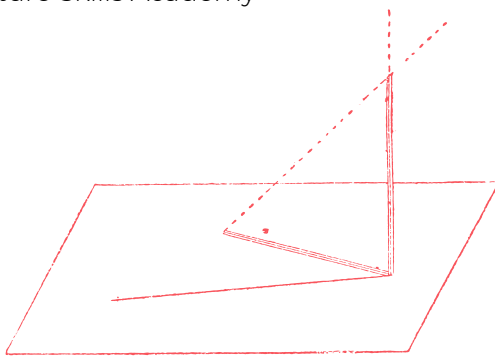


# Becoming A New World People Leader

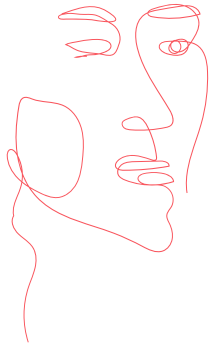


## Rajan Kalia

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# Becoming A New World People Leader

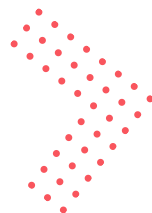
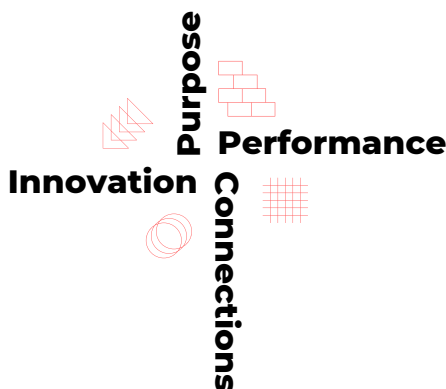


Organizations and individuals were at a pivotal juncture, both striving for similar objectives – organizations aiming for profits and individuals pursuing earnings. While profits and earnings represent two facets of the same coin, both parties approach them distinctly



Two years ago, when I first embarked on my research into leadership skills in the post-COVID world, I possessed an intuitive understanding of what was likely to transpire and what was missing. I delved into numerous literature articles, meticulously combed through magazines and journals to gain insights into the ongoing developments and what lay ahead. This comprehensive secondary research, coupled with discussions among six senior partners, CEOs, CHROs, CLOs from various corporations, led us to the firm belief that a profound shift in leadership practices would occur before and after COVID.

In February 2022, we coined our leadership model as the 'New World People Leader' (NWPL) (refer to Figure 1). Throughout the year, we diligently worked to refine and build upon this model. As we approached year's end, The Economist declared 'hybrid work' as the 'Word of the Year' for December 2022. This declaration forecasted that the world would never revert to the bygone era of manufacturing-like work ethics, rigid work timings, and conventional work relationships. I wholeheartedly concurred. In our model, which took shape in early 2022, I prophesied that organizations and individuals were at a pivotal juncture, both striving for similar objectives – organizations aiming for profits and individuals pursuing earnings. While profits and earnings represent two facets of the same coin, both parties approach them distinctly.



The NWPL model delineated the means through which organizations could achieve profits on the X-axis (Innovation and Performance) and what individuals need from organizations to give their best on the Y-axis (Purpose and Connections). This framework gave birth to four intersecting quadrants, each fostering the development of skills essential for the new world people leader.

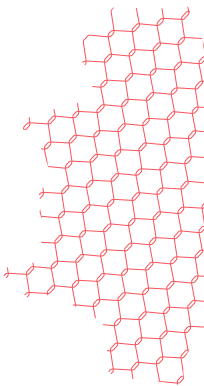


The advent of hybrid work necessitates leaders in their 40s and 50s to adapt their working styles. Leaders in these age brackets are less accustomed to change and tend to resist it instinctively. Change is often daunting and challenging, and many prefer their teams to return to the traditional office setup. However, most offices and workplaces have now transitioned to a hybrid model, requiring leaders to acquire new skills for effectively managing employees in this setting. Those who assume that hybrid work is a passing trend are gravely mistaken and will soon face the consequences.

