

## Editorial

## Digital Transformation of Work

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The past few years have been characterized by continuous and disruptive developments as well as major crises that have had a strong impact on the nature of work. Especially the ongoing integration of technology into all areas of organizations and many jobs has fundamentally changed the way work is done. This so-called “digital transformation of work” has emerged as a pivotal force reshaping the landscape of employment and human relations. It involves leveraging technology to change and optimize various aspects of working processes, communication and collaboration. Many practitioners and researchers even argue that the world is witnessing a new digital revolution, which is expected to have a strong impact on the future of work and employment (e.g., [Pereira et al., 2023](#); [Schwab, 2016](#)).

The digital transformation of work is fueled by various developments. Modern information and communication technologies (ICT) enable work to shift beyond traditional temporal and spatial boundaries so that many work tasks can be done at any time and from any place ([Schmoll and Süß, 2019](#)). This also affects, for instance, teamwork ([Fortagne et al., 2024](#)) and leadership ([Bauwens and Cortellazzo, 2025](#)). In addition, platform-mediated cloud and crowd-work has become increasingly prevalent in many industries, provoking debate about its consequences for the nature of work ([Vallas and Schor, 2020](#)). The same applies to the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace, which has recently received a massive boost ([Pereira et al., 2023](#)). The utilization of assistance systems and people analytics to systematically collect and analyze workforce-related data to gain insights into various aspects of an organization’s human resources, has gained momentum ([Giermindl et al., 2022](#)).

Building on the described developments, this special issue aims to generate deeper insights into the digital transformation of work. It includes the following five papers:

The first paper written by Jonas M. Koch and Christina Krins explores how digital assistance systems reshape communication and knowledge flows in industrial production. Drawing on an embedded single-case study with qualitative interviews and network mapping, the authors demonstrate that increased informational autonomy and the shift toward system-based expertise fundamentally reconfigure workplace interaction patterns. Their study links socio-technical

systems theory with social capital research and reveals how digital transformation alters the structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions of social capital. These insights underscore the need to consider the unintended consequences of digital tools for informal communication and knowledge exchange.

Also focusing on digital work settings, Ellen Weber, Timothy C. Bednall, Marion Büttgen and Felix Mynarek examine how transformational leadership (TFL) can sustain employees’ informal learning activities in technology-enabled remote work environments. Using a three-wave study with 1556 employees and structural equation modeling, they show that intellectual stimulation promotes both task-related and interactional learning, whereas supportive leadership primarily facilitates interactional learning. Interestingly, the effects remain robust regardless of the degree of remote work. The authors suggest that TFL can effectively foster informal learning and performance even without physical proximity. Their study advances the Antecedents–Process–Outcome framework and offers practical recommendations for leaders to maintain high performance in distributed work settings.

Extending the perspective to the organizational and institutional level, Raysa G. Rocha, Sónia P. Gonçalves and Fernanda Nogueira analyze the introduction of mandatory hybrid work arrangements in the Portuguese central government through the lens of Person–Environment Fit approach. Based on interviews with 21 senior managers, they identify four interdependent dimensions—organizational framework, leadership and management, employee-centric factors, and digitalization support—that must be addressed simultaneously to ensure successful hybrid work adaptation. The findings demonstrate how regulatory mandates reshape Person–Environment Fit dynamics in ways that voluntary adoption cannot capture, creating systemic disruptions that challenge traditional human resources management orthodoxy and force managerial reinvention. Beyond organizational implications, the authors discuss how hybrid work could serve as a lever for geographic economic redistribution, mitigating rural depopulation and urban concentration.

Shifting to the individual level, Luisa Groth, Bianca Straßhöfer and Stefan Süß explore how career orientations



and career self-management behaviors are shaped in the context of working from home. Using 26 interviews, they reveal that individuals' perceptions of remote work depend strongly on their career orientations. While, for example, networking behaviors are hindered, career planning and productivity-related behaviors are facilitated by working from home. Conceptually, their study enriches the model of career self-regulation by highlighting the role of contextual factors and offers insights into how employees navigate and proactively manage their careers under remote work conditions.

Finally, Martin Schneider, Paul Hemsén and Dennis Kundisch focus on platform-based work and ask which groups of crowdworkers are most likely to engage consistently over time. Applying fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis to survey data from users of a German text creation platform, they identify six distinct worker groups—loyal workers, precariat, stars, freelancers, core workers, and side jobbers—each characterized by different commitment profiles and participation levels. By reducing the apparent heterogeneity of the crowd to a small set of meaningful types, the findings provide platform providers with valuable guidance on how to design incentive systems that encourage sustained engagement. Importantly, the study also illustrates how technological disruptions such as the rise of ChatGPT disproportionately affect these groups, favoring highly skilled workers while marginalizing less experienced participants.

Together, these five contributions depict the multifaceted ways in which digitalization and new work arrangements transform communication, leadership, organizational structures, and individual career behavior. They open promising avenues for future research that examine how technology and hybrid work not only enable flexibility and autonomy but also reshape social interaction, learning opportunities, and long-term workforce participation.

Given the broad topic and its diverse implications, it is obvious that there are still many open questions regarding digital transformation of work which should be addressed in future research. Research would be enriched by incorporating more organizational consequences resulting from the various dynamics of digital transformation in the workplace. Future studies could examine how changes in the nature of work, leadership structures, and employee interactions reshape organizational culture, performance or resilience. Taking such aspects into account—among many others—would not only contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon but also provide practical insights for organizations facing the complexity of digital transformation. To advance this understanding, future research should particularly emphasize experimental and longitudinal designs, which enable stronger causal inferences and the observation of dynamic transformation processes over time.

Finally, we would like to provide you with some insights into the editorial process of this special issue. We started this project in combination with the 2024 meeting of the German “Arbeitskreis Empirische Personal- und Organisationsforschung”. By 31 January 2025, we had received 15 submissions, of which seven were selected for the review process. The remaining manuscripts were either desk-rejected or redirected to the regular review process of the Management Review because they did not fall within the scope of the special issue. Following 15 external reviews, two manuscripts were rejected, while the remaining five were invited to revise and resubmit. All authors accepted this invitation, and their revised manuscripts underwent another round of external review. After subsequent editorial revisions, these five manuscripts were ultimately accepted for publication. We would therefore like to express our gratitude not only to the authors for their valuable contributions but also to the reviewers for their timely, thoughtful, and constructive feedback, which greatly supported the authors in improving their work.

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## Author Contributions

RS, BS and SS made substantial contributions to this editorial as well as the special issue. All authors contributed to editorial changes in the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. All authors have participated sufficiently in the work and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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## Conflicts of Interest

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