

Culture Compass

2026

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Welcome to the Presentation!



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Goal of this Session



Share Insights

Show key findings from the Culture Compass 2026 study, covering 500+ respondents across 4 European countries.



Discuss the Paradox

Deep dive into the "Productivity Paradox": Why high employee engagement often coexists with slow decision-making.



Discuss Solutions

Identify actionable steps for business and education to bridge the gap between values and operations to drive future readiness.

Research Overview & Context

- This study investigates the link between organizational culture and productivity in Europe.
- The research was conducted between August and October 2025 and focused on values, skills, culture elements as well as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
- Data was collected from ca. 540 managers and employees across all sectors in Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Study Profile & Sample

Timeline

Aug - Oct 2025

Scope

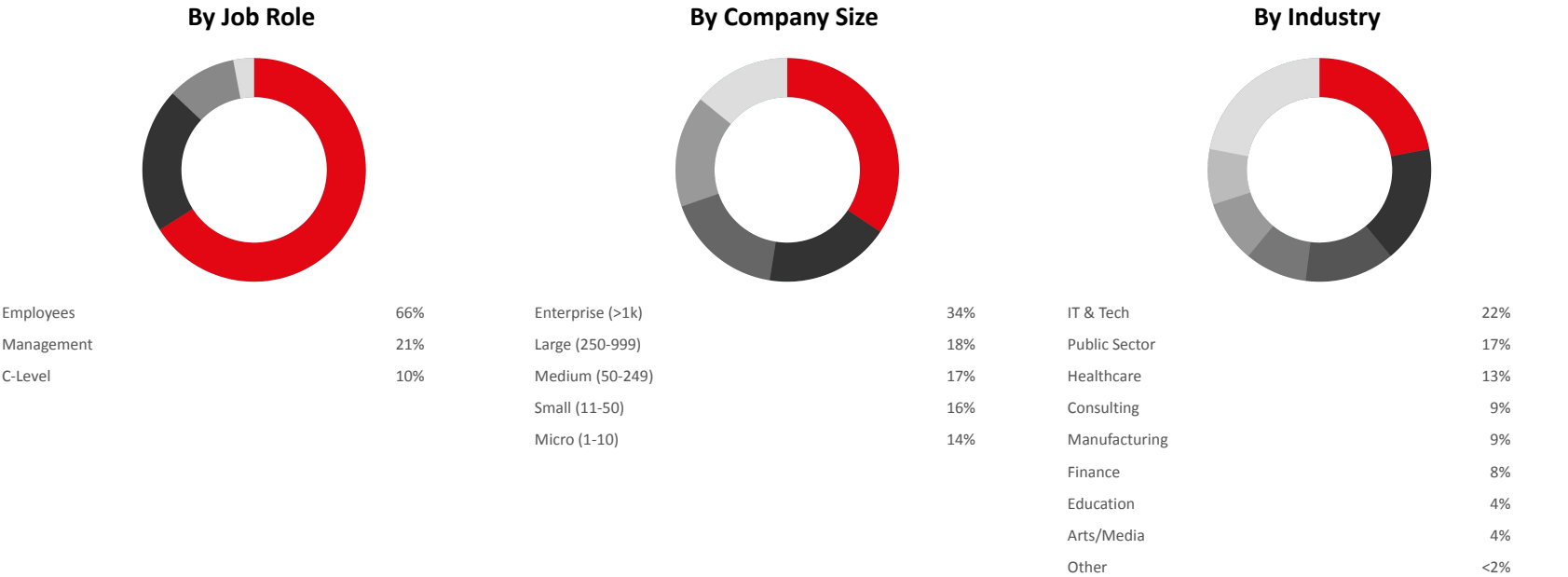
AT, CH, DE, NL

Sample Size

540+ Respondents

Method

Online Survey (SurveyMonkey)



Breaking the Productivity Paradox

A Live Exploration

01 **Culture & Values**
Presented by Joep Cornelissen

02 **Skills & How to Overcome the Gaps**
Presented by Hartmut Hübner

03 **Discussion & Q&A**
Join via LinkedIn Comments - moderated by Michael Reinhardt



Breaking the Productivity Paradox

Culture and
Values

The Productivity Paradox

42%

High Engagement

Top reported strength. Employees feel valued and connected.

