

**The Changing Nature of Leadership: An exploratory investigation into how the evolution of social media is changing what it means to be an effective leader.**

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UNICON Research Report

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### **UNICON Research Report:**

The Changing Nature of Leadership: An exploratory investigation into how the evolution of social media is changing what it means to be an effective leader.

UNICON sponsored this research initiative conducted by Hind P. & Holton V. Using an empirical, multi method approach, the research found that whilst the fundamental attributes of leadership seem to be relatively stable, subtle differences in the practice of leadership are emerging; the dimensions of; leadership reach, communication speed, locus of influence, and focus of communications appear to be markedly different in the digital world.

The implications for leadership development and future research are considered.

**The Changing Nature of Leadership: An exploratory investigation into how the evolution of social media is changing what it means to be an effective leader.**

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## Executive Summary

This report responds to the global trend that is social media which has significantly disrupted the nature of human interaction. The challenge for leadership is not simply a practical one of using social media but one of adapting to changing leader/follower relationships. This research, in partnership with UNICON, questioned whether the use of social media is changing our concept of leadership, how those relationships are managed and what may be the implications for leadership development.

### Purpose

In an age dominated by the use of social media, the potential for this communications and networking technology to improve leadership effectiveness in organizations, has, to date, been seen as simply an issue of technical competence and familiarity.

What is less well understood is whether the traditional view of effective leadership is now changing as social media use becomes ubiquitous in every aspect of our lives. This report is timely in that the nature of 21<sup>st</sup> century effective leadership merits scrutiny.

This report addresses two key questions of importance to the clients and providers of executive education.

- Are the key attributes of leadership being reshaped or redefined by social media?
- If the concept of effective leadership is being redefined – do we require different developmental approaches?

### Research Method

An initial literature search revealed that there is much advice in both the academic and practitioner literatures as to how leaders can better use technology. However, little research has been conducted directly examining the implications of social media for successful leadership strategies and leadership development pedagogy.

Primary data on social media use by a representative sample of leaders, future leaders, HR & L&D professionals, were gathered using a combination of face to face inquiries, and an electronic survey.

### Results and Conclusions

We explored what has changed and what has remained the same for effective leadership today. We found that beliefs about the essentials of leadership are relatively stable; people still say that leadership is about trust / communication / influence and good relationships. What has changed in the leadership mix is the nature and granularity of the relationship

between leaders and all those around them, in particular their direct followers. We identified several important aspects of this changing relationship:

- Breadth of reach – social media allows leaders to access many more stakeholders, both directly and indirectly, than has previously been the case.
- Speed of communication – using social media, leaders can communicate frequently and ‘instantly’ with their teams in a variety of sophisticated ways.
- Targeted messaging – whilst leaders have always been aware that their message (or vision) must address the ‘what’s in it for me’ factor for different audiences, this is now amplified.
- Balance of power and influence – social media allows for two-way dialogue between leaders and followers. Our evidence indicates that this may result in a shift in the power dynamics between these two groups.

Leadership is clearly not a static concept. Social media is disrupting leadership significantly through changing social trends and expectations. Leadership thinking is continuing to evolve and business schools must keep pace by addressing the need for enhancing self - awareness and strategic skills at all levels of leadership, supported by a sophisticated mastery of technology.



## Introduction

Imagine you are a successful leader, influential in your field and widely respected by your team. You have become used to shaping opinions and taking decisions that produce great business results. However, something is changing. You sense conversations are taking place across traditional boundaries both within the organisation and outside it. Others fill you in about new and fast-changing ideas. Others may be managing new technology more easily than you are. What's going on?

What's going on is social media. There's no doubt that what started as a personal networking tool for students – in other words Facebook – was quickly adopted in business as a way of delivering niche marketing and branding advantage. And there it remained for a little while, but in recent years, the growth of social media has been explosive. According to a 2018 global survey:<sup>1</sup>

- Internet users worldwide in 2018 numbered 4.021 billion, up 7 percent year-on-year
- Social media users worldwide in 2018 numbered 3.196 billion, up 13 percent year-on-year
- Mobile 'phone users in 2018 numbered 5.135 billion, up 4 percent year-on-year.

It is now estimated that there are 11 new social media users worldwide each second! It is inevitable that such global blanket usage will eventually permeate every part of the business world. As one leader commented in this research;

***“If the slowest mode of communication you have ever known is email then your expectations are different, and leaders must adapt to survive. People are used to being listened to and to having their voice heard through social media. They expect it at work too.”*** Executive Leader Interview

Why is this important for leaders and managers and for the HR professionals and business educators who guide their development? One of the key reasons is that social media changes the way relationships develop. For leaders, a key relationship is the one they have with those who follow them. It is clear that social media has repurposed what it means to be a follower. 'To follow' used to refer to behaviour which meant to go behind someone else and so a follower would tread in the footsteps of a leader. It now implies a choice made by

<sup>1</sup> <https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>

the follower regarding information or communications which may, or may not, affect behaviour. The work - place choices made by followers are now much more selective, voluntary, multi-channeled and arguably better informed.

Other changes have taken place that merit a closer look at the leader / follower relationships which are, after all, at the heart of effective leadership. The traditional organisational hierarchy between leaders and their followers has eroded over time, partly due to social movements and the growing empowerment of followers through their ability to access information more easily. Leaders are no longer the sole source of information about their companies or sectors. High profile incidents at companies such as Enron, BP, Lloyds, TSB and Exxon have led followers to question and potentially distrust top leaders.

Mergers and acquisitions continually disrupt the stability of leadership. Other factors such as new business models, the gig economy and the concept of 'slashies' – people who describe themselves as 'market analyst/app designer/yoga teacher/author', showing the breadth of their interests and skill, rather than identifying themselves as a 'programmer' or an 'administrative assistant' are all blurring the distinction between leaders and followers.

In addition, there is evidence that most people are more likely to trust a company whose leadership team engages with social media and that they would prefer to work for a company whose leadership is active on social media. When it comes to senior leaders, most people believe that use of social media improves CEO engagement with employees and that this is mission critical for a business.<sup>2</sup> When the 'talent' goes looking for an employer of choice, where do they turn first? To social media.

Over the last two years we have interviewed and surveyed a cross-section of consultants, leaders and HR professionals about the impact of social media on what it means for effective global business leadership. Through qualitative and quantitative analysis, we set out to examine whether the fundamental attributes of leadership are changing in our modern digital world.

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<sup>2</sup> As reported in BrandFog 2016 survey.



## Literature Review

There is broad acknowledgement that global trends, such as population growth, increased migration, prolonged life expectancies and political upheaval have produced significant changes for the world of work. Many of these changes are closely overlaid with technological advances resulting in rapidly evolving skill requirements, alongside economic uncertainty and changing business models. Accompanying shifts in work force expectations and preferences have made the creation of more responsive organisations necessary in order to create the employee engagement needed to sustain high performance. As well as challenging traditional notions of employment and of employer/employee relationships, the concept of leadership itself is also challenged. As employees expect to be included more in organisational decisions, processes and structure, so they expect to be led differently. If high performance organisations are ones where “the process challenges everyone to become a leader of the organisation ..... and leaders challenge followers to perform work at the highest levels possible (Northhouse, 2016), then a traditional notion of leadership is no longer fit for purpose. This research examines how one part of the digital revolution, our use of social media, may be changing the perceptions and practices of effective leadership.

The way we think about leadership has always been evolving. The idea of ‘The Great Man’ or ‘Leader as Hero’ (Carlyle, 1840, Galton & Eysenck, 1869) held sway for many years (see, Hoffman, Woehr, Maldagen-Youngjohn, & Lyons, 2011, for one review). This school of thought, the forerunner of Trait Theory (1910 – 1948) held that leaders were different, unique individuals with particular characteristics and traits that marked them out as fit to lead. Following Stodgills’ (1948) survey which concluded that ‘a person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits’ the focus shifted to specific ‘system management’ or external behaviours that are regarded as important predictors of leader effectiveness, which could be learned, such as providing direction, fostering trust, and delegating (for meta-analyses, see Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Core to this approach was the acknowledgement of the importance of context in leadership and the identification of two primary considerations, task oriented behaviours and relationship orientated behaviours (Stodgill & Coons 1957). Over time, the latter of these considerations has held sway, and leadership thinking has evolved to emphasise a ‘relational’ view focusing on the relationship between the leader and the follower (Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012).

