

Chapter

Perspective Chapter: Building Ambidextrous Organizations through Self-Leadership

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Abstract

This perspective chapter explores the critical role of self-leadership in fostering individual ambidexterity and, in turn, advancing organizational ambidexterity. While ambidexterity is widely acknowledged as a strategic imperative for organizational adaptability and innovation, the microfoundational mechanisms enabling its emergence remain underexplored. Most notably, current literature lacks clear guidance on how organizations can nurture ambidexterity from the bottom up, starting with the behaviors of individual employees. This chapter advances a framework that links self-leadership strategies with ambidextrous work behaviors through an integrative review of relevant literature and conceptual synthesis. We propose that by fostering self-leadership, organizations can empower individuals to navigate the competing demands of efficiency and innovation more effectively. The chapter concludes with best-practice recommendations for scholars and practitioners interested in building ambidextrous capabilities from within. The chapter contributes to a growing body of research that seeks to align individual agency with organizational adaptability, offering a novel, practical, and human-centered approach to a long-standing challenge in management science.

Keywords: ambidexterity, self-leadership, empowerment, knowledge sharing, evidence-based recommendations

1. Introduction

Organizational ambidexterity, the capacity of firms to balance and integrate both exploration (innovation, experimentation) and exploitation (efficiency, refinement of existing capabilities), is widely recognized as essential to sustained organizational performance and adaptability [1]. While significant attention has been given to the outcomes and structural antecedents of organizational ambidexterity [2], surprisingly little is known about how it can be cultivated from the bottom up, particularly through the behaviors and capabilities of individual employees.

This chapter addresses two pressing, underexplored questions in the ambidexterity literature:

1. *How can individual ambidexterity be fostered through self-leadership?*
2. *How can individual ambidexterity serve as a foundational mechanism for enhancing organizational ambidexterity?*

Despite growing interest in microfoundations of strategic behavior, research has only recently begun to examine individual-level ambidexterity, which refers to employees' ability to alternate and balance exploitative and explorative behaviors in their daily roles [3]. Despite the growing importance of the concept of leadership in literature [4], few studies have explored how self-leadership, a proactive form of self-regulation involving behavioral and cognitive strategies [5], can be deliberately developed to support such dual-task functioning.

The current literature falls short in three key areas. First, it lacks practical frameworks linking self-leadership strategies to individual ambidextrous behaviors. It often treats organizational ambidexterity as a structural or leadership-level phenomenon, ignoring its behavioral underpinnings at the employee level. It provides limited actionable guidance on how ambidexterity can be built internally, rather than relying on structural separation or sequential processes.

This chapter contributes to filling these gaps by offering an integrative framework and a set of best-practice recommendations. We argue that self-leadership represents a critical and underutilized lever for developing individual ambidexterity, which in turn serves as a behavioral microfoundation for broader organizational ambidexterity. This perspective draws upon an integrative literature review methodology [6], identifying and synthesizing peer-reviewed articles from databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. Selection criteria included conceptual relevance to self-leadership, empowerment, and organizational ambidexterity, with an emphasis on empirical and theoretical works from 1990 to 2024.

The structure of the chapter unfolds as follows: We first revisit the evolution of the ambidexterity concept at both the organizational and individual levels, contrasting perspectives that view exploration and exploitation as incompatible versus those advocating for contextual integration.

We then introduce the concept of self-leadership and map its core strategies, such as self-goal setting, self-observation, and natural reward strategies, to behaviors that support individual ambidexterity. Finally, we propose actionable steps for organizations to cultivate self-leadership in their workforce, with a focus on fostering a culture and context that enables ambidextrous behavior.

In sum, this chapter bridges a critical gap between psychological self-regulation theories and strategic organizational behavior, offering a novel and scalable approach to cultivating ambidexterity through empowered individuals. It advances current knowledge by positioning self-leadership as a developmental gateway to ambidextrous behavior, offering a bottom-up pathway to organizational ambidexterity that is theoretically grounded and practically feasible.

