

# Taking the leadership role

Citation for published version (APA):

Coun, M., Peters, P., & Blomme, R. (2019). Taking the leadership role: Understanding leadership across team and organizational boundaries in view of the changing employment relationship. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 12(4), 65-68. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21612>, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21612>

**DOI:**

[10.1002/jls.21612](https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21612)

[10.1002/jls.21612](https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21612)

**Document status and date:**

Published: 01/12/2019

**Document Version:**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

**Document license:**

Taverne

**Please check the document version of this publication:**

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

[Link to publication](#)

**General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

If the publication is distributed under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license above, please follow below link for the End User Agreement:

<https://www.ou.nl/taverne-agreement>

**Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at:

[pure-support@ou.nl](mailto:pure-support@ou.nl)

providing details and we will investigate your claim.

Downloaded from <https://research.ou.nl/> on date: 30 Mar. 2023

**Open Universiteit**  
[www.ou.nl](http://www.ou.nl)



TAKING THE LEADERSHIP  
ROLE: UNDERSTANDING  
LEADERSHIP ACROSS TEAM  
AND ORGANIZATIONAL  
BOUNDARIES IN VIEW  
OF THE CHANGING  
EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

---

MARTINE COUN, PASCALE PETERS, AND ROB BLOMME

Contemporary knowledge workers cooperate more and more in multiple, temporary, and often virtual teams with peers within and across organizational boundaries. The growing involvement of multiple actors inside and outside organizations has severe implications for how the employment relationship is managed. In the current article it is argued that leadership is becoming not only increasingly distributed but also diffuse. Leadership is no longer “what those in leadership positions do,” but refers to a process by which one or more actors stimulate themselves and each other in order to pursue values, goals, and objectives. Whoever takes on a leadership role, needs to understand the way actors can be motivated and energized to address future needs and requirements in organizations. Building on insights from human resource management, leadership, and organizational behavior literature, how multiple actors are stimulated to take on their leadership roles in order to foster salient outcomes for multiple parties is explored in the current article.

## Introduction

The growth of (virtual) multidisciplinary and flexible, self-managing teams signals a fundamental transition toward new ways of organizing work and collaboration (Van der Heijden, Peters, & Kelliher, 2015). The traditional employment relationship, often accompanied by direct control, motivation through reward, and trust based on long-term interpersonal relationships, is no longer appropriate (Peters, Den Dulk, & de Ruijter, 2010). Old employment models are gradually being replaced by more indirect control mechanisms, institutionalized in human resource management (HRM) practices, autonomous motivation, and “swift trust” (Costa, Fulmer, & Anderson, 2018; Peters, Ligthart, Bardoel, & Poutsma, 2016). In this regard, leadership is a challenge. Organizations are forced to consider more complex leadership approaches which are less centered on single formal leaders and relying more on the involvement of multiple actors taking a leadership role (e.g., Pearce & Conger, 2003; Yukl, 2012). In the current article, the new employment relationship is linked to indirect and diffuse forms of leadership displayed by different actors.

## Three Dimensions of the Employment Relationship, Leadership, and Multiple Actors

The employment relationship between organization, leader, and employee can be considered as a complex and multidimensional construct concerning a governance, exchange, and cooperation aspect (Peters et al., 2010). The transition of those dimensions toward a new “balance of dominance” represents a shift in organizational stakeholders’ cognitive and value structures, which also has implications for managing the employment relationship (Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998).

### THE GOVERNANCE RELATIONSHIP: LEADERSHIP AND CONTROL MECHANISMS

The managerial or *governance relationship* provides formal leaders with power to manage their employees. By acting on distrust, employment relationships used to be managed through institutionalized hierarchical governance structures which allowed for managerial

control and coordination (Peters et al., 2010). In the new and changing work context, formal leaders experience a loss of direct control possibilities, which have been replaced by indirect soft and hard control mechanisms institutionalized in new HRM practices (Peters et al., 2016). The management of the employment relationship is delegated to individual employees and teams by using peer and self-control.

### THE EXCHANGE RELATIONSHIP: LEADERSHIP AND GENERATING AUTONOMOUS MOTIVATION

Traditionally, the market or *exchange relationship* concerns the exchange of employees’ time for pay, but also other psychological contract terms (Rousseau, 2001). Organizations become more dependent on the human capital of employees who are willing to exchange their (nonsticky) commitment, knowledge, and skills for more self-determination in terms of personal development, autonomy, and sense of belonging (Coun, Peters, & Blomme, in press). This new exchange relationship has consequences for leadership as well. Individuals need to display more self-leadership referring to their capacity motivating themselves to individual proactivity and to operate with minimum of interference from their managers (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Also, team leadership has gained importance which is incorporated into their individual level of self-efficacy, shaping conditions for innovation (Pearce & Conger, 2003). Adopting HR management practices such as time-spatial flexibility and information and communication technology (ICT) support, may cultivate and encourage an innovation-driven atmosphere and motivate employees toward pro-innovative attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Lewicka, 2013). Still, formal leaders play a crucial role in inspiring individuals and teams and targeting a shared purpose, by displaying transformational and transactional leadership.

