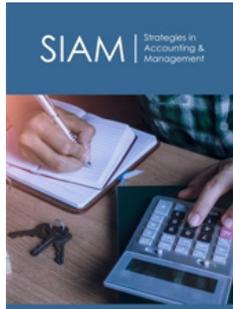


# Managing in the Hyper-Connectivity Era: The New Managerial Agenda

**Jaume Llopis\***

IESE Business School, Spain

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**\*Corresponding author:** Jaume Llopis, IESE Business School, University of Navarra, Spain

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## Introduction

“Managerial work is undergoing such enormous and rapid change that many managers are reinventing their profession as they go.” This quote from Rosabeth Moss Kanter, one of the biggest world experts in change management, was written in an article published in 1989. But, it’s as valid today, even more, as it was then... Over the years, companies have become global and digital; they have transformed their industrial operations radically; they have adopted technologies whose disruptive power can be hardly compared to other industrial revolutions. Consumers have been empowered and workers have been emancipated. And society has increased its level of awareness and commitment that all this has for people and for the planet [1].

How do all these changes affect the day-to-day of the CEO? What characterizes business leaders in 21st century? How is their management style? What kind of practices do they adopt or promote in their organizations? These are some of the questions that we bring up in the research we are carrying out at Open University La Salle with the support of Doctor Daniel Barquero, to study how the changes are redefining roles and tasks that members of senior management perform. These changes lie in the environment where organizations operate, and the companies, on their behalf, have required them to adapt to new circumstances [2].

## Changes in the practice and styles of management

Despite our research being in a preliminary phase, from our talks with CEOs and senior managers from different sectors and volumes we can already outline some common guidelines about the evolution of roles, tasks, and management styles. For example:

**Sense of purpose:** One of the changes we are observing is the rising importance for the CEO to provide a sense of purpose to the organization, further than the merely economic. The social pressure to face challenges such climate change or social inequality have grown notably in the last decade, and it is pushing companies to be aware of the consequences of their actions upon the community. Not only because they are under a tighter public scrutiny now, but also because they have understood that in order to connect with the customers and to motivate and get the employees engaged, they need to design strategies of shared value that transcend the usual mantra of “maximizing shareholder value” in order to making a positive contribution to society.

**The CEO as sensor and opportunity catalyzer:** Nowadays, players in the field tell us that the CEO must be more open to the outside world than before when management was focused on the company’s inner life: processes and products improvement, new innovations development... Now he must be doing all that, but he needs to be much more knowledgeable with what’s happening outside his own organization. That requires a more external glance, to know more in-depth ecosystems and to be able to detect and build alliances beyond the outskirts of the very same company, which, on the other hand, tend to blur.

**High touch leaderships:** For the new generations of employees, bosses’ professional prestige and coherence of behavior grants authority, while the position in the hierarchy does not. Moreover, they require closer styles of leadership and they expect their bosses to help them and to support them in the development of their careers by granting them constant feedback and giving them projects to help them grow. The CEO arises as a coach, a player

deemed suitable to replace the old management styles based on “master&command”, for the new management style that is more participative which makes the vertical boss and subordinate relationship evolve into a horizontal relationship among peers, and that lets collaborators and teams exert a greater autonomy, ability to make decisions and more flexibility [3].

**Soft skills:** Paradoxically, the more we enter in the digital and AI era, the more important become all of those abilities and competences that are more personal than technical. Evidently the 21st century CEO must be familiarized with new technologies, but his ability to learn and encourage others learn, to foster curiosity, to generate empathy and to prioritize people and teambuilding, to increase diversity or to know how to include cultural transformation that technology involves will be more relevant than his technological competence. When the only constant is change, the most important characteristic is the ability to adapt and to be versatile. Besides, managers who were interviewed stressed that nowadays the CEO must be a born communicator, somebody with high relational and communicative abilities. New technologies immediacy allows a much more intense and agile communication. At any time, managers can use various tools to get in touch with their teams: videoconferences, e-mail, shared apps, network work

and even whatsapp groups. He doesn't only have to communicate well inside the company, but also outside the company. They say that the CEO must now be much more attentive and present in the relationships with all the stakeholders.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the tasks of the CEO and the management styles of senior management keep evolving in tune with changes in economic and social environment. Changes in the profile, attitudes and aptitudes of CEOs are essential to guarantee the long-term survival of the company [4]. The CEO should always be the one who leads by example and his daily example will be transmitted to the entire organization.

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