2. Literature review: Ambidexterity at the organizational level

Over the last decade, ambidexterity in the management has outlived its usefulness, with experts acknowledging that long-term success (i.e., organizational sustainability) hinges on an organization's capacity to leverage actual competencies while cultivating new ones. Concurrently, the modern-day Industrial Revolution [7],

symbolized by several external threats and opportunities, has created new organizational rules in which innovation constitutes the key to organizational success [8]. Scholars have found that organizations embracing this double duality (i.e., current vs. future competencies; organizational threats vs. opportunities) are ambidextrous [9, 10]. One of the pioneers of organizational ambidexterity, Tushman and Euchner [11], stated,

[...] companies need to develop dynamic capabilities at the business unit level and at the corporate level to play two games at once. The first is to exploit the existing strategy and the second is to explore an uncertain future. Firms that do both well survive over time; firms that get stuck in either exploit or explore don't do well [11].

This leads us to agree with Duncan's [12] initial definition of organizational ambidexterity, according to which it is the organization's ability to be aligned and efficient in its management of today's business demands and to simultaneously be adaptive to changes in the environment. Further developments have been made by scholars and professionals, and organizational ambidexterity's accuracy has improved. At the beginning of the 1990s, organizational ambidexterity was described as follows:

Maintaining an appropriate balance between exploration (e.g., search, variation, risk-taking, experimentation, play flexibility, discovery, innovation) and exploitation (e.g., refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation, execution) is a primary factor in system survival and prosperity [13].

From this perspective, equilibrium is essential, and organizations must avoid being solely explorative, seen as the failure syndrome [14], or oriented too much toward the exploitation side of the equilibrium, seen as the success syndrome [15].

Organizational ambidexterity allows organizations to adapt themselves to various environmental changes [11, 14, 15]. In the media industry, for example, the newspaper, *USA Today*, reacted efficiently to the advent of the internet to gain a competitive advantage and "be a network, not a newspaper" ([16], p. 15). In contrast, companies that were helpless or reluctant to adapt and change found themselves at the rear of the pack. From 1980 to 1990, Lloyds TSB Bank Plc, a UK-based bank, was successful and distributed unprecedented returns to shareholders. However, Lloyds TSB's leader and CEO, Brian Pitman, failed to understand current customers' needs, causing Lloyds TSB to lose 60% of its market value [17].

Organizational ambidexterity can be summed up as the creation of structural ambidexterity [17] and the capacity to constantly reorient and adapt the core day-to-day business of an organization. At the individual level, contextual ambidexterity requires employees to choose between alignment- (exploitation) and adaptation-oriented (exploration) activities or, as we postulated, the exercise of both activities.

2.1 Ambidexterity at the unit level

Ambidexterity at the unit level is contextual and allows the expression of a "behavioral capacity to simultaneously" engage in exploration and exploitation ([18], p. 209). The border between exploration and exploitation at the unit level (i.e., what are the explorative activities and what are the exploitative activities) must be clearly defined to avoid obtaining fewer benefits from both activities [15, 19].

Regardless of their position, employees at the unit level need to engage in certain behaviors to foster ambidexterity. Regarding the exploration activities side of ambidexterity, employees must adopt innovative thinking, an explorative mindset that seeks competitive solutions, and the willingness to establish and implement innovative ideas [18, 20]. Because of the absence of a solid basis for explorative behavior, companies find it costly to encourage such activity and believe it somehow jeopardizes their sustainability. Thus, companies prefer to engage in exploitative activities that offer the advantage of enhancing the existing organizational conditions while using the current knowledge foundation to achieve more efficiency [18, 20]. As mentioned above, we believe that both activities must be equally prioritized for companies to strengthen their efficiency and impact on their daily operations and businesses.

The main contribution of the present paper is to provide organizations with best recommendations and identify what fosters exploration and exploitation. Our proposal is depicted on **Figure 1**.

Following the development of the equilibrium in **Figure 1**, we propose the following assumption: the organization should engage in both exploration and exploitation activities to foster organizational success. This assumption goes against a series of articles promoting either exploration or exploitation, but not at the same time. Thus, we are following a recent and growing body of literature proposing that ambidexterity can be fostered with both activities, and we propose a series of combined recommendations for organizations to be more efficient.

These recommendations are based on a renewed organization mindset where “the emphasis has (re)shifted from a focus on management control of employees to a decentralization of power and the provision of opportunity for workers, at all levels, to exercise increasing influence over themselves” [21]. Shipper and Manz added that self-leadership is about counting on workers’ creative and intellectual abilities, and this approach is helpful to achieve a competitive advantage.