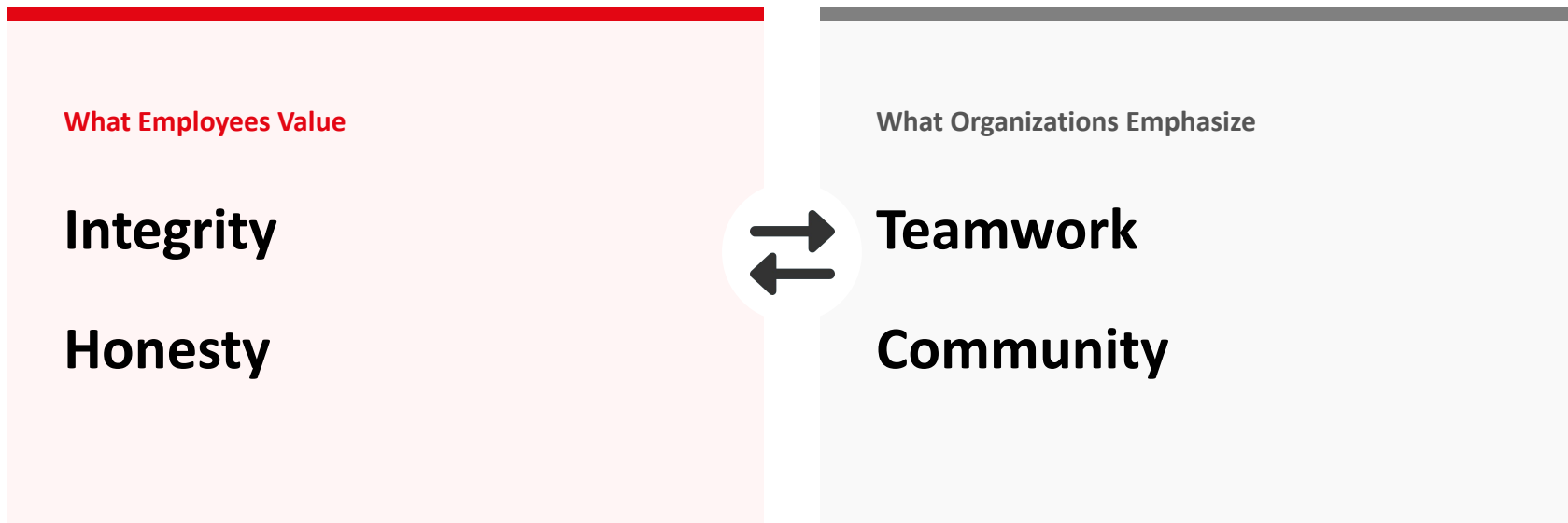
41%

Slow Decisions

Top reported weakness. Bureaucracy slows down execution.

"The tension between a people-first culture and the need for execution speed."

The Values Alignment Gap



"There is a significant gap between the ethical foundations employees seek personally and the collaborative behaviors organizations reward."

The Competing Values Framework

Flexibility & Discretion

CLAN

Collaborate

An extended family. Held together by loyalty and tradition.

Leader: Mentor, Facilitator

Value: Commitment, Communication

Theory: Human Development

ADHOCRACY

Create

Dynamic and entrepreneurial. People take risks.

Leader: Innovator, Visionary

Value: Innovation, Agility

Theory: Transformation

HIERARCHY

Control

Structured and formalized. Procedures govern what people do.

Leader: Coordinator, Monitor

Value: Efficiency, Timeliness

Theory: Control

MARKET

Compete

Results-oriented. The major concern is getting the job done.