Research into leadership has continued apace, with Contingency Theory (Fiedler, 1967) Charismatic Leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1998) Transformational Leadership theory (Burns, 1978) and Systems Leadership (Heifetz, Kania & Kramer, 2004). Many of these approaches have explicitly acknowledged the importance of characteristics of ‘the follower’ in the manifestation of effective leadership. However, followership itself is a term that has

been used interchangeably with other terms such as ‘subordinates’, ‘direct reports’, ‘team members’.

Several changes have taken place which merit a closer look at the concept of followership and its’ relationship to effective leadership. The traditional organisational hierarchy between leaders and their followers has eroded over time, partly due to social movements and the growing empowerment of followers through their ability to access information more easily (Cross & Parker, 2004), so leaders are no longer the sole source of information about their companies or sectors. High profile incidents at companies such as Enron, BP, Lloyds, TSB, and Exxon have led followers to question and potentially distrust top leaders, while mergers and acquisitions continually disrupt the stability of leadership. Other factors such as new business models, the gig economy and the concept of ‘slashies’ - people who describe themselves as ‘market analyst/app designer/author/yoga teacher’ showing the breadth of their interests and skill, rather than identifying themselves as a ‘programmer’ or a ‘administrative assistant’, are all blurring the distinction between leaders and followers.

The literature to date on followership has sought to examine follower motivations (Strebel 1996), follower values and trust, (Froggat, 2001) and the characteristics of effective and ineffective followers (Kelley, 1988). Kelley (1992) identified different types of followers (alienated, exemplary, passive, conformist, pragmatist) according to the dimensions of thinking and acting and sought to argue that followers have a dominant style of followership, as leaders may have a preferred or dominant style of leadership. Other writers (Manning & Robertson, 2016) emphasise that the development of effective followers underpins effective leadership, This view is crystallised in the ‘servant leadership’ concept outlined by Greenleaf (1977);

“A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the “top of the pyramid,” servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible”.

However, little research in either the leadership or the followership literature has specifically addressed how these two concepts may be fundamentally changing. Particularly in the light of the ‘Fourth Industrial Revolution’ where social media and other new technologies are blurring boundaries between the physical, digital, and biological worlds, In this area Avolio, Kahai, & Dodge coined the term ‘E Leadership’ as early as 2000 to refer to the interaction of social influence process and technical systems within organisations.

“What followers consider exemplary leadership will now need to take into consideration how leaders use technology to inform, monitor and make decisions’

This research considers one specific aspect of the relevant changes here and that is the phenomena that is social media. This has radically changed the nature of human interaction and impacted on the quantity and the nature of information exchanged, affecting both local and distant relationships (Joo & Teng, 2017). The impact is not simply a practical one of leaders using social media to spread their messages; the scale and the unexpectedness of, for example, the 2016 American election in which one candidate's Tweets arguably played a considerable role has been examined and Bulman (2016) suggests something deeper may be going on. Indeed, we can see the impact of social media on leadership and followership simply by considering its' language. 'To follow' used to refer to behaviour which meant to 'go behind' someone else, so a follower would tread in the footsteps of a leader. Social media has repurposed the term and now implies a choice made by the follower regarding information, or communications, which may or may not have any behavioural consequences. This choice is selective, voluntary and multi - channeled.

It seems likely that this significant change to the way we communicate, our social media experiences, may fundamentally change the concept of what we understand leadership and followership to be – particularly with regard to interpersonal dynamics. Power and Phillips-Wren (2011) suggest that social media can exert a powerful influence both on personal and managerial decision-making, sometimes overwhelming logical thought altogether. And, as Turner (2014) indicated, social media affects social power dynamics in profound ways – it allows low, or no, consequence choices of who to 'follow' and 'unfollow'; and when to comment or remain silent. It allows selective sharing and endorsement of opinions (e.g., Facebook comment and 'Likes'), with endorsements being relatively easily obtainable, and with those with large numbers of endorsements may increase perceptions of message credibility, "click-validity". Social media also allows for emotional investment to be declared and shared perceptions to be cultivated; it affects discourse; and, of course, it has vast, global reach, which may be particularly significant in times of worldwide uncertainty and unrest. It is appropriate, in the light of the current global challenges facing businesses everywhere, not just in the digital arena, that we re-evaluate what it means to lead effectively. This is particularly pertinent for those of us engaged in the business of developing future leaders.

Research is beginning to examine how the Internet affects cognitive, psychological, and language development (e.g. Johnson, 2008), suggesting that this can affect humanity at the most basic levels. Other research examines the dynamics of trust between customers and companies in online shopping contexts (e.g., Urban, Amyx, & Lorenzon, 2009), and between virtual and face-to-face teams developing relationships through computer mediated communication (Wilson, Straus, & McEvily, 2006).

With reference specifically to leadership communications, researchers have begun to study how leaders manage communication within their organizations—that is, how they handle

the flow of information to, from, and among their employees. (Groysberg & Slind (2012). Studies have also looked at social movements and, how social media affects followers' willingness to act on behalf of a cause, (Turner & Seidel, 2012). Other research has begun to explore ways in which specific groups of leaders may utilize social media. For example, Porter, Sweetser, Chung, and Kim (2007) found that public relations practitioners with blogs perceived themselves as having more prestige power and expertise power than those who did not blog. Luo, Jiang, and Kulemeka (2015) interviewed public relations professionals and found a number of central themes around how they used social media in leadership roles: exhibiting expert power, demonstrating tangible outcomes to gain decision power, displaying vision. Subsequent work by those same authors (Jiang, Luo, & Kulemeka, 2017) showed that communications professionals using Facebook and YouTube for strategic communication and environmental scanning were more likely to undertake leadership behaviours.

As yet there has been little research directly examining the implications of social media and computer mediated communication more generally for successful leadership strategies and leadership development pedagogy. We have, for some time, acknowledged that many leaders are leading people who are much more social media savvy than themselves and, that some business areas such as marketing and sales are further ahead in understanding social media's impact on strategy.

What are the implications for example, on our assumptions about the nature of the relationship between leader and followers? Or with regard to the key leadership attribute of creating trust or how to effectively motivate others? If our concepts of leadership are evolving, so too must our strategies for leading successfully, and our approach to developing leaders for the future. If we do not evolve to meet the realities of the modern environment, we risk irrelevance. However, before we can rethink our leadership development tactics, we must understand exactly if, and in what ways, the new leadership paradigms differ from the old.

## Research Methodology

### Method

We adopted an empirical multi method approach using four different methodologies:

1. We initially conducted a pilot study during the 2018 British Academy of Management Conference. This constituted a structured development inquiry session with 42 participants who were either senior academics or senior professionals in the L&D community.