We believe that employees can develop exploitative and explorative activities through self-management and self-leadership. Self-leadership is also required to

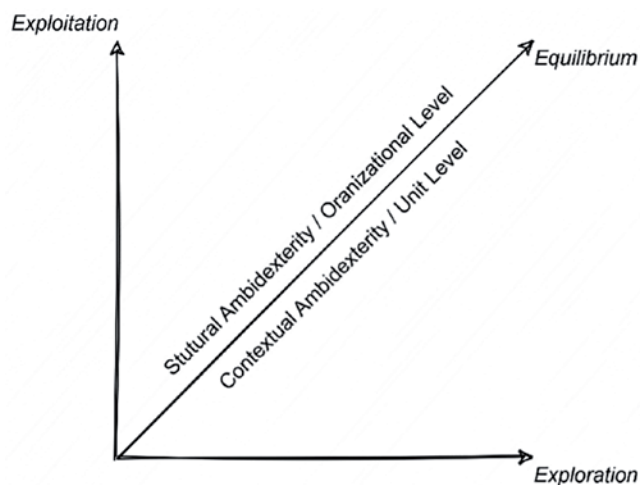


Figure 1. *Ideal alignment of ambidexterity within a 2x2-level equilibrium. Note. The above figure has been made for the present study.*

achieve a decent level of empowerment, and sharing knowledge is the key to organizing activities among employees. With the pandemic and the emerging idea that work habits need to change, the dual approach of ambidexterity might regain popularity, or recent events might shed new light on personal responsibility.

Scientifically, we are in line with Stewart et al. [22] who proposed an alternative to external leadership and did not advocate the classical view of the manager-leader. Indeed, the present proposition needs to be perceived as a toolbox for organizations from the contingency theory perspective [23], which refers to the contingent self-leader's flexibility and adaptation to succinct organizational strategies.

2.2 Self-leadership

Manz [24] defined self-leadership as achieving self-motivation and self-direction through one's influence and desirable behavior. With COVID-19, self-leadership has taken on an even greater significance because of the rise of teleworking [25]. It can, correctly, be argued that not all populations are in a teleworking arrangement with their employers. However, self-leadership was studied for years before this way of working became common.

Self-leadership replaces the presence of a leader with the adoption of self-processes of auto-congratulation for achieving a specific target [26] using different cognitive strategies to keep the focus on goal achievement [26, 27]. Essential self-leadership strategies are self-motivation, self-rewarding, self-cuing, and self-goal setting (e.g., [26, 27]). The cognitive aspect of self-leadership is crucial because it allows the replacement of the negative framework of counterproductive work with a more positive one [22], such as the development of self-knowledge [28] or self-awareness [5, 29].

With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, one can envisage a significant shift in working habits not only because of lockdowns being imposed around the world but also because organizations are now making working from home an integrated part of the employment relationship [30]. In this process, self-leadership might impose itself. We argue that working from the office or working from home allows employees to experience more flexibility in workplace design, self-scheduling, and self-task prioritizing, but this must always align with the unit strategy. In making this argument, we are in line with a few studies that have investigated the establishment of self-leadership at work [25, 31–33].

Self-leadership has some prerequisites to be effective, such as a high level of autonomy [25]. Further analysis indicates that a high level of autonomy positively influences employees' outcomes, which will "depend increasingly on the individuals' own efforts, initiatives, and decisions rather than on the adequacy of instructions from the boss or on a manual of job procedures" ([33], p. 258). Self-leadership is also strongly related to perceived responsibility [34]. When employees feel more responsible, they are more likely to engage in an empowerment culture that fosters both exploitative and explorative activities [3, 35], and where rehearsal behavior is promoted to foster greater employees' effectiveness [24, 36, 37]. Similarly, self-knowledge can be used to assess what needs to be changed and enhanced [28] in a knowledge-sharing culture. Therefore, the first proposition states the following:

P1: Self-leadership is the starting point of a funnel-shaped process that develops employee (self) ambidexterity.

2.3 Antecedents of individual ambidexterity

In this section, we examine empirical evidence regarding the importance of antecedents in fostering Individual ambidexterity among employees. As Caniëls et al. [3] put it, empowerment and knowledge-sharing cultures play a crucial role in making the individual level of ambidexterity flourish. We argue that self-leadership is the starting point of a funnel-shaped process that develops employee (self) ambidexterity (**Figure 2**). To elaborate on this, we examine what scholars have found about the capacity of self-leadership to enhance various processes and functions within the organization, leading to innovation and creativity [38, 39] and empowering self-managed teams [40], as well as about their capacity to work on knowledge (e.g., [41]). Being a self-leader goes together with empowerment and knowledge sharing: “Self-leadership is itself an empowering leadership approach, and its appropriateness leans on the need for creativity, and innovation where knowledge reach at its peak, and better activity exploitation” [42].

