who is responsible for work-related wellbeing?

Global Wellbeing initiatives forecast to double from \$50bn to \$100bn by 2030*

Multi-dimensional factors:

- Role demands and resources
- Organisational culture
- Communication norms
- Team and leader dynamics



Individual psychobiology; genes, habits, lifestyle

What the evidence says: Well-being is strategic



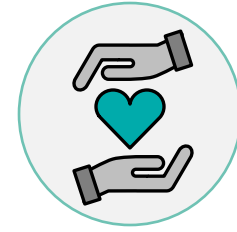
Profit

Highly engaged teams drive **23% greater profitability** ¹



Productivity

Organisations that prioritise well-being are **2.2x more likely** to see above average productivity ²



Pride

Employees who report high well-being are **32% more likely to stay**, 45% more likely to recommend ³

Poor well-being leads to higher absence, burnout, turnover, and reduced effectiveness (Coulston et al., 2025)

¹ Gallup 2023, ² Deloitte, Global Human Capital Trends, 2024

³ CIPD, Good Work Index, 2024

So, is hybrid working helping teams to thrive?

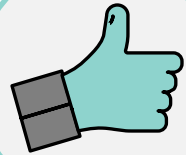
What makes the difference between thriving and surviving?



Hybrid teams: A powerful force – with real risks

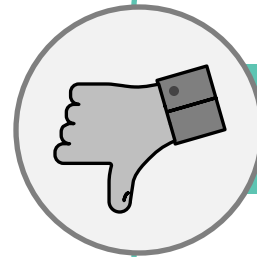
57% of organisations now use hybrid teams¹

When designed well



- ✓ Higher motivation and lower burnout^{2,4}
- ✓ Greater productivity and trust^{2,4}
- ✓ Stronger autonomy and team alignment^{2,4}

When poorly designed



- Isolation, disconnection^{2,3,4}
- Always on strain and blurred boundaries^{2,3}
- Declining engagement and team cohesion^{2,3,4}

¹ CIPD (2024), ² Coulston et al, (2025), ³ Microsoft New Future of Work (2022), ⁴ Gallup (2023)

About the Research

A three-part study: grounded in global, multi-method evidence

Systematic review (2011-2025): journal paper under review

Reviewed 4000+ papers on virtual and hybrid team well-being and performance

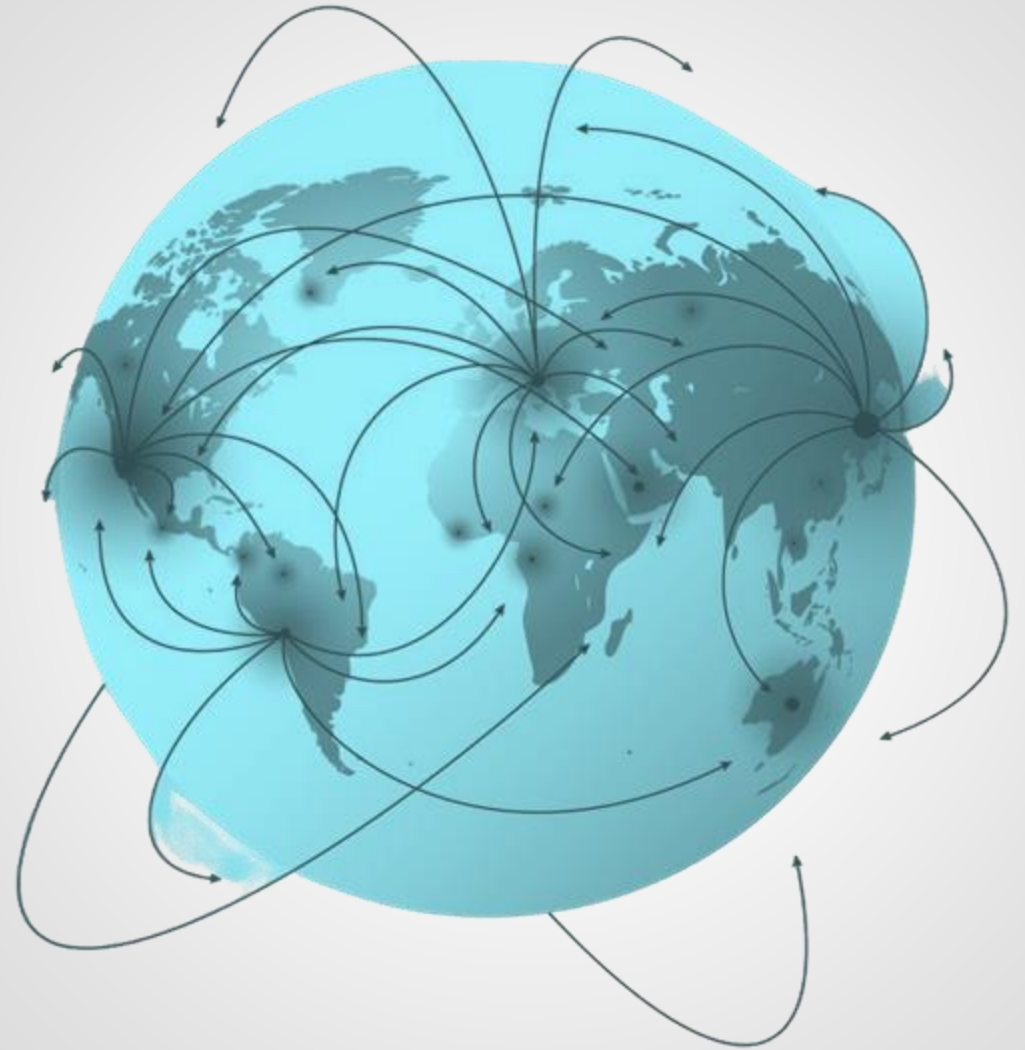
Global Interviews & Focus Groups: published journal paper