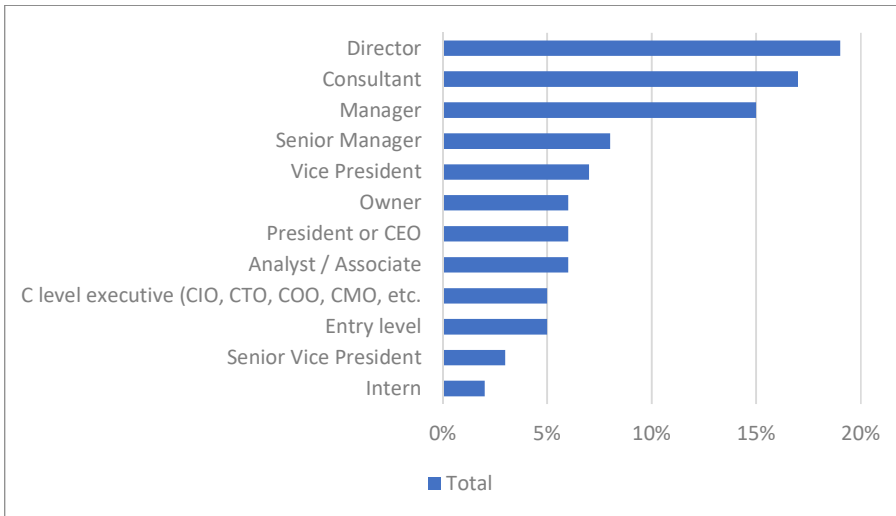
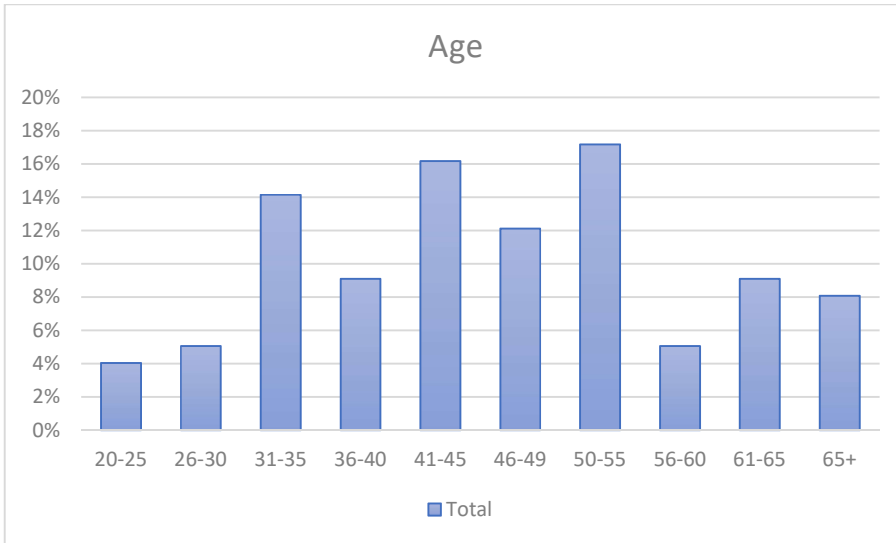
During this session we examined both individual experiences and opinions and created 'vignettes' or short case studies of 5 publicly recognised leaders who appeared to be fluent users of social media. (*One of these vignettes is included as Appendix 3*). This allowed an examination and analysis of exemplars of business leaders using social media effectively. This informed the design of the interview protocol and the on - line survey.

2. We facilitated focus group discussions with 18 executive MBA participants with leadership aspirations. Participants were asked to discuss whether they believed the key attributes of leadership were changing in the light of social media use. This was designed to:

- a. Articulate an emerging and adapted leadership model reflecting the next phase of leadership thinking
- b. Provide a forum for participants to discuss how leadership is evolving alongside the use of easily available social media platforms.
- c. Allow participants to explore the opportunities and challenges for the development of future business leaders.

3. We conducted an electronic survey. Following a pilot sample (n = 5) we invited leaders who were leading established teams to take part in the research. We considered a team to be composed of one team leader and a minimum of five team members who reported directly to the leader. We also included respondents who were either involved in leadership development as faculty members or consultants. The survey respondents included volunteers who responded to a call for participants whilst participating on an executive leadership course at a leading UK business school, or through their membership of a research based international organisation. Respondents were asked to complete a web - based survey and followed up with a reminder after three weeks.

The total number of completed responses was 86 from individuals operating at senior levels of organisations. There were 54 male respondents and 32 female. All participants were asked for their age range. The total participant group ranged from 20 to over 65.



Ethical clearance for the project was obtained, with consideration being given to the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents.

No significant differences were detected between the participants joining the web survey via the business school or the research - based organisation.

4. We interviewed ten senior managers, who participated in the survey and who had volunteered to take part in a subsequent interview. Interviews were semi structured and contemporaneous notes were subsequently content analysed.

### Measures

We used a leadership framework adapted from Yukl, Gordon & Taber (2002) to construct both the survey and the interview protocol. The framework considered three dimensions of leadership behaviours; task, relationship and change related behaviours and comprised six categories;

- Task behaviours; a) clarifying roles and responsibilities, b) target setting and performance management.
- Relationship behaviours; c) encouraging and recognising others, d) developing and inspiring others.
- Change behaviours; e) challenging the status quo, f) inspiring and communicating a vision.

Participants were asked to rate the importance of leadership attributes on a 7 - point Likert scale, using the anchors ranging from 'most important' to 'least important'.

This framework was adopted because it was comprehensive and developed following meta-analysis of earlier peer reviewed research.

## Results

Quantitative analysis was used to interrogate the survey results to look for differences between respondent groups, range and frequency of social media sites used and confidence in ability to use social media. We also checked the integrity of the model of leadership used.

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the inquiry session, the classroom discussion and the interview data to identify if any consistent themes were emerging concerning the relationship between leadership and social media use.

### Quantitative analysis

As the total number of respondents to the survey was relatively small ( $n = 86$ ), and participants had been categorized as falling into two main groups, 'leaders' and 'consultants', quantitative analysis was conducted to see if both groups were distinct, or could in fact be treated as one set of participants. As noted above, analysis was also conducted to check the integrity of the model used.

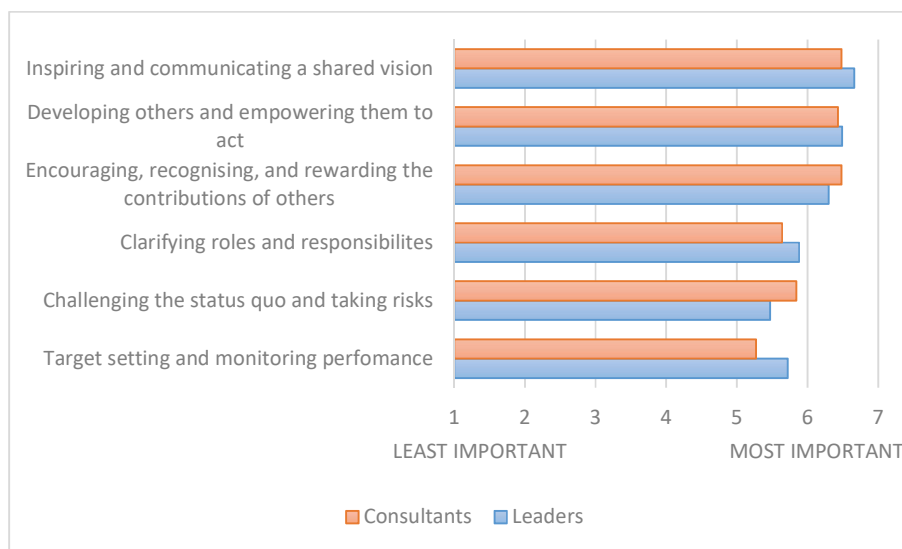
### Differences between participant groups.

Statistical analysis revealed that the first three survey questions revealed no significant differences between the consultants and the leader groups;

- On self-reported styles of leadership.
- On how they ranked change, relational, and task behaviours.
- On what they believed to be the most significant attributes of effective leadership
- On their own ability to use social media to utilize change, relational, and task behaviour.

Overall while there were no significant differences between the two groups, there were some interesting points to note. For example, the consultant sample seemed slightly more confident in their ability to use social media when compared to leaders across all leadership behaviours. Effect size was, however, small.

Additionally, when asked about effective leaders and how often leaders are using social media today, the leaders group indicated that they viewed leaders as using social media more for task behaviours than consultants did. This seemed to be about a medium effect size and possibly with a large sample-size, this finding could have been significant.