Leader: Competitor, Producer

Value: Market Share, Goal Achievement

Theory: Competition

Stability & Control

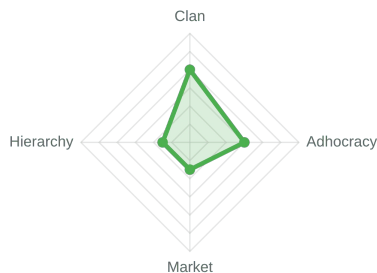
Internal Focus &
Integration

External Focus &
Differentiation

Industry Patterns

Sector-Specific Cultural Dynamics

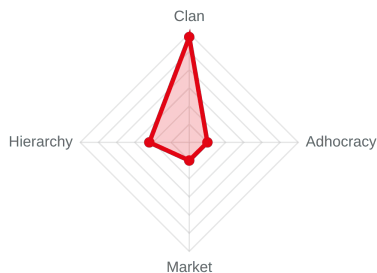
Technology



Highest Adhocracy (16%)

Uniquely positioned with a structural commitment to innovation, yet still battling the "scaling" challenge of maintaining agility while growing.

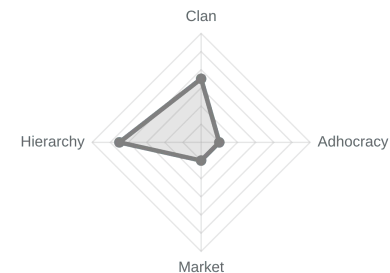
Healthcare



Extreme Clan (58%)

The "Family" archetype drives patient care but creates a blind spot for efficiency. The challenge is balancing empathy with operational speed.

Public Sector



High Hierarchy (31%)

Driven by stability and procedure. The "Stability Trap" makes agile transformation particularly difficult despite high engagement.

Cultural Distribution Across Sectors



The Constant

Clan Culture is dominant everywhere. Across all industries, the focus on internal cohesion and "family" dynamics is the primary cultural force.



The Variable

The **Secondary Driver** (Adhocracy vs. Hierarchy) dictates the specific strategic challenge for each sector.

The Clan Dominance

Understanding the prevalence of collaboration in European organizations



42%

of organizations exhibit a dominant Clan Culture

Archetype Definition

Characterized by an internal focus and flexibility. The organization acts like an extended family, held together by loyalty, tradition, and collaboration. Success is defined in terms of sensitivity to customers and concern for people.

The "People-First" Advantage

The dominance of Clan culture explains the survey's top reported strength: **High Employee Engagement (42%)**. European organizations have successfully created supportive environments where employees feel valued and heard.

The Hidden Cost: The Consensus Trap

While fostering trust, this heavy emphasis on consensus can inadvertently slow down execution. The "family" dynamic often avoids conflict, leading to the reported weakness of **Bureaucratic Decision-Making (41%)**.

The Adhocracy Opportunity

Innovation as a strategic asset in a changing environment



30%

of organizations exhibit a dominant Adhocracy Culture

Archetype Definition

Characterized by external focus and flexibility. A dynamic, entrepreneurial workplace. Leaders are innovators and risk-takers. The glue is commitment to experimentation.



The Competitive Advantage

With only 3 in 10 prioritizing this, Adhocracy is a differentiator. In an era of rapid change, adaptability is a primary driver of value.



Strategic Implication

Don't abandon collaborative roots, but inject "**Adhocracy pockets**"—agile teams or innovation labs—to counter the inertia of the dominant Clan culture.

Market Culture

Balancing results with resilience in a competitive landscape

11%

of organizations exhibit a
dominant Market Culture

Archetype Definition

Characterized by an **external focus and stability**. A results-oriented workplace where the goal is winning. Leaders are hard-drivers and competitors. The organization is held together by an emphasis on winning and reputation.