Leaders who cling to the mindsets and skills of the 1990s must undergo a transformation in their vocabulary and their approach to managing a multigenerational workforce. The four quadrants necessitate that leaders acquire new skills and rekindle dormant ones. Skills required for effectively leading a multigenerational workforce, which may have been disregarded as 'soft skills' in the past, have now become indispensable 'hard skills.' These skills can be challenging to master, as they often challenge our fundamental beliefs about how organizations should operate. Becoming proficient in these skills may take leaders several months, and sometimes even a few years of practice. However, I firmly believe that, before leaders can fully grasp these new skills, organizations must fundamentally reassess their prevailing mindsets.

## The Three Mindset Shifts

We identified three mindset shifts in management and leadership thinking that are happening consciously or subconsciously in management and leadership thinking.



### Pre-2020 Thinking

People Are Resources

Workplaces Need Supervisors

Productivity & Efficiency



### Post 2021 Thinking

People Are People

Workplaces Need Coaches

Outcomes & Innovation



Productivity and Efficiencies are internal measures, always looking inwards. Outcomes and Innovation makes sure that customer needs are met and are delivered to.



**The first mindset shift is the recognition that human beings should not be treated or referred to as mere resources.** The current term 'human resources' in the corporate world urgently requires revision. Alternative terms like human capital, people operations, people excellence, or any other more human-centric phrase should be adopted. We can no longer afford to label human beings as mere resources.

The pandemic underscored the fundamental truth that, when screens are flat and the windows on our Zoom calls are of uniform size, we are first and foremost human. Humans possess needs, emotions, feelings, and a profound desire to connect with one another. The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped the corporate world as never before. During this period, we all craved a space to express our individuality, to feel connected, and to remain relevant. Many of us hesitated to appear on Zoom calls because we lacked a separate space, or our backgrounds weren't picture-perfect, or we had other household members present – be they people, pets, or partners.

The experience taught us that people can work effectively from anywhere, provided they feel a genuine connection with their managers, leaders, and organization, in addition to their peers. Our innate need for connection remains strong, and it will always be an essential part of our lives. Post-COVID, we have rediscovered the importance of individual expression and the desire to be recognized as equal human beings. We all aspire to contribute meaningfully and to be part of something greater. None of us wants to feel like just another cog in the wheel.

**The second mindset shift required for success in today's corporate world involves transitioning from a supervisory role to embracing a coaching approach.** The younger generations, Gen Z and millennials, have been raised with a light touch parenting style that emphasizes dialogue and coaching. When they encounter supervisory behaviors and micromanagement in the workplace, they tend to disengage rapidly. This trend has contributed to early attrition and, ultimately, the phenomenon known as the 'great resignation.' Employees now not only seek coaching in the workplace but are also quick to leave companies and leaders who exhibit a supervisory rather than coaching style.



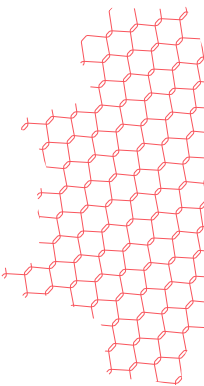
In the contemporary workplace, coaching has become an indispensable skill for effectively engaging with one's team. This entails deep listening, providing room for experimentation, offering frequent recognition, and mastering the art of feedforward.



**The third mindset shift is centered on agility. Leaders and organizations must adapt to the BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Non-Linear, and Incomprehensible) nature of the modern world.** A leader must consistently innovate to deliver results, regardless of the prevailing circumstances. Organizations must steadfastly uphold the promises made to their customers.

In today's corporate landscape, productivity and efficiency are fundamental prerequisites for success. Looking ahead, productivity and efficiency will predominantly rely on technologies such as AI, IoT, and robotics within organizations. While productivity and efficiency typically focus on internal measures, organizations that prioritize outcomes and innovation ensure that customer needs are not only met but also consistently delivered.