- **Leadership behaviours**

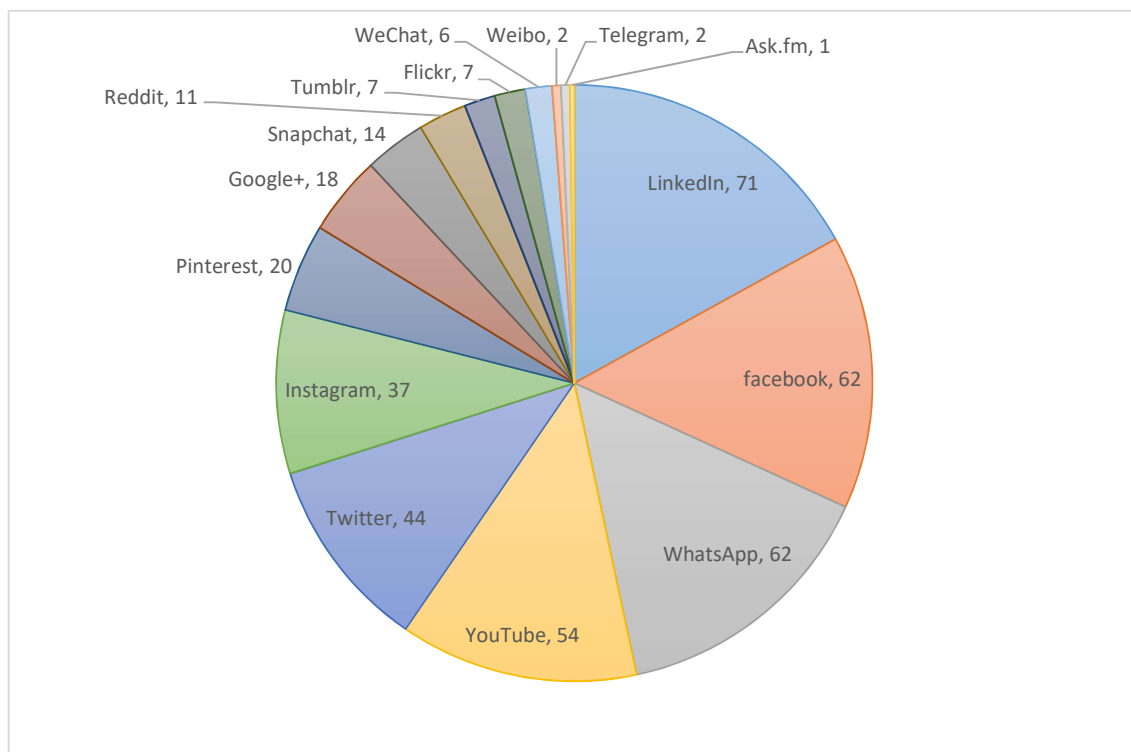
There were no significant correlations between the numbers of social media sites the participants reported using and the effective leadership questions or the role of social media in their working role. However, there was a significant correlation between number



of sites used and self - reported confidence in ability to use social media in change and relational leadership behaviours. The correlation with task behaviour was not significant but almost reached the threshold. While it seems that the more participants reported using social media the more confident they were in being able to use social media in their working role, this correlation was weak with all being below .25.

- **Platform usage**

LinkedIn was the most common most often used platform so we looked at those who listed LinkedIn as their most used vs those who listed anything else. For looking at change, relational, and task behaviours for effective leaders there were no significant differences or notable effect size.



There were no significant differences when asking how often leaders are using social media today but there was a trend where those who did not cite LinkedIn as their primary social media platform viewed all three of the taxonomies as being used more than the LinkedIn group. If using just a Cohen's D the effect sizes for those differences seems to be around .4 which is about medium. With a larger sample size this would possibly be significant. The

non-LinkedIn group also tended to report higher ability levels, but these were not significant but the difference between means relative to standard deviation is noticeable:

- **Leadership questions and age and gender.**

There were no significant correlation between age (category) and leadership questions. There were no significant gender differences on any questions.

- **Integrity of the scales**

Although we had used a recognised and validated model of leadership dimensions, we checked whether the questions factored out in our data. The taxonomy used three categories outlined above; Task Behaviours, Relations Behaviours, Change Behaviours;

It appears that the relations and change behaviours do factor together, with task behaviours being more independent. This may align with models such as transformative and transactional leadership styles where task behaviours would be more transactional and relations and change behaviours fit together under transformative.

The individual questions asked within each dimension correlated with each other as expected.

The two sets of social media questions correlated more with each other while most of the effective leadership questions (the relational and task questions) were not significantly correlated with the social media questions. This shows that the question sets (one asking about effective leadership, one asking about leaders' use of strategies with social media, and one's own confidence of social media use) seem to be distinct.

### **Qualitative findings**

Content analysis of the qualitative data explored three themes directly related to the research question. They were;

1. Social media usage
2. Leadership effectiveness
3. Changing attributes of leadership

#### **1. Social Media Usage**

We were interested to understand how leaders are actually using social media, the leaders interviewed reported variable levels of social media usage, from between 30 minutes a day to up to some 6 hours a week and most leaders reported using between 2 to 4 platforms with Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube being cited most frequently. (LinkedIn was the most likely platform among respondents to our survey.) They were then asked about

how much time this involved, how many platforms were used, etc. We asked participants to self – define their use of social media, from high to low and found that there were more variations than similarities across our sample about the key characteristics of what constitutes a high user of social media. Most participants pointed out that it is common to use social media differently in personal and professional lives. Our respondent group had a broad distribution between those who had only recently begun to use social media (in the past year) others who described themselves as early adopters and a range of experience in between the two.

Following the model which underpinned the research, social media usage was reported as follows;

## **2. Leadership Effectiveness**

- **Inspiring and communicating a vision.**

Many participants spoke of using social media for marketing and brand communications, for telling the organisational ‘story’ and sending powerful messages to both current and potential employees. Company visions can be reached by all employees, can be revised and kept in the public eye, creating brand identity. On a personal level, leaders use social media to develop their personal leadership brand, to expand their influence and share opinions on professional matters creating high visibility and a coherent message. A key factor is the increased ‘reach’ offered by social media, as it allows organisations and leaders to communicate directly and more quickly (if not instantly) with a much broader range of stakeholders. Social media both amplifies and accelerates organisational and individual messages, making effective connections the key to effective leadership.

- **Encouraging and recognising others**

This was the most often quoted usage of social media for many participants. They spoke of publicly congratulating team members, encouraging and rewarding their teams, acknowledging success and highlighting great performance. This use of social media as a motivational tool, included acknowledging what success looks like and encouraging aspirational performance from not only direct reports, but with a wider company reach than has previously been possible.

- **Developing and empowering others.**

This again was an important area for leaders. Participants talked of the wider scope for collaboration and empowerment through social media, and the opportunities for personalised and immediate coaching ‘in the moment’. It is particularly relevant for dispersed or virtual teams, minimising the disruptions of time and geographical differences.

*“For my direct team I use our internal media system; they have a 5 minute check-in each Friday night to look at last week – both the positives and negatives; have they used their*

*strengths? Priorities for next week and what do they need from me as their boss? I comment on each, then we catch up in a weekly real time meeting.”*

- **Challenging the Status Quo.**

Social media has been used to challenge the status quo, particularly in the field of customer relations. Social media can now publicise customer complaints instantly, and leaders acknowledge the need to respond equally publicly and equally instantly. We heard of bad customer experiences being immediately transformed into good PR through effective use of social media, or indeed into reputational damage through poor responding. We also heard one or two examples of leaders using social media to ‘check the pulse’ of their organisations and making changes in the light of the informal ‘noise’ that they detected. A key feature of social media that disrupts organisational functioning is the speed with which data can be collected and used, this often challenges existing process.

- **Clarifying roles and responsibilities**

Although this was a factor in our leadership model, no participants reported using Social Media for any aspect of this leadership task.

- **Target setting and performance monitoring.**

Participants often reported how they found social media useful in ‘getting things done’ through improved communications. It is used internally for performance monitoring and reporting, particularly through closed groups such as WhatsApp. Live Twitter feeds are also used for reporting aspects of delivery. Many teams report that using social media helps them to speed up what they do, thus achieving targets more quickly, and picking up early on problems that might hinder performance.

### **3. Attributes of leadership**

Participants reported all aspects of the leadership model offered to be of continuing importance. However, they also reported perceiving some developments in the practice of contemporary leadership that can be linked to the emergence of social media.

One trend is the emergence of the importance of ‘thought leadership’ for leaders today. To be seen as effective, leaders need to be seen as thought leaders who can build momentum and publicly call others to action. This visibility is a source of leadership power and is related to the wider communication network that characterise fluent social media users. To be influential, leaders must be seen to ‘own’ a narrative and to have the courage to share their opinions widely.

For this public presence to be influential, however, our participants reported that leaders needed to be able to command trust, through establishing authenticity. The way leaders do this successfully is to ‘have the courage to be vulnerable’. By this, our participants meant that leaders must allow others into their personal lives, and be prepared to share personal information.