In medicine, this trio can refer to a patient with chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, or asthma, and their monitoring of themselves *via* healthy behaviors. Patients with chronic conditions become their own managers and are more responsible, balanced, and serene about managing their condition because of the accumulation of knowledge. Therefore, these patients need fewer and fewer health-care resources over time.

This next section presents empowerment, self-empowerment, and knowledge-sharing concepts for developing employee ambidexterity (**Figure 2**).

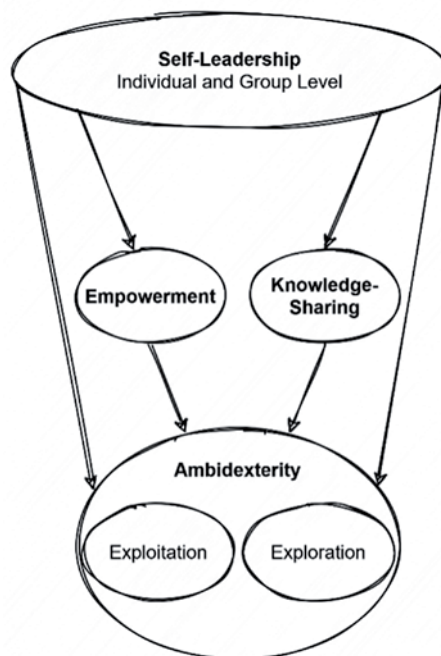


Figure 2.
Funnel-shaped process of self-leadership enabling ambidexterity. Note. The above figure has been created for the present study.

2.4 Self-leadership and empowerment

Self-leadership and empowerment are two distinct concepts. According to the definition of self-leadership, empowerment is part of the organization's effort to "enable; it means to help people develop a sense of self-efficacy... to energize people to take action" ([43], p. 483). Another perspective of empowerment is giving employees

The four A's: (1) authority, delegated to the employees to make decisions; (2) accountability, accepted by the employees for their actions and results of their decisions; (3) alignment of employee direction, meaning a shared vision with the organization; and (4) ableness, or development of the employee's skills over time. (Anderson & Prussia, citing Brower, [44]).

Empowerment is a multifold concept that has some unique features that emerge from the combination of actions and responsibilities. Empowerment can be seen "as a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members" ([45], p. 474). Rappaport [46] indicated that empowerment occurs at different levels of analysis: "Empowerment is viewed as a process: the mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives" ([46], p. 122). In the organizational context, empowerment is seen as the sum of "organizational processes and structures that enhance member participation and improve organizational effectiveness for goal achievement" ([47], p. 44). Whatever the approach or definition researchers or professionals feel comfortable with, the organization fosters empowerment through a philosophy, a desire, and a culture where employees can employ their self-leadership skills [48].

Organizations are always looking for ways to enable empowerment among their employees or teams. Many scholars have indicated that self-leadership is the starting point for doing so; it is the primary mechanism for achieving a high level of empowerment [21, 24, 48, 49] and fostering self-managing teams [24, 40, 50, 51]. Other studies have identified several positive organizational outcomes of being empowered, indicating that self-leadership is more likely to coexist with empowerment. This is consistent with Kirkman and Rosen [52], who found that self-leadership at the team level is positively linked with empowerment.

When empowerment is enabled within the organization, employees tend to be more self-confident and autonomous [53–55]. While encouraging self-efficacy and control behaviors—two factors fostering innovation—among employees, empowerment also inhibits the sense of powerlessness caused by, for example, the bureaucracy [54, 56]. We also found a consensus in the idea that empowerment benefits both the employee and the organization [57–61].

Despite the existence of many positive organizational outcomes of the establishment of empowerment culture, only a few studies have focused on it. When employees are given the opportunity to be empowered by the structure itself or by a leader [3], they will develop self-efficacy and self-esteem [35, 62], or will tend to be more self-assured and risk-taking [63]. However, empowerment is about more than just developing a psychological state. Building a culture of empowerment means building an organizational climate of trust where constructive feedback is highly tolerated [35]. In such an environment, employees make decisions about their working habits, reinforcing a collaborative approach with their leader even though their decisions may sometimes fail to reach the expected outcomes [55].