150 participants across industries and geographies

Longitudinal Quantitative Study: preparing journal paper

320 participants / 77 teams across 13 sectors
44% worked remotely 3 days/week, 23% 2 days/week

Source: Coulston et al., 2025



Advancing virtual and hybrid team well-being through a job demand-resources lens

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF QUALITATIVE STUDIES ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
2025, VOL. 20, 2472460
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2025.2472460>



EMPIRICAL STUDIES

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

Advancing virtual and hybrid team well-being through a job demand-resources lens

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ABSTRACT

As the modern workplace evolves, the shift to virtual and hybrid team working necessitates a re-evaluation of well-being. While workplace well-being research has predominantly focused on the individual level, understanding team-level well-being is critical, as its underlying psychological and social processes differ. This study applies the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework to virtual and hybrid contexts globally, demonstrating the dual nature of demands and resources at the team level, where the same constructs may contribute to driving positive gain cycles or negative loss cycles of well-being. Through reflexive thematic analysis, we analysed thirty semi-structured interviews with leaders and twenty-nine focus groups with 3–6 team members each ($n = 110$) across more than twelve industries and geographies. Our findings revealed three candidate themes: “Choice Matters”, “It’s Business and It’s Personal” and “Leader as Social Influencer”. This research extends JD-R theory by advancing its applicability to team-level well-being in virtual and hybrid contexts. Practical insights include empowering teams through redesigning work practices to establish sustainable boundaries, aligning communication norms, and fostering inclusive connections that accommodate diverse needs in the modern workplace.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 26 September 2024
Accepted 18 February 2025

KEYWORDS

Virtual teams; hybrid work;
job demands resources;
team well-being; leadership
dynamics

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic transformed the landscape of work, particularly in knowledge-based industries. Accelerated by globalization, digitalization, and technological progress (Lunde et al., 2022; Raghuram et al., 2019), the global adoption of virtual and hybrid working practices sparked a significant re-evaluation of how, when and where work is conducted. This shift has driven the rapid adoption of new approaches for collaboration, coordination and connection within teams. According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2022), more than 57% of organizations have adopted hybrid working models, integrating office and remote working days into the weekly schedule. Identified as one of the most significant trends likely to shape the next two decades (Robinson et al., 2022), hybrid work profoundly influences team dynamics and well-being.

Despite its widespread adoption, the literature on virtual and hybrid work remains inconclusive (Grobely, 2023), producing mixed findings on its implications for team well-being. Poor well-being has broad consequences, including increased mental health costs, burnout, absenteeism, and reduced effectiveness. Yet, workplace well-being research has disproportionately focused on the individual level

(Bliese et al., 2017; Charalampous et al., 2019), overlooking interdependencies within teams. Well-being at the individual level is not independent; it is shaped by leadership, team interactions and collective attitudes (Jiang & Probst, 2016; Liu et al., 2015). This highlights the urgent need to better understand team-level processes that shape both individual and collective well-being.