The Competitive Edge

Market culture is the primary driver of the "**Strong Customer Focus**" (37%) identified in the SWOT analysis. In an environment of "Increasing Competition" (Top Threat), these organizations are best positioned to capture market share through aggressive goal-setting.

The Sustainability Risk

The intense focus on external results can inadvertently erode internal cohesion. This culture type correlates with the reported weakness of "**Siloed Departments**" (28.5%), as teams may compete against each other rather than collaborating.

The Hierarchy Challenge

Control vs. Empowerment in a digital age

17%

of organizations exhibit a dominant Hierarchy Culture

Archetype Definition

Characterized by an **internal focus and stability**. A formalized and structured place to work. Procedures govern what people do. Leaders are efficient coordinators and organizers.



The Stability Trap

While Hierarchy provides essential structure, it acts as a "dampener" on innovation. Hierarchy cultures more frequently report **resistance to change (33%)**.



Strategic Implication

The challenge is not to eliminate structure, but to shift from "control-based" to "**enablement-based**" structure. Leaders must identify where rules protect value (compliance) versus where they destroy value (bureaucracy).

Values Alignment

Official Company Values vs. Daily Workplace Reality

64%

of respondents rate alignment between 61 and 90, indicating strong perceived consistency between official values and daily practice.

Perception depends on:

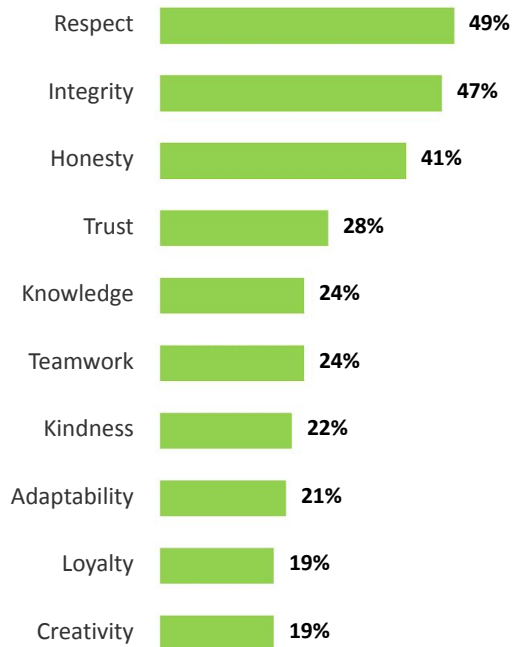
Ownership Structure

Company Size

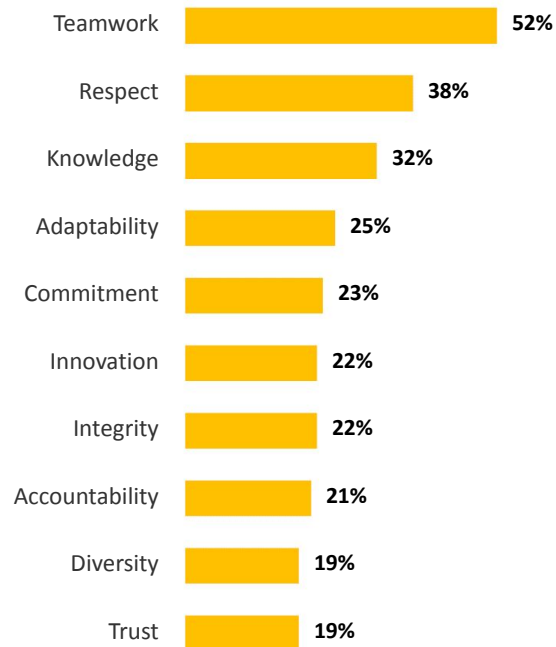
Job Role

The Values Gap (Top 10)

Core Personal Values



Values Employees See Daily



Values Mismatch Analysis

Underrepresented Ethical Values (Individual > Workplace)	
Integrity	+136
Honesty	+131
Kindness	+62
Respect	+61
Compassion	+35
Humility	+35

Ethical values are strongly felt by individuals yet weakly embedded in workplaces.