Therefore, the second proposition is as follows:

P2: Self-leadership is expected to enhance individual ambidexterity of employees via empowerment, which will ultimately improve organizational ambidexterity.

3. Antecedents of team ambidexterity: Knowledge sharing

Knowledge can be shared among employees [64], and being generous with knowledge will positively affect organizations [65]. Self-leadership does not refer to selfish behavior among employees who are enabling it. On the contrary, self-leadership should go hand in hand with knowledge sharing. An employee who has developed self-leadership must share resources and intellectual capital to perform better; this employee must use others' resources and intellectual capital while maintaining an important level of self-leadership. There is a lack of empirical studies analyzing the relationship between self-leadership and knowledge sharing. One exception is Lee and Choi [66], who studied bakery franchise brands in Korea regarding the relationship between self-leadership and knowledge sharing. A total of 108 franchise owners responded to the questionnaire, and the results indicated that self-leadership of franchisees has a positive and significant impact on knowledge sharing.

Self-leadership allows and favors self-managed team behaviors designed through two components: self-management and work collaboration [67]. Indeed, we found the same foundation between self-leadership and self-management: The former was at the individual level, whereas the latter was at the team level [68]. One cannot share knowledge with oneself; sharing requires someone else. A self-managed team has many positive outcomes, such as higher quality [69]. It seems obvious that self-managed individuals will benefit from all members' knowledge [70].

We postulate that knowledge sharing affects both explorative and exploitative activities at the individual level. One can consider it as "the only meaningful resource" [71]. Knowledge imposes itself on the individual level as a paradigm: "In a strict sense, knowledge is created only by individuals. An organization cannot create knowledge without individuals" [64].

A knowledge-sharing culture embraces some specificities, such as knowledge donating and collecting [72, 73], and employees may use fragments of knowledge in their everyday tasks [74]. However, the process of knowledge internalization from one colleague to another will differ [75]. Studies have found that knowledge sharing is a vector for promoting learning [76] and development of new and innovative ideas [77, 78], particularly thanks to increased trust [79] and seamless communication processes among employees [80]. Further, the crucial role that knowledge sharing plays is now well established, specifically in the way it helps employees obtain valuable information [81].

The role knowledge sharing plays in exploration activities has now become clearer as the flow of information has positively influenced employees. The more employees experience a high level of knowledge sharing, the higher their innovative work behavior will be [82]. Sharing knowledge among employees will enhance their problem-solving skills, encourage more efficient work habits, and foster business creativity [81, 83].

In the same vein, one can see the possibility of activity exploitation in knowledge sharing. Indeed, establishing a working culture will positively affect employees' working habits, which will increase exploitation. Van Grinsven and Visser [84] confirmed this, and they specifically stipulated that an employee's propensity to be

aligned with the organization's policy is related to his or her exploitative behavior. Therefore, the third proposition is as follows:

P3: Self-leadership is expected to enhance team ambidexterity of employees via knowledge sharing, which will ultimately improve organizational ambidexterity.

Overall, we propose a framework where knowledge sharing effectively influences exploitative and explorative activities. The recent literature on organizational strategy supports this framework through its discussion of the advantage and possibility of engaging in both activities to remain successful [85]. To become ambidextrous, employees need to embrace the knowledge-sharing culture their organization has established.

Next, we offer evidence-based recommendations on specific actions and interventions organizations at all levels can implement to promote self-leadership and a culture of empowerment and knowledge sharing, thus motivating employees to engage in ambidextrous activities. Our next section will try to extend the idea that both activities can and should be combined.

4. Practical recommendations and real case examples

In this section, we offer recommendations and evidence-based intervention for professionals to foster ambidexterity at the individual [86–88], team [89, 90], and organizational level [17]. Ambidexterity at the individual level is generated through the establishment of self-leadership and empowerment, whereas ambidexterity at the group level is generated through knowledge sharing. It remains crucial that self-leadership be apprehended only across levels [22].

4.1 Self-leadership training

Because self-leadership is the cornerstone for engaging in explorative and exploitative activities, self-leadership might be taught both at the individual and team level. Self-leadership outcomes are indeed widely found positive, and their impacts have been empirically established on individual performance, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and long-term career success (for a review, e.g., [91]). Self-leadership is related to reducing employee's negative outcomes, such as absenteeism [92] and work anxiety [93]. Positive outcomes of self-leadership are numerous, so it is relevant to provide employees who cannot express it naturally with adequate acquiring procedures. As for example, employees with a low level of conscientiousness [94] or those less intrinsically motivated [95] need to work on learning, building, and developing self-leadership.