Leaders who demonstrate thought leadership effectively have excellent ‘message management’ skills. As well as managing outbound communications, it is equally important that they have the ability to manage incoming communications. Social media can lead to information overload and effective leaders can filter the ‘noise’ and respond appropriately within moments, on different platforms and using different modes of communication.

*Table 1. Changing Dimensions of Leadership; Illustrative quotes.*

Leadership Dimensions	Illustrative quotes from qualitative data
Leadership reach; From local to distant	<p>“My main audience is getting broader – I used to be ‘followed’ by people of my generation – my LinkedIn contacts – but now the audience is much wider and multi-generational”</p> <p>“There is a broader reach, so wider spread of message, it can reach 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> level of receivers and also unintended audiences.”</p> <p>“Wider dissemination, easier to get the message ‘out there’.</p>
Speed of communications; From slower to faster	<p>“Communications are different, people now are used to instant communications and they want it at work too. It is important that leaders adapt to these changes in the environment and in technology. If the slowest mode of communication you have ever experienced is email, your expectations are different and leaders must adapt to survive.”</p> <p>“Younger generations want fast reactions from their leaders fast moving action – they expect quick responses.”</p> <p>“Can give instant, high volume feedback and so can be useful for canvassing opinions, is helpful in reaching people quickly.”</p>
Locus of Influence: From centralised to dispersed	<p>“More scope for collaboration and empowerment.”</p> <p>“Makes leaders more accountable.”</p> <p>“Greater collective = more action, greater reach for achievement (may have variable results).”</p>
Focus of communications; From generic to tailored	<p>“What followers need has changed substantially.”</p> <p>“Older people ..... feel there is a risk in exposing personal and social details, put a premium on privacy, but younger generations don’t see this distinction.”</p> <p>“Message can be delivered through multiple platforms so can ‘land’ with more people ..... can motivate and inspire different people.”</p>



## Discussion/Conclusion

### Discussion of findings

The lack of difference between the leader group and the consultant group in the quantitative analysis allowed us to collate the open question comments from both groups and treat them as one for qualitative content analysis.

There was no significant correlation between age (category) and leadership questions, which seems surprising as received wisdom holds that there are significant difference between 'digital natives' or younger groups, and more mature individuals. Our qualitative data did include a younger group, but again, no significant differences were apparent. This may be a technical matter, having age be an interval variable rather than category may be a better choice to pick up age trends.

The relations and change behaviours in our model appeared to be factoring together, with task behaviours being more independent. This may align the transformative and transactional (Judge & Piccolo 2004) leadership styles, where task behaviours would be more transactional and relations and change behaviours would work together under transformative category. However, in this set of findings was the observation that the respondents who reported LinkedIn being their preferred or most used platform actually reported that they thought social media was not used much for leadership. Those who did not cite LinkedIn as their preferred mode, seemed to feel social media actually made leadership more effective. The reasoning behind this is not clear but there may be a difference between people whose primary social media account is more work focused on LinkedIn than less work focused such as Facebook and Twitter. There may be a difference here related to the 'sophistication' or 'fluency' of social media use, but it is also possible that LinkedIn is traditionally seen as a professional networking tool, rather than a leadership one.

Our results suggest that leadership is becoming more focused on personal strengths and profiles. Many of our respondents talked of the need for leaders to 'humanise' themselves by sharing personal information and opinions through social media. This allows for intimacy and familiarity with the leader, which can create trust if effectively managed.

We may be witnessing an evolved model of leadership, which in some respects mirrors the 'great man' approach in that leadership is personal and resides in individuals. This is in line with Alvolio et al (2000) who talked of 'E – Leadership' as needing a 'sense of presence'. There is a paradox here however as the new perspective redistributes power rather than attributes it to an elite, and this redistribution is seen as a key feature of agile and high performing organisations

As well as being about direct and personal communications from leaders, leadership also must factor in this redistribution of power, where others often have access to almost as



much information as they do, and can share their views as easily. This seems to imply a need for greater receptivity and inclusivity, with leaders needing to, and being able, to acknowledge and include the views of others in their decision making. The apparent interactions of the relationship and change dimensions of leadership could suggest that in a period of constant and increasing change, leader/follower relations become critically important and the speed, intimacy and ultimately the inclusivity of those decisions may be the key to competitive advantage. In line with this thinking is the idea of shared leadership (Alvolio et al. 2009) which takes the concept of inclusivity further into strategic decision making. These findings support the ‘conversational’ model of leadership put forward by Groysberg & Slind (2012) who argue that the ‘new’ and ‘old’ communicative frameworks of leadership differ along four key dimensions, against background of five contextual changes.



Source: Groysberg & Slind (2012)

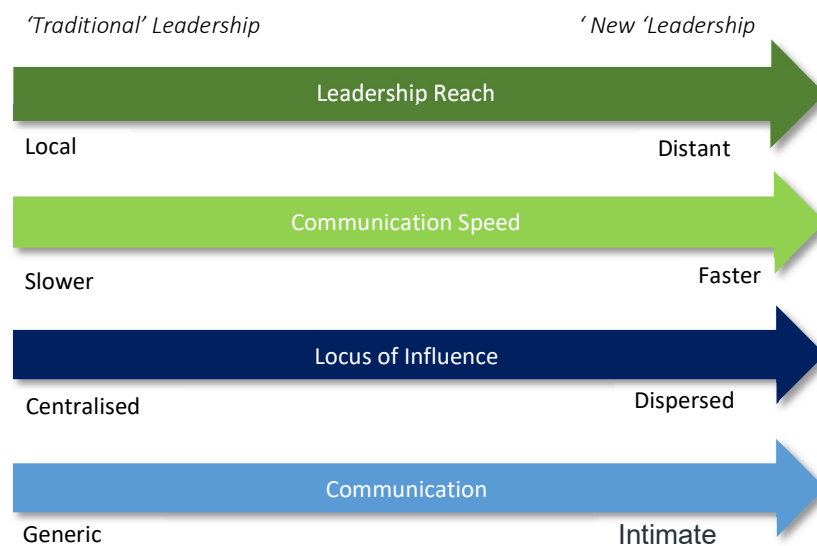
Leadership is clearly about the ability to influence others, (Haslam, Reicher & Platow 2010) and the key to this is emotional engagement, through conversation, which involves as much listening as ‘talking’. With redistributed power, ‘followers’ can choose who to listen to and who to ignore. This is an important change. The key to effective leadership is to have an authentic voice, which people want to hear – emotional engagement is at the heart of this. We cannot ignore the fact that followership is changing and therefore leadership must change. Digital natives have different expectations and expect to be led ‘up close, personal’ and fast.



While the distance between leaders and followers can now be much closer, allowing for more intimate, tailored communications, the breadth of reach of leadership communications is clearly vastly increased with the use of social media. Not only can leaders reach many more people, but their communication is much, much faster and a single message (good or bad) may be indelible once out there on the Internet. Followers can now be as powerful as leaders, as influence is distributed but although these changes all seem to create more risk for leaders these may well be superficial differences. Although leaders have always been judged by those around them and decisions made about whether or not they are effective and worth following, in this social media era, those decisions are clearer and the power of followers more evident to their leaders.

When examining what has changed and what has remained the same, we see that beliefs about the essential attributes of leadership have not changed. The dimensions we used in our survey were not challenged at all and respondents endorsed the model that was offered. What has changed is the nature and granularity of the relation between leaders and their stakeholder groups. This research summarised several aspects of this changing relationship; breadth of reach; speed of communication; redistribution of influence and individualization of messages. It is important to note that these dimensions can also provide new opportunities that some of our participants said are helping them manage their time more effectively, as well as to be more effective leaders. The importance of authenticity, managing relationships, the ability to influence others, being a great communicator, recognising the efforts of others and the ability to communicate a vision are still key elements of effective leaders, but they play out differently on the new social media stage.

### Changes from traditional leadership to 'new' leadership



It appears that there are certain leadership paradoxes, or tensions, that are amplified and accentuated by the use of social media. One example of this is the need for speed in responding on social media versus the importance of providing a lucid, appropriate and considered response. It can be hard to resolve this tension, with some suggesting that strategic thinking may be a casualty here. Another is that the 'big' personality and confidence which helps develop a social media persona must be balanced with personal communications that meets follower needs. Our study did find some polarised views, with some participants believing that social media is not a major tool for leadership and that leading is all about face to face relationships. However, although personal, individual relationships are important to effective leadership there seem to be many ways social media can help leaders with communication and engagement.