Underrepresented Well-being Values	
Happiness	+48
Passion	+26
Health	+22
Creativity	+19

Well-being is valued by individuals but structurally undervalued at work.

Overemphasized Workplace Values (Workplace > Individual)	
Teamwork	-151
Community	-64
Commitment	-61
Trust	-49
Knowledge	-43
Diversity	-35

Teamwork, Community and Commitment are heavily promoted institutionally but not equally internalized by individuals.

Ethical values must be operationalized, not merely declared.



From Insight to Action

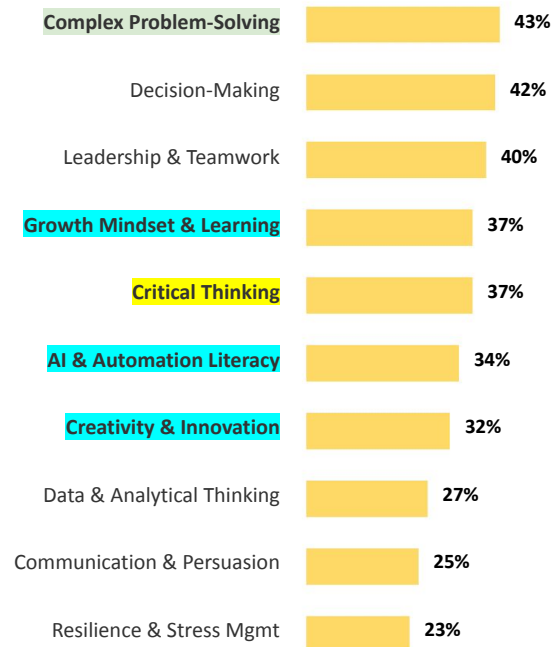
Skills & How to Overcome the Gaps

Skills Landscape: Essential vs. Future (Top 10)

Skills Individuals Consider Essential for Success

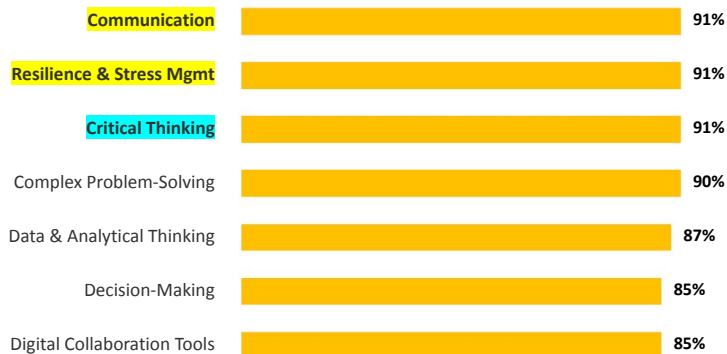


Top Skills Shaping the Future of Organizations



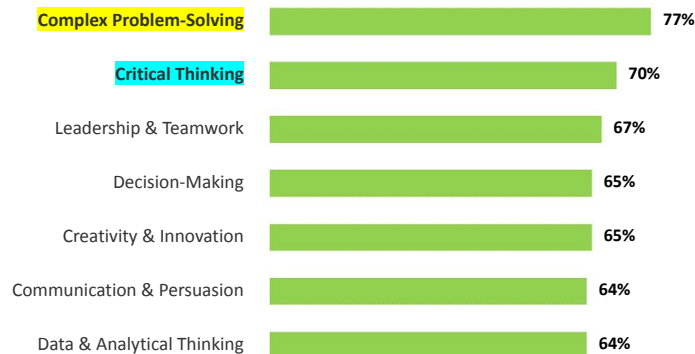
Skills Landscape: Priority vs. Presence

Skills Prioritized by the Workforce



Over 90 percent of respondents identify communication, resilience and critical thinking as important.