The mindset shift comes before any actionable change in leadership. The New World People Leadership begins with a deep appreciation of these three shifts leading to being self-aware, empathetic, vulnerable, connected and trustworthy.





## Purpose & Performance

New World People Leader™

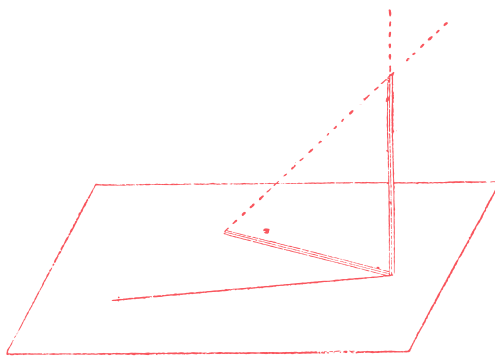


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The first mindset, 'People are People,' also aligns with the first quadrant of the NWPL model, where Purpose and Performance converge. Key skills required in this quadrant encompass the ability to connect the organization's purpose with the purpose of specific functions and, ultimately, the purpose of each individual. Leaders must reimagine the way work is organized to be carried out not only by humans but also by machines (computers and robots), members of their teams, and even outsourced gig workers. A compelling purpose motivates employees, inspiring them to perform at their best even on challenging days.

Organizations with a strong sense of purpose experience higher levels of engagement. Leaders who establish meaningful connections between their employees' work and the organization's purpose tend to retain their teams for more extended periods. A purpose as profound as 'Putting a man on the moon before the decade is out,' as exemplified by President Kennedy's speech to Congress, can unite a nation and imbue every job with significance.

Employees who derive meaning from their work report higher job satisfaction, a stronger sense of connection, and longer tenures. In today's corporate landscape, a leader's role includes aligning their team's work with the organization's purpose, particularly when facing disenchantment, siloed working, and disengagement. Leaders who take proactive steps in this regard are more likely to achieve superior outcomes.





## Performance & Connections

New World People Leader™



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The second quadrant of the model pertains to the skills required for achieving optimal team performance through the establishment of deep connections between leaders and their teams. These connections should also extend to interactions between team members and cross-functional teams. This quadrant aligns with the second mindset of coaching, emphasizing the need for supervisors to transition into the role of a coach. The role of a coach is to simplify team tasks, reduce complexity, and make work both straightforward and meaningful.

Leaders can draw inspiration from the world of sports, which serves as a prime arena for human achievement. In sports, winning a match or tournament today does not guarantee success the next month or in the following quarter. The constant introduction of new players, techniques, and equipment presents an ongoing challenge that keeps athletes on their toes. In much the same way, coaching imparts skills such as emotional intelligence, effective listening, guidance, and the ability to capitalize on team strengths while addressing weaknesses. Coaches maintain unwavering commitment to the team's success.

Caring for the team's well-being and simplifying complex tasks are essential aspects of coaching that result in consistent performance. A coach's role includes tending to the team's overall welfare, aligning their purpose with that of the organization, and consistently driving peak performance year after year.





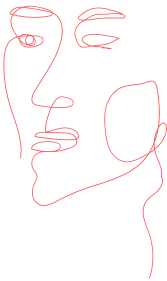
## Innovation & Connections

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The third quadrant of the model stands out as particularly intriguing. It places a dual focus on both internal and external aspects of the organization. This quadrant encourages leaders to cultivate collaboration skills within their teams, across different functions, and beyond the organization's borders. Tomorrow's leaders must shift their mindset to one of humility, acknowledging that they don't know everything. To stay at the top of their game, they must continually forge connections in all directions.