Social media does however have a down-side with significant risks at both a personal and corporate level and this leads to caution on the part of some leaders (and some organisations) about using it. In the main, it seems that the use of social media offers important opportunities for a leader to be 'in the moment' with those around them, up close and personal, to increase the levels of trust and authenticity, and create a stronger sense of belonging which is what many followers want from their leaders. Social media can also offer tangible benefits for those who are leading teams across different time-zones and sites, making communication easier and more personal.

Although not directly related to our research question, our respondents talked of two significant risks associated with the use of social media by leaders. Earlier work by Baccarella et.al (2018) talked of the 'dark side' of social media. This research identified cyberbullying, addictive use, trolling, fake news and privacy abuse as risks that all social media users need to be cognizant of. Our research offered support for several of these concerns. The first is the tension between the need to be personally open and transparent in order to invite trust, and the risk of becoming vulnerable through such exposure. The challenge is to protect privacy whilst welcoming intimacy. A lack of consistency between online and offline personas is seen to create mistrust and loss of influence, such inconsistency may be historic or indeed unintended. Although regulatory frameworks are currently being developed, there are still dangers associated with the indestructible nature of information posted on social media and with the lack of checks and balances. It is often impossible to control the development of a message, for example when it goes viral, or to correct malicious misinterpretation.

The way in which communications are managed also pose a risk. If social media is simply used as a megaphone, it loses power and credibility. However, if used to listen, understand, and respond appropriately, it affords leaders a significant competitive advantage. Some of our respondents felt that to manage this risk was extremely time consuming, whilst others disagreed, viewing it as an opportunity to be more effective leaders.

The second key risk identified by our respondents was another tension, that between the need for speedy and attention holding responses versus the leadership responsibility for thoughtful and considered views. It was felt that the pressure to respond quickly could lead to 'sound bite leadership' making strategy the casualty of short - term thinking. This can also oversimplify complex issues, ultimately affecting organisational success.

Our results pointed to the need for more understanding of the changing needs and expectations of followers. People are used to having their views heard and responded to on social media, and so expect their leaders to do the same. They want fast, personalised responses from their leaders. A new generation of followers, digital natives, are used to choosing the information and communications they receive, and leaders must ensure that they are 'chosen'. Social media has changed the way relationships are developed and maintained and leaders who do not address these changes were described by some participants as 'irrelevant'.

*"If the slowest mode of communication you have ever experienced is email, your expectations are different and leaders must adapt to survive."*

The issue of trust was raised by our participants in the sense that who and what to trust is now a conscious decision by followers. In the world of 'fake news' many followers do not expect to be able to trust all they see and hear. Again, leaders need to be 'chosen' to be influential, and there is no way of knowing whether being 'liked' is the same as being trusted.



Wilson, Straus, & McEvily, (2006) suggested that trust in digitally mediated relationships takes longer to develop than in situations where f2f interaction is possible. it would appear that the concept of trust is being recalibrated as we speak.

There has been a significant movement away from the command and control leadership of the early approaches, and even from the participative models of more recent years. The power distance is now much shorter between leaders and followers, and followers have the power to decide who is influential or not. This decision is sometimes seen to be clouded by the need to be entertained and the power of celebrity culture that pervades the media. Leaders need to be both interested and interesting in order to hold that space.

## Implications for Leadership Development

It is clearly true that today's world is different. The challenges and issues that leaders face are more fast-paced and turbulent than ever before. Our research indicates that it is also true that leadership skills have much in common with the past, but that there are important differences and developments in the leader/follower relationship associated with the use of social media by leaders.

- The importance of a leader's 'character' is heightened in what is now a digital world where leaders are frequently challenged, directly and immediately, on their integrity. Authenticity, trust, personal openness and transparency are qualities required for a leader to be granted a 'licence to operate' and to have influence. Therefore, a key development need for leaders in this context is for increased self – awareness and for an emphasis on values-based leadership. Values-based leadership refers to consistent and explicit alignment between leadership behaviours and stated, positive, values. With issues of corporate social responsibility and sustainability now firmly on the organisational agenda, these values need to relate to the economic and social performance of an organization as well as to financial returns. Many leadership development interventions do already include input around self-awareness, witness the ubiquitous use of instruments such as the MBTI (Myers–Briggs Type Indicator), but this becomes even more important in the social media context for two main reasons. First of all, the importance of the leader's 'brand' and the visibility of the individual forms the basis of follower choice and thus is the platform for leadership influence. Secondly, because of the risk of the inevitable and forensic scrutiny leaders are subject to through social media, they must be acutely aware of their values, their reasons for leading and their true leadership identity. It is important that not only are leaders aware of the values that drive their behaviour, but that those values are truly aligned to the behaviours that create and drive the culture of the organization. A number of the participants in this study emphasise the importance of authenticity for leaders to be seen as credible and inspiring to their followers.
- For this to happen, leadership development and executive education provision needs to go beyond short-term behaviour changing programmes. We need to explore in depth the assumptions that underpin leadership values, and spend time uncovering

real motivations and aspirations. This level of ‘immersion’ in personal development is often reserved only for the most senior leaders, or the crème de la crème of high potential talent. But, the advent of social media means anyone can be a leader, so organisations need to extend the luxury of meaningful self-awareness to those at all levels of the business – it must be available to those who are able to impact most at the operational level, to line managers who are the face of the organisational culture for most employees and to team leaders who are working alongside the younger millennial generation. Many will see this an investment too far, yet as early as 2003 George argued that:

“leaders who lead with purpose, values and integrity ... build enduring organizations, motivate their employees to provide superior customer service, and create long term value for shareholders.”

However, we believe more research is needed to establish methodologies to train and inspire leaders to be value based, to be ethical and moral if they lack these qualities naturally. No research has, as yet, demonstrated that this is definitely possible. However, it is easy to point out to leaders that lack of integrity, positive values or a moral framework may lead to misalignment between public and private personas. If values are not understood, owned and explicitly lived, contradictions and misalignment can occur which easily lead to a perceived loss of authenticity, an actual loss of influence and reputation which may be terminally damaging for a leader.

- An important aspect of values-based leadership is that it is not simply about the behaviour of individual leaders, but its impact on whole organizations. Again, alignment between what is believed, said and seen to be done is critical. This becomes a strategic issue for organizations. All leaders must understand the purpose of the organization, the values that underpin it and the behaviours required to achieve the strategy. Again, all too often we see strategic skills being developed only at senior leadership levels, yet all leaders need to have good strategic capability – to help them to keep the long-term organizational strategy firmly in the spotlight, in full focus, despite short termism that may be encouraged by social media. The principles of strategic decision making, rather than strategic implementation need to be a part of every management development programme, not just at executive level.
- This research demonstrated a clear need for leaders to develop enhanced competence in ‘filter management’. The sheer quantity of information available has risen exponentially, and it is imperative that leaders are able to deal with information overload, and to prioritise. This requires explicit development of decision-making skills as a core component of leadership and executive development

Leadership development must help individual leaders to understand sources of individual and group bias which may affect the information prioritised and therefore acted upon. We (those who provide executive education) need to teach techniques for reducing bias in decision making, and safeguards to prevent bad decisions. Understanding categories of risks and how to assess them in terms of severity and probability is also critical to decision-making, as is assessing the right balance of risk and reward.

- Finally, there is also a clear need for leaders to have the technical competence to use social media effectively. Skill levels and confidence vary widely, and lack of ability limits the leadership toolkit. This would be counter intuitive to the recent trends in leadership development which have focused on 'soft' skills, but it would seem that the inclusion of the 'hard' skills of technology mastery are necessary. Leaders of the future will have to be able to keep up with technical developments to leverage the potential they offer. Every business school should promote and offer modules which focus on developing competence and capacity in the key social media skills that every leader requires. These include;
  - developing and distributing media rich content that delivers a message and holds attention
  - receiving, sifting and filtering information to make sound decisions
  - blending social media with other forms of organisational communication
  - anticipating changes in the interest and focus of the leaders' audience to adapt and adjust the message.