Perceived Presence in Organizations



Complex problem-solving stands out, with nearly 77 percent reporting strong presence. Critical thinking is the common denominator between skills prioritizes and perceived.

Digital Readiness: Gaps for AI, Data & Cybersecurity Skills

High strategic importance, uneven operational presence

Skill	Role Importance (mean /5)	Org Presence (mean /5)	Gap (Imp – Pres)	% “Not/Slightly present”
AI & Automation Literacy	3.93	3.23	+0.70	28.2%
Data Science & Visualization	4.32	3.59	+0.73	17.3%
Cybersecurity Awareness	4.28	3.57	+0.71	16.4%

Culture Compass survey (n=540). Item-level n varies (Importance n: AI=88, Data=65, Cyber=54; Presence n: AI=181, Data=81, Cyber=122). Likert 1–5 mapping (Importance: Not→Very; Presence: Not→Very).

✓ External validation

- Skills gaps are the primary barrier to business transformation (63% of employers).
- EU ICT hiring bottleneck: ~58% of EU enterprises recruiting ICT specialists report difficulties filling roles (2023).
- Cyber skills gap widened +8% since 2024; only 14% are confident in workforce cyber skills.

Sources:
World Economic Forum (2025)

Digital Readiness Bottlenecks: SMEs vs Large Organizations

Same outcome — different constraints → different interventions

Pressure to act is visible in both segments, but SMEs are constrained by capacity, while large organizations are constrained by speed.

SMEs (1–250 employees)

Top constraint

Lack of resources & investment 34.5%

Problem: Even when willingness exists, digital upskilling competes with time/budget and access to specialists.

What works (examples):

- **Role-based upskilling:** baseline AI/data/cyber literacy + a small set of deep specialists
- **“Fractional experts” / shared enablement** (pool scarce AI expertise/secure infrastructure)

Large/Enterprise (251+ employees)

Top constraint

Bureaucracy & slow decision-making 44.2%

Problem: Skills are often there, but scaling adoption stalls due to governance and decision latency.

What works (examples):

- **Clarify ownership** + reduce gates for digital/AI initiatives
- Standard playbooks and **reusable patterns** to scale adoption

Sources:

McKinsey Global Institute (2024)

European Parliamentary Research Service (2025)

World Economic Forum (2025)

Different bottlenecks, same risk: without increased priority, skills gaps remain the limiting factor for digital transformation.

SWOT Analysis

Strategic Landscape: Internal Reality vs. External Forces

Strengths	Internal (Assets)
High Employee Engagement	42%
Culture & Teamwork	41%
Strong Customer Focus	37%
Quality of Products/Services	35%

Opportunities	External (Growth)
Technological Advancement	52%
New Market Expansion	38%
Digital Transformation	33%
Talent Acquisition	28%

Weaknesses	Internal (Liabilities)
Bureaucratic Decision Making	41%
Resistance to Change	33%
Talent Retention	28%
Slow Innovation Cycles	26%

Threats	External (Risks)
Economic Uncertainty	56%
Talent Shortage	44%
Increasing Competition	41%
Regulatory Changes	34%

Country Profiles

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Germany	Netherlands	Switzerland	Austria
+ Strength High employee engagement (SMEs) (51.4%) - Weakness Bureaucratic and slow decision-making processes (44.3%) ↑ Opportunity Technological advancements (57.3%) ⚠ Threat Economic uncertainty (50.8%)	+ Strength Collaborative inclusive culture (41%) - Weakness Talent retention issues (36.8%) ↑ Opportunity Technological advancements (55.6%) ⚠ Threat Economic uncertainty (52.1%)	+ Strength Customer focus (41.0%) - Weakness Bureaucratic & slow decision-making processes (large enterprises) (41%) ↑ Opportunity Technological advancements (46%) ⚠ Threat Economic uncertainty (65%)	+ Strength Employee autonomy (large enterprises) (44.4%) - Weakness Bureaucratic and slow decision-making processes (42.2%) ↑ Opportunity Supportive government policy (large enterprises) (42.2%) ⚠ Threat Economic uncertainty (57.8%)