The main objective of self-leadership training, at the individual or team level, is to use self-leadership as a strategy (e.g., self-goal, self-talk, self-reward, self-punishment) in employees' daily tasks. Self-leadership is linked to employee creativity [96] and production quality [97, 98], which are respectively related to exploration and exploitative activities.

The self-leadership training literature is quite old, but propositions on training remain up to date, and it is specifically in this uncertain environment that organizations need to adapt to rapid changes [99]. Teaching self-leadership to employees consists of preparing them to develop a set of behavioral skills [100], such as self-observation and self-reinforcement skills [101]. The question is how self-leadership training will positively affect ambidexterity. The literature is quite clear on the

relationship between self-leadership and innovative behavior. Self-leadership has a significant impact on innovative work behavior [38, 39] and helps to reinforce and develop work processes through individual and collective motivation to achieve expected work outcomes and behaviors [24].

Self-leadership skills can be developed based on three studies found in the literature: Neck and Manz [95], Stewart et al. [22], and Furtner et al. [102]. The human resource department needs to be involved in developing these skills [103]. Training components can be designed from Manz and Neck [104], who proposed a three-dimensional approach to self-leadership: (1) a behavior-focused strategy to improve self-awareness [48, 104]; (2) a natural reward strategy that motivates people to enjoy their work [48, 104]; and (3) a thought pattern strategy to create positiveness and increase performance [5, 48, 104].

Behavior-focused strategies aim to develop positive or productive behaviors and diminish the negative or unproductive behaviors. They include training on self-awareness to better identify the employee's fit for a specific behavior during a specific task or project [104]. In this vein, setting clear and challenging goals is crucial [36, 104], as is imposing self-punishment to penalize unproductive behavior.

Natural reward strategies aim to develop activities that are intrinsically motivating and rewarding [104]. The first objective is to design task specificities that are more enjoyable. The second objective is to help focus on the pleasant side of activities and their rewards. Overall, natural reward strategies are designed to enhance feelings of self-determination [105].

Constructive thought pattern strategies aim to improve performance by creating effective thought patterns [104]. Mental imagery and self-talk are used to eliminate the unproductive beliefs and retain positive ones [104, 106]. Envisioning efficient behavior requires going through the mental process of forecasting what is productive against what is negative and then engaging in that specific task [95, 106]. Additionally, talking to oneself is necessary to allow positive and optimistic talk to dominate negative and pessimistic talk [107].

Additionally, to foster self-leadership, one must focus on specific skills such as “self-observation, self-goal setting, self-reward, rehearsal, self-job design, and self-management of internal dialogue and mental imagery” ([108], p. 220).

Based on the previous statements and the available programs in Neck and Manz [95], Stewart et al. [22], and Furtner et al. [102], suggestions on what to teach about self-leadership is provided in **Table 1**.

4.2 Employee empowerment

On his company's website, under the “Who we are/our culture” section, Jack Stack, CEO of Springfield ReManufacturing, provided a very informative quotation about the well-implemented culture of employee empowerment: “SRC is an employee-owned company dedicated to being a business of business-people, where everyone has a stake in the outcome.”

Scrolling down provided us with a few examples of how Jack Stack is empowering his employees on a daily basis such as: Springfield ReManufacturing Corp. actively practices the teachings of The Great Game of Business,

*Our employees are participating owners projecting our future success and
Each week the financials are shared with the employees for the current month's
performance.*

Level of ambidexterity	#	Evidence-based recommendations
Individual level	1	- Establish an individual training plan for self-leadership that must include the following three questions, which act as guidelines to the three strategies [104]: - How to create a fit between behaviors and tasks or activities? - How to enhance organizational free will at the employee level? - How to positively visualize tasks and activities?
	2	- Reduce rigidity to prevent individuals from having to go through organizational “red tape.” - Design clear core values of empowerment to enhance employee self-engagement; however, transparency and trust must be the cornerstone of such values. - Develop a social contract with enhanced formal and informal power within and outside the organization. - Provide organizational support, offer open access to organizational information, and provide easy access to organizational resources (e.g., open-book management system). - Enable meaningful tasks that have a high organizational impact can boost empowerment. - Assess on a regular basis employee empowerment effectiveness programs for readjustment strategies. In this sense, developing a “company check-in process” seems adequate.
	3	- Find matches between individual characteristics to create effective teams at the time of the recruitment process. - Assess personality during the recruitment processes, because individuals with a high level of openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness are more likely to engage in healthy knowledge-sharing behavior. - Predict future potential deviant attitudes to avoid free riders [70] among teams and regularly assess the collaborative environment at the individual level.

