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# ESCAPE

## dEep SoCial Analytics for emPloyee Engagement

### Executive Summary

ESCAPE is a research project aiming at studying how employee engagement in companies is affected by different factors, especially in the context of smart working.

Following Covid-19 pandemic and the mass diffusion of ever more effective communication media, smart working has indeed experienced an unprecedented growth in the last years. This new managerial philosophy is based on flexibility and autonomy for employees in choosing their work spaces, their working times and the tools to use, but also on more responsibility for the outcome. Therefore, while this innovation represents an opportunity for organizations and employees, it poses new and complex challenges from the human resources point of view. In particular, it increased the priority for firms to count on employees who are not only loyal and flexible, but also, and especially, engaged. Starting from these assumptions, this work firstly takes a detailed picture of the smart working startup panorama in order to detect trends and future perspectives in this field. Secondly, we present and validate on industry data a theoretical framework for fostering the employee engagement in companies through transformational leadership.

The outputs of these activities allowed the Team to build a global and easy to access startup dataset, whose validity has already been tested and proved by academic research. On the other hand, an unprecedented model in the literature has been validated, contributing to move a further step in making work from home ever smarter.

### Key Words

Employee Engagement, Smart Working, Technological Innovation, Employee Experience

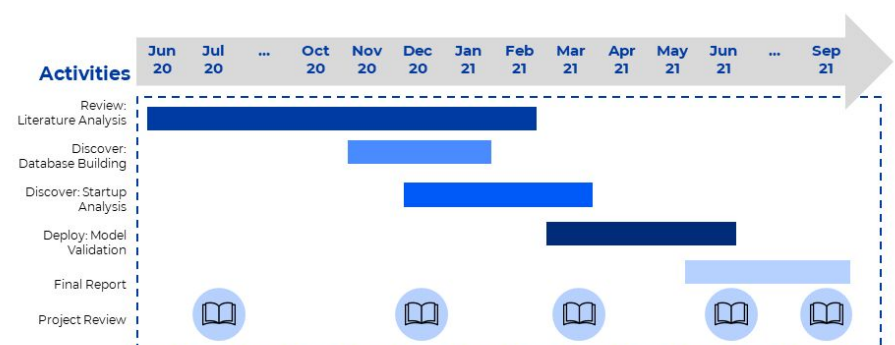


Figure 1. GANTT of the Project

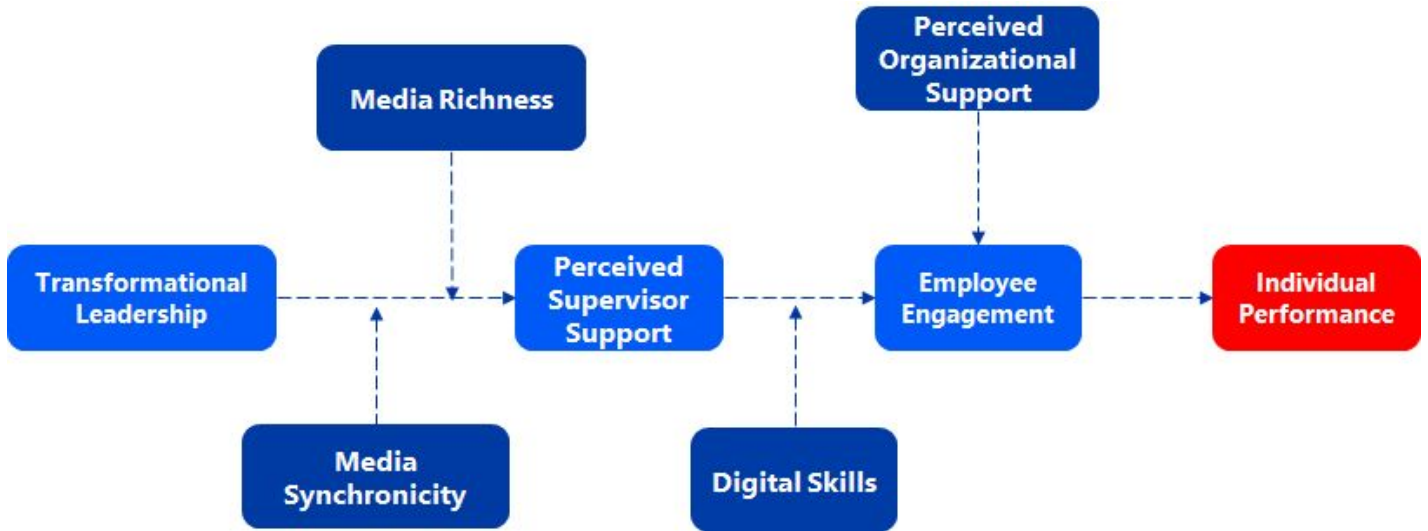


Figure 2. Initial Hypothesised Model

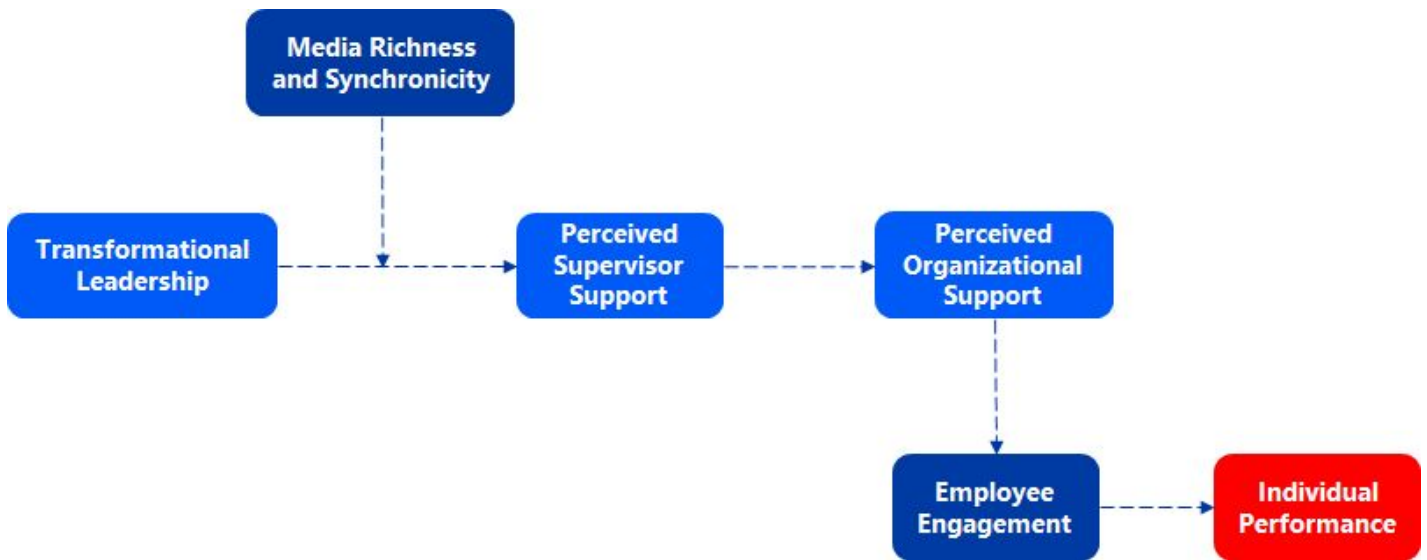


Figure 3. Final Model

**Project description  
written by the  
Principal Academic  
Tutor**

Globalization and the advancement of digital technologies represent unquestionable opportunities for firms, but they pose new and complex challenges in terms of Human Resources management. Firms compete for hiring and retaining people with up-to-date competencies, face upskilling and reskilling issues, and deal with the potential offered by organizational models based on flexible work practices.