Twenty first century leadership is often characterized by words such as communication, networks, flexibility and agility. Whilst many of these words have described leadership skill sets over past decades, what is required now is a new leadership mindset to apply those skills. Leadership no longer always depends on formal title and hierarchy, but can be conferred by evolving networks of followers, who can choose whose coat tails to hang on to and who to 'Like.'

For the future, leadership development must focus on helping leaders to 'earn' that support from their followers, to truly exert influence in a world which requires them to make a difference, to have a viewpoint and to deliver triple bottom line value. As leadership developers, business schools must do the same.

## Future Research

The statistical analysis generated several interesting results however, these were all with low power. In this instance the effect sizes are moderate, but it is still not significant. This

low power probably indicates that we did not have a large enough sample size. For instance, if the effect size was the same but the sample size was doubled it probably would have been significant. We still cannot be sure because with a smaller sample size the effect size is much more malleable, but we did not find a small effect size and non-significance. So when we see non-significance but a moderate effect size we still cannot claim significance but we would suggest that future research, with larger samples, should look more into those variables as the sample size we currently have might not have been big enough to indicate those effects.

The next phase of the research will examine the leader/follower relationship more closely, with a specific focus on the expectations and evaluations of followers as to what now constitutes effective leadership. It is expected that the methodology for this second study will be similar, but with a significantly increased sample size. We would also include in this future stage further investigations with regard to generational differences and the impact of gender with regard to leadership and social media.

### **Limitations**

The study has some limitations such as the small sample size of our survey indicated above and the fact that the study was largely UK centric though the leaders and academics who were interviewed and those who participated in the workshops did represent an international sample. Further limitations were that all the data was subjective, i.e. self – reported, in particular that participants self–defined their use of social media from high to low and we found that there was a broad scale of interpretation. Further, no objective or subjective measure of leadership effectiveness was included in the survey. Future research should address these issues.

The fact that the interviews (and leadership case study vignettes) focused on individual leaders may be another drawback. It would be interesting to conduct a similar project with a leadership group in a single organization, which would control for variables such as culture, support, gender and common practice which our study did not fully consider. It would also be useful to further contrast age and gender differences, leadership experience and function.

### **Concluding Comments**

This study explored an important area in the field of leadership research. Leadership thinking has continually evolved in response to social change, and we can track these changes through the agrarian, industrial, service and knowledge revolutions. We are now considering the concept of ‘high performance organizations’ which focus on achieving high employee ownership at every level of the business. In practice, every employee is encouraged to take an active leadership role to ensure sustainability and long-term success. Clearly this development requires us to continue to evolve our thinking about leadership.



It now appears that we are in a digital age, where connectivity, relationships and blurring boundaries hold sway. Social media plays a large part in this development and it is reasonable to assume this development will affect, is already affecting, leadership thinking in the way that previous evolutions have done.

Our research has provided a useful contribution to knowledge in this field by highlighting the subtle changes in leadership practice which are influenced by the social media phenomena. It is likely that these changes will afford a mixture of risks and benefits which leaders themselves and leadership development professionals must take account of. There is a dark side to social media which while at present this is perhaps more evident in the celebrity, political and public relations/media world, also represents a significant risk for these first generations of 'Instagram' and 'Twitter' CEOs and leaders. We encourage colleagues to undertake further research to clarify how best we can continue to develop and support effective leadership.



## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – The Electronic Survey

The two sample groups (Leaders and Consultants) were given the same survey to complete, with minor word changes for some questions. This appendix contains the generic survey and indicates where the wording varies;

(L) indicates the questions as addressed to the Leader group

(C) indicates the questions as addressed to the consultant group



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### Social Media and Leadership Survey

We know social media has radically changed the way we communicate and interact with each other. This has had a major impact on who we communicate with, and the quantity and the nature of information we exchange with them. The impact for leadership is not simply a practical one of using social media platforms to reach potential followers to share information. It may be that our social media experiences are fundamentally changing the concept of what we understand to be leadership - particularly through major changes to how relationships are managed.

This research aims to explore this important issue. Does the leadership practice of those familiar and competent with social media differ from those less comfortable with these means of communicating and influencing? If so, do we need to rethink leadership development? Your help with this project would be greatly appreciated.

Please be assured that neither you nor your responses will be identified in any outputs or reports. Participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the research and, where possible, to request to have your data destroyed or deleted at any time.

All information will be stored by Hult and will be treated confidentially. The data will be aggregated and anonymised and no individuals or their responses will be identified in any outputs.

**Disclaimer:** Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your data will be kept accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). All responses will be treated in strictest confidence and no individual will be identified.

Prof. Patricia Hind & Viki Holton, Ashridge Executive Education at Hult International Business School and R. Anthony Turner, Hult International Business School

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Which age group are you in?

- 20-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-49
- 50-55
- 56-60
- 61-65
- Over 65 years

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

Please indicate your ethnicity. *If you do not identify with any of the following please select 'other' and insert your ethnicity in the comment box.*

- White/Caucasian
- Latino/Hispanic
- Middle Eastern
- Black
- Caribbean
- South Asian
- East Asian
- Mixed
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

Which category best describes the kind of work your organisation does?

- Hospitality and catering
- Administrative and support service activities
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Construction
- Education
- Electricity, gas, oil, air conditioning
- Financial, insurance and professional services
- Government agency, public administration and defence
- Medicine and health related professions
- Information Technology (IT), communication, media, PR and marketing
- Mining and quarrying
- Manufacturing
- Professional, scientific and technical activities
- Real estate activities
- Third sector/charity
- Transport and storage
- Water supply, sewerage, waste management

Wholesale and retail trade

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Which of the following most closely matches your job title?

Intern

Entry level

Analyst / Associate

Manager

Senior Manager

Director

Vice President

Senior Vice President

C level executive (CIO, CTO, COO, CMO, etc.)

President or CEO

Owner

Consultant

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In which region is the majority of your work based?

- UK
- Rest of Europe (other than UK)
- Africa
- Eastern Asia (China, Hong Kong, Macao, Japan, Korea)
- Southern Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka)
- Rest of Asia
- Central & South America, Caribbean
- North America
- Australia, New Zealand and rest of Oceania
- Middle East

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- GCSEs or equivalent
- A-Levels or equivalent
- University undergraduate programme
- University post-graduate programme
- Doctoral degree

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**About Leadership styles and behaviours**

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1. (L)

We know that leadership is often a mixture of different styles. Please think about your own leadership style, please indicate on the following scale how each description best reflects your style, **where 1 is least like you and 7 is most like you.**

1.(C) We know that leadership is often a mixture of different styles. Please indicate on the following scale how each description best reflects effective leadership, **where 1 is least like an effective leader and 7 is most like an effective leader**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
You make decisions jointly with your team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You listen to the views of your team, but then make decisions yourself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You make the decisions for your team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

How important do you think the following attributes are for effective leadership?

	Not at all important 1	Low importance 2	Slightly important 3	Neutral 4	Moderately important 5	Very important 6	Extremely important 7
Inspiring and communicating a shared vision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraging, recognising, and rewarding the contributions of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing others and empowering them to act	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Challenging the status quo and taking risks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clarifying roles and responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Target setting and monitoring performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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## Impact of Social Media

(L) To what extent do you use social media for the following in your role as a leader?

(C) To what extent do you think leaders today are using social media in their leadership roles?

	Less than once a month	Once a month	2 to 3 times a month	Once a week	2 to 3 times per week	Daily
Inspiring and communicating a shared vision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraging, recognising and rewarding the contributions of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing others and empowering them to act	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Challenging the status quo, and taking risks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clarifying roles and responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Target setting and monitoring performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate how confident you feel TODAY in **your** ability to use social media successfully each of the leadership activities below

	Not at all confident	Not very confident	Somewhat lacking in confidence	Neither confident nor unconfident	Somewhat confident	Quite confident	Very confident
Inspiring and communicating a shared vision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraging, recognising and rewarding the contributions of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing other and empowering them to act	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Challenging the status quo and taking risks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clarifying roles and responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Target setting and monitoring performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

-----

Which social media platforms do you use? - Please mark all that apply.