Leaders must acquire the skills of deep listening and draw upon the well of empathy cultivated in the second quadrant to foster collaboration. At the heart of successful collaboration lie elements like deep listening, empathy, a win-win mindset, the establishment of trust, clear guidelines, and shared expectations with all stakeholders. This process can be time-consuming, and many leaders tend to either defer it until the last minute or delegate it to their teams. Some may lack the necessary skills, while others may consider it beneath their status. However, failing to address these issues can result in resentment, strained relationships, ruined projects, and a trail of unsuccessful endeavors.

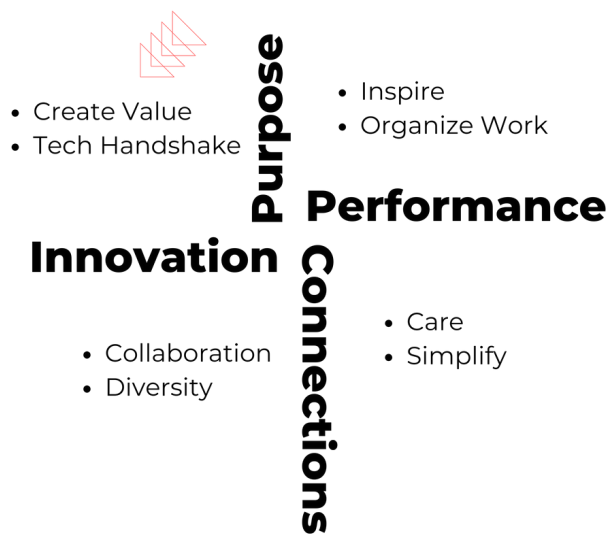
Leaders who value diversity tend to achieve greater success than those who stick to a narrow path. In the 2020s and 2030s, organizations will only thrive with diverse talent, encompassing various geographies, races, identities, genders, specialties, and other dimensions. Diverse perspectives breed innovation, uplifting both the organization and the world. Leaders often accumulate biases over the years that have contributed to their success, making it challenging to let go of what has worked for them. Embracing diversity and collaboration compels us to reevaluate our biases and remain open to innovation.





## Innovation & Purpose

### New World People Leader™



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The fourth quadrant focuses on the future and the consistent addition of value to your team during every interaction. Your team looks to you for investment in their careers and success. In the new world, leaders can no longer rely on a command-and-control approach. They must continuously contribute fresh value to their teams to meet the ever-rising standards of the organization, customers, and demanding teams.

One effective method for adding value to teams is through the use of career maps. Leaders are expected to learn how to create these maps. Career maps differ from traditional career ladders as they encompass a combination of in-depth, broad, and diverse management cycle experiences. These maps enable leaders to add value directly and indirectly by allowing team members to explore other projects and gain experience in different domains and functions while maintaining a loose connection to their current roles. Career maps are essentially the art of letting go while staying engaged with your team.

In this quadrant, there's the aspect of the 'technology handshake.' Leaders need to embrace new technology and envision its use for their team's success. Technology can often trigger various fears - such as ineptness, a lack of understanding, lack of comprehension, or a knowledge gap, leading to feelings of shame and defense mechanisms. Self-aware leaders begin with the acknowledgment of 'I don't know' and work towards understanding, adopting, and ultimately mastering technology as a tool for both their own and their team's best work. By taking charge and ensuring they understand, adopt, and master technology, leaders help simplify their team's work and guide them away from fear and resistance.