Strategic Recommendations

Operationalizing culture for competitive advantage



Process Optimization

Decouple Consensus from Decision Making

- Keep psychological safety; clarify decision rights
- Use “disagree & commit” to avoid consensus paralysis
- Apply the same model to digital/AI: clear owner, fast approval, fewer handovers



Innovation Engine

Institutionalize Experimentation

- Run AI/automation sandboxes
- Add lightweight cyber + compliance guardrails
- Scale what works with playbooks



Talent Strategy

Turn culture into a capability

- Market engagement as a recruiting advantage
- Build a Digital Readiness Academy (role-based)
- Baseline AI/data/cyber for all; deep tracks for champions



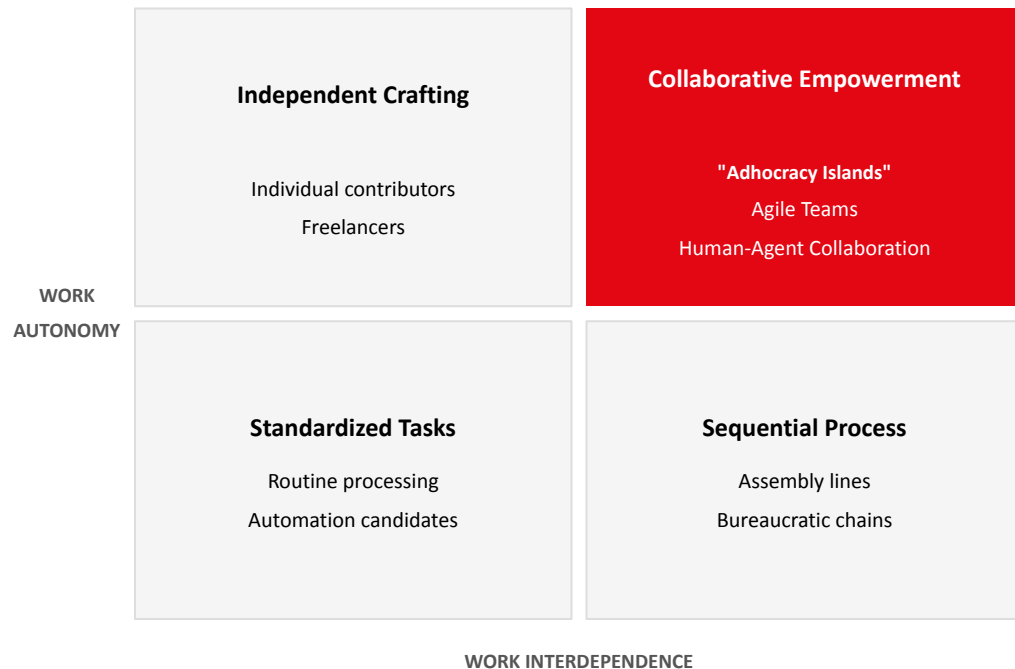
Leadership Focus

Shift from "Manager" to "Enabler"

- Reduce friction; increase empowerment
- Leaders build AI literacy for better decisions
- Role-model learning and safe experimentation

Outlook: Work Design Typology

(Reiche, 2023)



"Organizations must empower members to design work themselves... replacing hierarchical structures with network structures."

Reiche, B.S. (2023). Human Resource Management Journal

The Theoretical Shift

Modern work design moves from manager-defined roles to worker-defined crafting, essential for integrating AI agents.

Strategic Fit

Our recommendation for "Adhocracy Islands" aligns with the **Collaborative Empowerment** quadrant: High Autonomy + High Interdependence.

Open Discussion

Questions and answers.



Professor Joep Cornelissen



Hartmut Hübner

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Continue the Conversation

Turn insights into impact for your organization

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