- |                          |           |                          |               |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|---------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Facebook  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Odnoklassniki |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | YouTube   | <input type="checkbox"/> | QQ            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Instagram | <input type="checkbox"/> | YY            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Qzone     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Telegram      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Weibo     | <input type="checkbox"/> | WeChat        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | WhatsApp  | <input type="checkbox"/> | V Kontakte    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Twitter   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Baidu Tieba   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Reddit    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Snapchat      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pinterest | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Ask.fm    |                          |               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Tumblr    |                          |               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Flickr    |                          |               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Google+   |                          |               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | LinkedIn  |                          |               |

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Which of the above platforms do you use most often?

\_\_\_\_\_

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(L) Please describe an example of a time when social media was particularly useful to you as a leader, if you have had such an experience?

(C) Can you please describe an example of a time when social media was particularly useful, either to yourself in a leadership role, or to another leader?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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(L) Please describe any challenges you face in using social media in your role as leader.

(C) Please describe any challenges you believe face leaders in their use of social media

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(L) What impact do you think your use of social media has on your leadership effectiveness?

(C) What impact do you think use of social media has on leadership effectiveness?

Does not increase leadership effectiveness      Increases leadership effectiveness

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10



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(L) Regarding your last answer about whether social media makes you a more effective leader or not, please explain your response

(C) Regarding your last answer about whether the impact social media has on leadership effectiveness, please explain your responses

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Do you have any other insights or thoughts about the impact of social media on leadership that you would like to share with us?

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We would like to interview leaders to gain deeper understanding of the impact of social media on leadership practices and effectiveness. Would it be okay for us to contact you via email to set up a brief interview in which you will share your experiences and opinions on this important topic?

- Yes, Sure!
- No thanks!

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Please enter your email address in the box below or, if you prefer, leave the box blank and send an email to Viki Holton ([Viki.Holton@ashridge.hult.edu](mailto:Viki.Holton@ashridge.hult.edu)) to let us know you're interested in being interviewed!

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## Appendix 2

### Follow Up Interview Schedule

#### Social Media and Leadership Research Interview Schedule

**Research Outline:** The Changing Nature of Leadership: An exploratory investigation into how the evolution of social media is changing what it means to be an effective leader.

*The interview will use semi-structured questions and is likely to last 45-50 minutes. All information will be confidential. We would like to record the discussion (on Smartphone or Dictaphone) as this will help the research team to analyse the information collected. Ask for permission to do this.*

*Will also include an Ethics statement – can withdraw, etc.*

*Demographic data to include: age, management level and role, company size & sector*

#### Section 1; Thinking about your leadership;

1. Looking at the leadership and /or management roles you have held, what have you been most proud of?
2. What would you say are the most important things that leaders should do?

#### Section 2: Thinking about how you use social media

3. Do you use social media in your leadership role? **If no go to Q6**
4. Can you tell me about how you use social media, in your leadership role: **Open question**

E.g. When did you start using social media as a leader?  
Why did you start?

What do you use it for? **Megaphone or telephone? Mostly? When and why?**

Who is your main audience?

Do you use it to lead your team?

Has this changed since you began using social media and if so, how?



5. What sort of communications do you share on social media? **Tick all that apply**

- Personal information
- Marketing/brand communications
- Personal opinions on world events
- Your leadership opinions
- Crisis management

6. How would you describe your own use of social media? High, medium or low? **(3,2 or 1)**

**If low:** *would you like to increase how much you use social media as a leader & why or why not?*

*Why do you think that? Check what this means in terms of no. of platforms, how much activity? How often? (open question)*

7. What platforms do you use? Mostly?

8. In what ways can social media make a leader more effective? Less effective?

9. What are the implications of social media on how you as a leader for example, develop and maintain trust? Create engagement? Build relationships etc. **(open question)**

10. Do you think there are any pitfalls (or risks) in using social media as a leader? **(open question)**

### **Section 3: Thinking about leadership in the future**

11. Do you think we need to think differently about leadership in the new world of social media?

- What does this mean for how future leaders will emerge?

- What are the implications for the way we train and develop leaders?

12. **Section 4:**

In this interview, we've been trying to understand how social media affects how leaders can relate to others, what it means for leadership effectiveness, and how we might need to develop leaders differently in the future as a result of the social media revolution. Do you have any other thoughts or insights that might help us to understand these things better?

13. Who would you nominate as a leader who is successfully using social media... name & why?

Thank you for your time

## Appendix 3

### Leadership Vignette

I was on Facebook when in a leadership position, because my students were. They were talking about their Ashridge experience, so I joined up to listen in to them. I needed to know the issues that they were discussing outside of the classroom and often I would surprise them at the coffee machine the next day with a comment about a Facebook posting. They didn't expect me to do this!"

I use Facebook for personal opinions and LinkedIn for professional branding and opinion stuff.

I am discerning about what I put out there and am mindful of the legacy it leaves.

I always think about the BBC rule of 3 – inform, educate & entertain.

Social media can make a leader more effective by amplifying messages – simple messages can be targeted and accelerating them. It also makes the leaders themselves more visible so they can humanise themselves. I post about my interests and irritations. It shows an aspect that others may not be aware of

opens the door to different complexions of relationships, makes new contacts with others with shared interests etc."

"It can also help leaders to take the pulse of what's happening, can help to monitor moods etc. My advice to leaders is that you ignore social media at your peril."

"there's nowhere to hide, e.g. with customer complaints, but these can be turned into opportunities as easily as that can present challenges. My Domino Pizza 'where the hell'... but this comment was turned around with a quick reply SMS from someone; I was impressed.

The platforms themselves are neutral – it is how they are used that make them positive or negative."

## Appendix 4

### Author Biographies



Professor Patricia Hind is a Director of the Ashridge Centre for Research in Executive Development. She works with a range of clients, nationally and internationally from both the public and private sectors, specialising in leadership, organisational behaviour and change management. Her research interests include; ensuring the effectiveness of management education, the impact of social media on leadership and the role of responsible leadership in embedding sustainable businesses practices in organisations.

As an organisational behaviour specialist, Patricia has worked on many Ashridge customised programmes globally. In the Middle East she has worked with; the Sheik Mohammed Leadership foundation in Dubai, The Abud Dhabi Executive Council and EDEC amongst others. Elsewhere she has worked closely on the design and delivery of programmes for organisations such as Philips, BP, E.On, Barclays, Alcatel and Astra Zeneca. In the public sector she has worked with leaders at all levels in the Civil Service and the National Health Service

Patricia has been appointed a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Stellenbosch. Patricia has a degree in Psychology, an MSc in Organisational Psychology and a Doctorate in Managing without Authority. A Chartered Psychologist, she has been appointed an Associate Fellow of the BPS and is qualified to use a wide range of psychometric instruments.

*“We live in a world of diverse and complex organisations. For them to function well they must be managed effectively, efficiently and sustainably. For me, the task of helping individuals to manage and lead in ways that create sustainable social, economic and human value is an exciting and constantly evolving challenge. The world of work is going through a period of arguably unprecedented change and we need to reskill the workforces of today to stay agile, relevant and competitive.”*



Viki Holton is a Senior Research Fellow at Ashridge Executive Education, Hult International Business School. She was involved for a number of years with the Ashridge Centre for Business and Society where her interests included diversity and inclusion, HR and women's career development and leadership. Research topics include the impact of social media on leadership and team coaching and she has published and presented regularly at conferences including the European Association for Work & Organizational Psychology and the British Academy of Management. Other publications include a book, *How to Coach your Team*. An earlier book, *Women in Business: Navigating Career Success* was shortlisted for the CMI Book of the Year Award.

She co-authored *How to Thrive and Survive as a Working Woman: The Coach Yourself Toolkit* by Bloomsbury in 2016. Ashridge Executive Education has been the research partner with HR Magazine's Most Influential Awards and Viki leads that project and as a member of the judging panel. She also is a member of the editorial board for the journal Career Development International. She was involved with the European Women's Management Development Network (EWMD) as a member of the international board and the founder editor of the EWMD Newsletter.

Viki has been working recently on the challenges of careers, creating more agile solutions for individuals, leadership, as well as diversity in action. A forthcoming book on careers, co-authored with Fiona Dent and Patricia Hind, will be published in 2020.

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