Level of ambidexterity	#	Evidence-based recommendations
Group level	4	• Estimate teams' climate to constantly foster a healthy team climate that encourages knowledge sharing. • Create a sense of belonging and affiliation so that a team member can feel a sense of attraction or belonging to the team. • Forge trust because it is not only important between employees and organization but also between employees and their teams; without trust, knowledge is less likely to be shared. • Encourage team members to share what is perceived as an obstacle for organizational effectiveness through formal or informal procedures. • Organize weekly communication or round table sessions to easily share novel ideas or ideas that enhance procedures and current activities.
	5	• Reduce rigidity to prevent teams from having to go through organizational "red tape." • Install organizational support for the empowered team. • Help teams become self-directed by giving them access to information and resources and encouraging them to develop more "out-of-the-box" solutions. • Forecast teams' actions and behaviors and translate them into business results; teams need to understand the idea of the great "game of business." • Enable meaningful tasks that have a high organizational impact can boost empowerment. • Assess regularly team empowerment effectiveness programs for readjustment strategies; the company check-in process option is doable for teams.
	6	• Establish a training plan at the group level for self-leadership that must include the following three questions, which act as guidelines to the three strategies [104]: 1. How to create a complementary fit between behaviors and tasks or activities? 2. How to enhance organizational free will at the employee level? 3. How to positively visualize tasks and activities?
Organizational level	7	• Build on a vision and culture that embrace self-leadership as the engine of their functioning, powered by empowerment and knowledge-sharing strategies. • Avoid the multiplication of middle managers and intermediaries to apply their previously established vision and culture and strive to have an open organization system. • Reflect the day-to-day procedures and processes on the organizational-level perspective to attain sustainability while achieving the expected competitive advantage.

Table 1.
Recommendations to engage in ambidexterity without leader's ubiquity at the individual, group, and organization level.

The above example shows that empowerment is offered to individuals who are self-determined, through their daily actions, to contribute to the company's daily operations. Indeed, employees are more likely to be empowered if the process comes from them and is not imposed from above (e.g., the hierarchy). This postulate has been well enforced since the 2000s at Tasty Catering, when they moved from a "command-and-control leadership model to one of employee empowerment." So far, the company is between particularly good and excellent financial health and is providing a shining example of maintaining its human capital. Indeed, its turnover rate is 4% whereas that of the sector is 45%. The company built a culture based on seven core values and helped employees define themselves through the company. Not only did the company successfully turn out a profit in the early 2000s, but it is also maintaining thanks to an "auto-culture of empowerment" where employees encourage and support all kinds of actions arising from employees' and that are consistent with Tasty Catering's core values. One can envisage that the role of the organization is to maintain its healthy culture of empowerment to keep up the culture's positive impact.

This healthy culture is based on trust and transparency between employees and the organization, which is a key approach to dealing with today's turbulences such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Murielle Tiambo, senior engagement manager at PwC in New York, recommended engaging in "regular and consistent trust-building conversations". However, trusting without delegating is a useless organizational process according to Shauna Geraghty, VP of global talent acquisition at Talkdesk, a tech company based in San Francisco. She agreed with Tiambo about words as empowerment being a key driver of Talkdesk's rapid growth strategy. However, she added that empowering comes with delegating responsibilities: "If you can't establish trust and delegate, then you can't empower employees." According to Geraghty, empowerment also establishes the self-determination of the employee's career path. Employees need to have the capacity and freedom to choose between options in their professional aspirations.

Key recommendations concerning establishing an empowerment culture are provided in **Table 1**.

4.3 On how to share knowledge

Sharing knowledge between members of an organization is beneficial for developing innovative ideas and generating positive organizational outcomes [109]. The question is how knowledge is shared and how to promote knowledge sharing from one employee to another. It is obvious that this process involves a team. One cannot share one's knowledge with oneself but only use it.