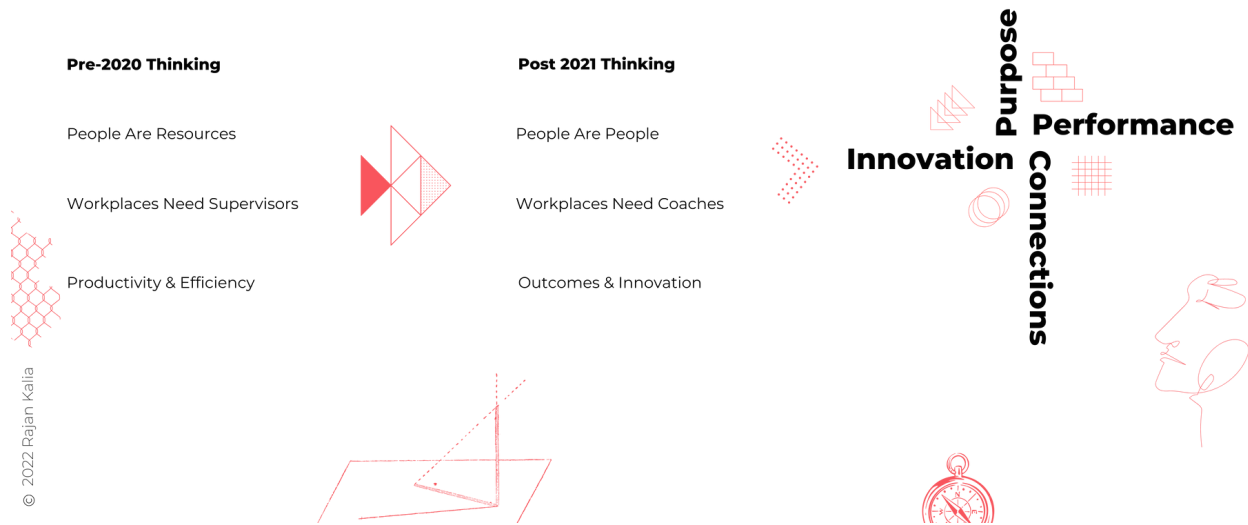
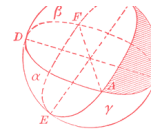
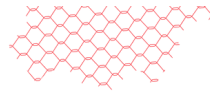


## Becoming The New World People Leader

Being a 21st century leader requires a new level of balance and adaptation between the four quadrants never needed before. In world of abstract change, I believe the New World People Leader thinking helps deliver success to people and enterprise.



New World People Leader™



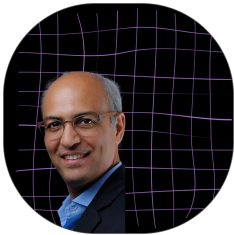
As we look through the model and try to adapt it for our organizations and leaders, we realize the constant back and forth between various quadrants. It is also evident that many skills overlap, and learning one skill can enhance another; for example, organizing work can lead to simplification of work and sharpening other skills. New world people leaders must recognize the mindsets which are no longer effective and shed them periodically.

The New World People Leaders are self-aware, empathetic, vulnerable, connected and trustworthy.



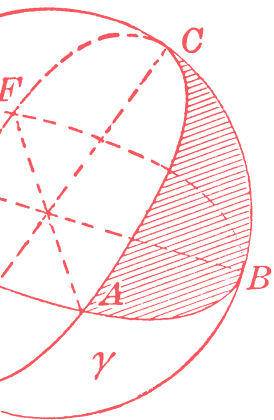
## We Help Leaders And Companies Build New World People Leader Skills

### About The Author

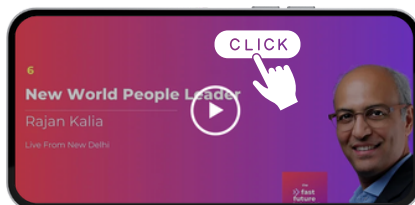


Rajan has a rich and varied 30 years of experience as an entrepreneur and a corporate executive . He does cutting-edge Talent Management work with Marc Efron for Fortune 100 companies across the globe, closer home he is involved with Harvard Business Press, Stanford Seed, Caltech and SHRM advising, consulting, teaching and coaching their clients. For the past 11 years Rajan has been consulting, advising, training, coaching and launching organizations in their next growth orbit. He has worked with over 130 clients in varied sectors including Fortune 100 Global, Indian private and public sector companies. His clients seek his advice to ‘solve complex people problems’ including Talent/Performance Management issues, build robust Talent strategies, work with Leadership teams and Transform Organizations.

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