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Digital Transformation: Understanding the Leadership Skills Needed.

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

This research study discusses the relationship between digital transformation and the development of leadership skills. Becoming digital is a requisite for survival today. However, while waves of technology — automation, additive manufacturing, AI — are washing over the corporate world, redefining the nature of work and productivity, there are no playbooks and few best practices for manufacturers' digital transformation (Moldoveanu & Narayandas, 2019). The U.S. military coined the acronym VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) in the late 1990s, and it has become general shorthand for conditions leaders may encounter especially in digital transformation context and leaders need to be prepared for many types of turbulence or upheaval (Schoemaker, Heaton, & Teece, 2018).

Bennis (2013) highlights that to face the digital revolution, it is necessary to lead with the capacity to understand the use of digital opportunities, tools, and instruments from this era. Kane (2019) adds that the most successful digital transformations begin with a change in the mentality of leaders, who need to develop for this challenge. It is worth noting that the search for the improvement of leadership skills is not something simple, as it requires a constant rethinking about the paths and methods to be adopted in the challenge of enhancing the skills of leaders. According to Klein (2020) digital leaders have to lead the DT so they could bring the organization through Industry 4.0 by managing the disruptive changes by motivating the employees.

This way, a project has been developed in Brazilian organizations that are in the process of digital transformation. Initially, exploratory field research is being developed to understand the phenomenon and after a quantitative study will be proceed reaching a larger audience to understand what the skills are required of digital leaders, what are the best practices, among other findings. Thus, this research aims to encourage discussion of this topic.

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