### THE COOPERATION AGREEMENT: LEADERSHIP AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

The third dimension focuses on the employment relationship as a *co-operation agreement* in which permanent and temporary employees are viewed as partners who share responsibility to act in line with the interest of

the organization, despite potential conflicting issues. Within virtual teams, employees manage themselves and rely on “swift trust” derived from professional role-based settings (Costa et al., 2018). They enjoy higher levels of autonomy, flexibility, and responsibility to organize themselves. Employees may jointly construct a leadership relationship in which some employees temporarily take the leadership role (shared leadership). However, transformational leadership of the formal leader remains important in stimulating informal collaboration with colleague employees, and in creating and communicating purpose and direction in organizational activities. Moreover, HRM practices can facilitate intra- and interorganizational cooperation by offering time-spatial flexibility and access to ICT.

## Conclusion

The growing need for agility, flexibilization, and (virtual) team-based work implies that future leadership will be increasingly indirect and diffuse, which is reflected in how the future employment relationship will be managed. More and more, organizations delegate the management of the employment relationship to individuals and teams (self and peer control). Paradoxically, employees are expected to share their knowledge with and mutual support others with whom they do not necessarily have a long-standing relationship. They have to co-shape collaboration via partnerships based on “swift” trust. Regardless of who takes on the leadership role, stakeholders at all levels have a responsibility in managing the employment relationship and need to understand how to motivate and energize others to respond to future needs and requirements in organizations.

## References

- Costa, A. C., Fulmer, C. A., & Anderson, N. R. (2018). Trust in work teams: An integrative review, multilevel model, and future directions. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 39*(2), 169–184.
- Coun, M. J. H., Peters, C. P., & Blomme, R. J. (in press). “Let’s share!” The mediating role of employees’ self-determination in the relationship between transformational and shared leadership and perceived knowledge sharing among peers. *European Management Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2018.12.001>
- Lewicka, D. (2013). Supporting innovation through HRM practices—Importance of motivation. *International Journal of Innovation and Learning, 14*(2), 217–240.
- Lewicki, R. J., McAllister, D. J., & Bies, R. J. (1998). Trust and distrust: New relationships and realities. *Academy of Management Review, 23*(3), 438–458.
- Neck, C. P., & Houghton, J. D. (2006). Two decades of self-leadership theory and research: Past developments, present trends, and future possibilities. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 21*(4), 270–295.
- Pearce, C. L., & Conger, J. L. (2003). *Shared leadership: Reframing the hows and whys of leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Peters, P., Den Dulk, L., & de Ruijter, J. (2010). May I work from home? Views of the employment relationship reflected in line managers’ telework attitudes in six financial-sector organizations. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, 29*(5), 517–531.
- Peters, P., Ligthart, P. E., Bardoel, A., & Poutsma, E. (2016). “Fit” for telework? Cross-cultural variance and task-control explanations in organizations’ formal telework practices. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 27*(21), 2582–2603.
- Rousseau, D. (2001). The idiosyncratic deal: Flexibility versus fairness? *Organizational Dynamics, 29*(4), 260–273.
- Van der Heijden, B. I. J. M., Peters, P., & Kelliher, C. (2015). New ways of working and employability. Towards an agenda for HRD. In R. F. Poell, T. S. Rocco, & G. L. Roth (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to human resource development* (pp. 542–551). London, England: Routledge.
- Yukl, G. (2012). Effective leadership behavior: What we know and what questions need more attention. *The Academy of Management Perspectives, 26*(4), 66–85.

*Martine Coun is Assistant Professor Management and Organization at the Open University of the Netherlands. She developed several courses, all based on the principles of distance education in the fields of organization, leadership, and change management. Her research is focused on contemporary issues in organizational leadership and organization behavior. Currently, she is finishing her dissertation on the changing role of leadership in flexible working contexts. Communications can be directed to martine.coun@ou.nl.*

*Pascale Peters is Professor Strategic Human Resource Management at Nyenrode Business Universiteit in the Netherlands. She is a member of the editorial board of Community, Work and Family journal. She publishes and supervises PhD-students, Master’s- and Bachelor’s students on topics such as (gendered) labor–market participation, work–life balance, boundary management, sustainable*

*HRM (employability, workability, and vitality) and the contemporary organization and leadership regarding work, in particular, home-based telework, and New Ways to Work. Email p.peters@fm.ru.nl.*

*Rob Blomme is Associate Dean Degree Programs and Faculty, and Full Professor Organization Behavior at Nyenrode Business University, the Netherlands. He is also a*

*full Professor Management and Organization at Open University, the Netherlands, and is Editor-in-Chief of Management and Organization (a Dutch journal). His research areas and publications cover a diversity of topics from Organizational Psychology, Organizational Theory, and Organizational Sociology, including leadership, psychological contract, existentialism, work–family balance, and humanistic themes. Email r.blomme@nyenrode.nl.*