This study responds to calls for a broader perspective in work-related well-being research (Kozusznik et al., 2015), by investigating the underlying psychological and social processes within virtual and hybrid teams. Using qualitative methods, we examine the experiences of team members and leaders working in virtual and hybrid settings. We discuss the implications for team well-being and organizational sustainability. The findings provide actionable insights for fostering healthier, more inclusive work environments, while also identifying limitations and areas for future research.

Research objectives

The primary aim of this exploratory study was to enhance our understanding of the most salient well-

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^bSupplemental data for this article can be accessed online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2025.2472460>

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6 C. COULSTON ET AL.

Two sub-themes, “Living at Work with Connection Overload” and “More Purposeful in Time and Place,” illustrated how the dynamics of virtual and hybrid work shaped these experiences.

Sub-theme one: living at work with connection overload

For many team members and their leaders, the absence of clear boundaries between starting and ending the workday led to feelings of overwhelm and stress, most notably when working from home. Work from home often extended the workday, as time once allocated for commuting, and for some, decompression time, was absorbed into back-to-back meetings, leading to cognitive and emotional challenges for participants to switch off.

You could spend your days in back-to-back meetings. I don't even have the time to break for lunch or quite simply for work, to rest, for your mind to get some sleep. I can see more and more clients. I had one this morning telling me: Well, I'm available at 07:30 this morning, so let's have a quick call. Oh, I'm available tonight at 19:00... So, I think this is changing a lot. (Team leader, Team 21, Professional Services, France)

The overwhelming pace of communication exacerbated this issue. The resulting connection overload led to feelings of exhaustion and anxiety, ineffective multi-tasking, with some likening their experience to facing a “tsunami of emails” or a “barrage” of messages.

What I'm seeing is that there is an abuse of over-communicating from my perspective. Everyone needs to know everything, which is not really working in this for me. It's not really working in this context, because we're just overwhelming each other with too many

communications and people are not reading. (Team leader, Team 10, Human Resources, Europe).

Participants described a relentless need to stay connected across multiple platforms, often driven by a combination of self-imposed internal assumptions of needing to appear reliable and productive and fears of not being seen or recognized, as well as external expectations, often modelled by leaders' own behaviour of communication.

You can say well-being is important. You can say that you need to take care of yourself. You can say that you need to have work life balance. But if you're looking and you're seeing partners are on 24/7, they're never off, never eating. Yesterday I was talking to a leader and for dinner they were having nuts and cheese, and so if that's what they're doing, you feel guilty about taking time for yourself and taking care of yourself. (Team member 5, Team 19, Consultancy, US)

Despite recognizing the importance of self-care, participants often struggled to implement meaningful boundaries and lifestyles had become more sedentary for some. This sense of powerlessness was further compounded by a perceived need to overcompensate for home-based distractions, particularly for those managing childcare responsibilities.

Sub-theme two: more purposeful in time and place

In contrast, several leaders and team members experienced hybrid work as an opportunity to make more intentional choices about how, when, and where they worked. This sense of autonomy acted as a powerful resource, enabling participants to align their

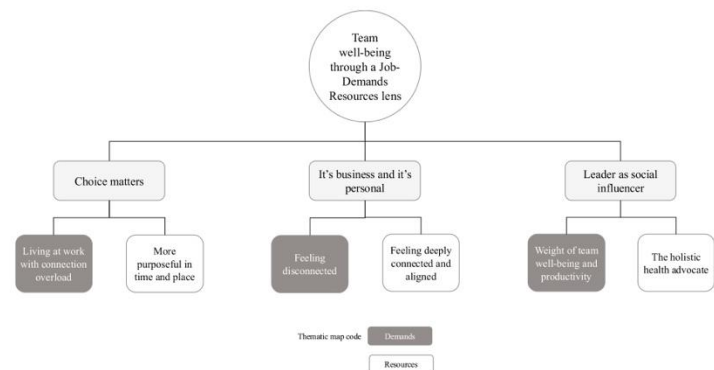


Figure 2. Thematic map of candidate and sub-themes.