Organizations are advised to cultivate a positive team climate, and this can include promoting inclusive behaviors, psychological safety, and open communication norms that make employees feel valued and heard. Team leaders should actively manage team dynamics to reinforce constructive social interactions, which are a key determinant of knowledge-sharing behavior [110]. Strengthening group identification and affiliation is a major element of knowledge-sharing. Organizations can use collaborative platforms or rituals that reinforce group unity, increasing the psychological affiliation that motivates members to share their expertise [111]. Department heads should focus on building and sustaining trust *via* recognizing behaviors that demonstrate trustworthiness, such as transparency and constructive feedback, to reduce barriers to knowledge sharing [112, 113]. Finally, as discussed in previous section knowledge sharing is advanced through self-leadership. Organizations can

equip employees with self-leadership strategies (e.g., goal-setting, self-observation, self-reward) to foster autonomy and internal motivation for contributing knowledge. They are advised to shift leadership development from top-down models to shared and self-directed models, particularly in knowledge-intensive and cross-functional teams [42].

Another way to share knowledge is to share concerns about unproductive processes. SYSPRO's CEO, Geoff Garret, established a "company check-in process," an all-hands meeting that allows employees to raise issues and strengthen processes. Shortly after, the organization takes up the issues discussed and proposes swift actions to address employees' concerns. Such an approach has been identified in the literature review as increasing the feedback loop [35] and strengthening the relationship between self-led employees and the organization. Both actors (i.e., employee and the organization) need to come closer to ensure effective daily business operation [114].

Further, enabling empowerment necessarily entails developing collaboration among employees, and developing collaboration among employees fosters knowledge sharing [115] and promotes interaction and communication toward learning and creativity [116]. Improving the existing organizational ramifications and adopting a better approach to enhance a certain activity characterize Dell's mission statement: "The Soul of Dell." Dell's is a corporate culture that aims to address daily work issues or propose different innovative work approaches. Mr. Rollins's, Dell's Manager (Irish Times, 2004) organizational approach is quite innovative and relies on employee empowerment and self-awareness, two elements that we described before as a prerequisite for ambidexterity at the individual level:

We want every employee to be responsible and every pair of eyes possible to be focused on anything we can do better. We reward people for bringing those issues forward, either improvements to our business or issues that are inappropriate.

Key recommendations concerning knowledge sharing are provided in **Table 1**.

5. Boundary conditions and potential risks of self-leadership

While self-leadership offers a powerful mechanism for fostering individual and organizational ambidexterity, its effectiveness is not universal. Contextual factors such as organizational culture, industry norms, and job design significantly influence its outcomes. In highly regulated or hierarchical environments, for instance, excessive autonomy may conflict with the established control systems, creating ambiguity or role conflict. Similarly, in cultures that emphasize collectivism or deference to authority, self-leadership initiatives may require adaptation to avoid resistance or misalignment with shared values [117]. Moreover, promoting self-leadership without adequate structural and social support can unintentionally increase work intensification, emotional strain, and feelings of isolation, particularly in remote or hybrid work settings [25, 118]. Therefore, organizations must carefully assess contextual readiness—such as leadership style, trust climate, and task interdependence—before scaling self-leadership practices. When supported by empowering leadership, psychological safety, and transparent communication, self-leadership becomes a catalyst for sustainable ambidexterity rather than a one-size-fits-all solution.

6. Conclusion

This chapter highlights the strategic necessity of fostering organizational ambidexterity in the face of growing complexity and organizational paradoxes, such as the tension between stability and innovation. We position this capability as not simply a by-product of structural or top-down interventions, but as a process that happens from the ground up through the development of individual ambidexterity.

Central to this development is self-leadership, a largely unnoticed but highly viable approach through which employees balance competing demands for exploration and exploitation. By developing individuals who can self-direct, self-motivate, and self-regulate their behaviors, organizations can establish a dynamic, scalable, and sustainable behavioral building block for ambidexterity.

We emphasized the role of team climate (specifically, affiliation, trust, and innovativeness) in establishing a context conducive to knowledge sharing, which is essential to ambidextrous behavior. The practical implications discussed throughout the chapter provide researchers and practitioners concrete avenues for turning individual capability into organization advantage.

In sum, we hope this chapter will provide a slightly different and much more human-centric view of ambidexterity and encourage scholars and leaders to reconsider where organizational change begins, not just in structures and systems but in the heads and actions of self-leading people.

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