In a context where 'change', 'adaptation' and 'continuous update' have become new imperatives, and where the current emergency related to COVID-19 have intensified these needs, it is fundamental for organizations to count on employees who are not only loyal and flexible but also (and especially) engaged. Engaged employees sustain firms' success and competitiveness, displaying superior job performance, higher involvement, lower absenteeism and intention to quit.

The aim of this project is to support organizations and HR managers in measuring and fostering employee engagement.

**Team description by  
skill**

Considering the level of comprehensiveness of the project, the heterogeneity of academic backgrounds and experience the Team could rely on was definitely helpful.

Samuele is a PoliMi Master student in Management Engineering. Given his background, he was the "closest" to the paradigms the team had to deal with. His experience in these fields helped the other team members in better understand the theoretical framework of the research project.

Elena Sofia is a PoliTo Master student in ICT for Smart Societies. She has volunteered for over 3 years in the Junior Enterprises environment. Given her experiences, she was in charge of the Communication of the group: drafting guidelines for the internal reports, creating the graphical contents, videos and designing the presentations.

Federico is a PoliMi Master student in Mathematical Engineering. During his academic career he has been part and leader of many data science oriented group projects, resulting also in a medical journal publication. Federico was therefore in charge of the data analysis activity.

Alberto is a PoliTo Master student in Industrial Production Engineering. His academical and working background provided him a broad understanding of both technological and business subjects. Thanks to his experience, Alberto coordinated the team through the different tasks assigned.

## Understanding the problem

Technological innovation and globalisation represent an incredible opportunity for all companies and for all businesses. In response to these phenomena, many organisations have decided to restructure their organisational model towards models based on the principles of Smart Working. The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly accelerated these processes.

This new smart context has forced Human Resources (HR) departments to rethink the main challenges they have to face in the future. Implementing and supporting employee engagement will definitely be one of the main. The risk is that in this new context, the physical distance between employees working remotely and the company may cause an increase in the "emotional" distance. On the contrary, companies need engaged employees as they sustain firms' success and competitiveness.

Despite recent efforts in both literature and entrepreneurship, the subject matter is so vast that many gaps remain to be filled by future research, including the one you will find in this report.

## Goal

The main objective of this project is to support organizations and HR managers in measuring and fostering employee engagement, in the Smart Working context, with the aim of enhancing the individual and collective performance.

In order to achieve this ultimate goal, it was decided to divide the research into three different parts that would allow us to consider both the academic and managerial aspects of Employee Engagement.

The aim of the first part was to gather academic knowledge through a comprehensive literature review, on the world of Employee Engagement and HR Tech.

In the second part, the goal was to explore the direction in which innovation on the subject was moving. So we put ourselves where innovation stands: startups.

To conclude, we wanted to give our contribution to applied research. In fact, our aim was to validate a theoretical model of Employee Engagement, to understand which factors influence it most in a Smart Working context.

## **Exploring the Opportunities**

Considering the complexity and multidisciplinary nature of the research, a lot of time was dedicated within our project to studying the state of the art, both from an academic and managerial point of view.

In this way, it was possible to identify what was the level of understanding of Employee Engagement in a Smart Working context and what were the trends and technologies emerging in the business world.

This research was the basis on which we then generated our solution.

## **Generating a Solution**

The main focus of this research work is to study the employee engagement, adding different context and influencing factors to it. The overall project was driven by two main pushes, resulting into two major outputs.

One among the two pushes is more market-oriented and refers to the need to study the main innovation directions in the human resources startup sector, with special attention to the employee engagement perspective and what can add up to it. The result analysis showed what the main global trends are, helping to understand how the different sectors are evolving and contaminating the performance in the workplace.

As for the second push, this is more research-oriented and focused on the study of a model that sees different factors influencing on the employee engagement. This study has been developed on a specific company dataset, and is based on a survey questionnaire. All the included factors have been previously proved as significant to the engagement variable by the literature. The study aimed at giving an empirical proof of that, differentiated in two scenarios: before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Main bibliographic references**

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