The P.A.T.H.TM model: A Research-Based Framework for Thriving Hybrid Teams

Developed from peer-reviewed research - A 14-year systematic review, global interviews, and 6-month longitudinal study*

Pillar	Construct	Description
 P	Purposeful Choices	Autonomy and thoughtful work design
 A	Aligned Communication	Clear, creative and co-ordinated communication and knowledge- sharing
 T	Team Connection	Trust, psychological safety, and a sense of community
 H	Holistic Leadership	Empowering leadership with a focus on well-being

* Coulston et al., 2025

Pillar 1: Purposeful Choices

Autonomy and thoughtful work design

Core Insight



When teams have clarity and control over how work is structured, they experience less digital strain and greater engagement. Occurs only when autonomy is balanced with clear team boundaries and co-ordination

What the research shows



- Teams in our study thrived when they **co-designed their ways of working** – aligning flexibility and control with accountability and shared team rhythms (Coulston et al., 2025).
- **Technostress** significantly reduces productivity ($\beta = -0.41$, $p < .01$) and well-being (Tarafdar et al., 2019).
- Mis-aligned time zones, digital overload, and coordination complexity erodes performance and morale (Coulston et al., 2025).

Leadership Reflection



- *Are your team's work patterns intentionally designed or inherited?*
- *How do you balance flexibility with coordination and clarity?*

Pillar 2: Aligned Communication

Clear, creative, and coordinated team communication

Core Insight



Communication quality - not quantity - is what drives hybrid team performance. Teams thrive when they have clear expectations and communication rhythms. These reduce overload, lower stress, and build psychological trust in hybrid environments.

What the research shows



- In our study, teams with high communication clarity experienced **stronger cohesion, lower stress levels, and higher psychological safety** (Coulston et al., 2025).
- **Shared mental models** of digital tools improve team coordination and performance (Müller & Antoni, 2020).
- **Transparent hybrid conversations** – from days in the office to core hours and focus time (MIT Sloan Management Review, 2025).

Leadership Reflection



- *Do we have shared and intentional norms about when and how we communicate across the team - or are we defaulting to overload?*
- *Are we rewarding clarity and outcomes - or visibility and constant availability?*

Pillar 3: Team Connection

Trust, cohesion, and psychological safety are critical for engagement, resilience and high performance in hybrid teams

Core Insight



Team cohesion was the strongest predictor of thriving hybrid teams in our study. Teams that felt emotionally connected and aligned were correlated with higher performance, engagement, and learning. But connection isn't accidental - it must be intentionally designed.

What the research shows



- **Team cohesion** had the highest predictive value for team performance and well-being in our longitudinal study (Coulston et al., 2025).
- **Intra-team trust** is positively related to team performance ($p = .30$) (De Jong et al., 2016, meta-analysis).
- **Feeling disconnected** was associated with **higher stress** and lower engagement (Coulston et al., 2025).
- Hybrid environments require **deliberate rituals** to foster connection and counteract distance and fragmentation.

Leadership Reflection



- *Are you building true cohesion or just managing coordination?*
- *What regular rhythms help foster a sense of belonging and community in your team?*

Pillar 4: Holistic Leadership

Empowering, well-being-focused leadership essential to thriving hybrid teams

Core Insight



Teams thrived when leaders actively cared for well-being, modelled healthy work habits, and were an advocate for well-being. Crucially, teams performed best when leadership was also shared - with clarity, care, and culture co-owned across the team.

What the research shows



- **Holistic leadership** - that combines leader as well-being role modeller and advocate for wellbeing supports both well-being and sustainable results (Coulston et al., 2025).
- Leaders who **visibly prioritise well-being** foster **greater psychological safety and cohesion** (Coulston et al., 2025).
- **Empowering leadership** drives stronger team performance and engagement (Lee et al., 2018).
- **Shared leadership** is emerging as a key enabler of adaptability, learning, and innovation in virtual and hybrid teams (Castellano et al., 2021).

Leadership Reflection



- *Are you role-modelling the well-being culture you want your team to embrace?*
- *Where could leadership in your team be more shared - around communication, energy, or collaboration?*

Thriving teams need all 4 Pillars – By Design

Thriving hybrid teams intentionally activate all four.

Pillar		Construct	Description
	P	Purposeful Choices	Autonomy and thoughtful work design
	A	Aligned Communication	Clear, creative, and coordinated communication and knowledge- sharing
	T	Team Connection	Trust, psychological safety, and a sense of belonging
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Putting the PATH model into Practice

Quick Wins:

- Audit your team's current practices for each PATH pillar
- Identify one area to improve this month

Team Discussion Prompts:

- Which PATH pillar is our current strength?
- Where do we have the biggest opportunity for change?
- What's one action you'll take to boost well-being and performance in your team this month?



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