

The Modern Technology Organization:

How to Hire and Structure
Teams for Today's Org
Design Models



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When it comes to org design, ambition has outpaced execution

As AI moves from experimentation to expectation, talent operating models for most technology businesses are shifting toward more agile structures designed to help people move faster, operate smarter, and deliver measurable business impact sooner.

At least, that's the idea.

In the real world, companies that are adopting agile operating models are increasing complexity faster than they can build the leadership and talent systems required to support it. As the ability to hire high-judgement talent at speed becomes a primary constraint on execution, technology organizations must rethink how they are led, staffed, and run.

In this guide, we explore:

- ✓ The organizational design shifts reshaping modern technology teams
- ✓ Why leadership capacity, alignment, and hiring throughput have become the limiting factors to execution
- ✓ How leading organizations are structuring, hiring, and leading differently to translate transformation into sustained impact

The hidden risks behind modern org design trends

Today's tech organizations are busy flattening hierarchies, forming nimble cross-functional teams, empowering employees with greater authority, and enabling remote or hybrid work.

However, each structural improvement creates a new set of constraints that many companies aren't always prepared to manage. Here's how the promise of today's organizational and cultural trends are meeting reality.



Flatter structures increase speed-while concentrating risk

Companies are actively removing management layers and expanding spans of control, with the average manager now overseeing nearly six direct reports, a 17% increase from two years prior. Fewer layers mean fewer handoffs, more direct communication, and faster decision-making. Managers gain greater visibility into their teams, while teams take on more ownership.

But flattening doesn't always reduce complexity. More often than not, it just redistributes it. As layers disappear, the work those layers performed shifts onto fewer leaders juggling broader scopes. The organization becomes structurally simpler, but operationally more dependent on individual leadership capacity.

When not handled correctly, flattening increases the amount of complexity each leader is responsible for managing, leading to:

- Reactive and fragmented decisions as leaders operate in triage mode
- Fewer leaders available to carry context across teams
- Less clarity on priorities and decision rights
- Reduced coaching and development as managers become stretched thin across too many reports
- Fewer promotion pathways that end up weakening the internal pipeline for future leaders

The result:
The organization becomes slower as it sacrifices leadership capacity in exchange for fewer layers.

While the organization may increase speed at the edges, it can just as easily create bottlenecks and leave more decisions in the hands of a few key people.



Networked teams increase autonomy—while fragmenting execution

As organizations flatten, they're also reorganizing around smaller, cross-functional teams aligned to products, platforms, or customer outcomes. Instead of operating in functional silos, engineering, product, design, and data are increasingly embedded within the same team, with shared ownership over delivery. By combining multiple capabilities into a single team, organizations can eliminate handoffs, accelerate iteration, and push decision-making closer to the work itself.

While the goal is to help the organization move faster, coordination ends up becoming a shared responsibility across independent teams, often without a clear owner.

Over time, that fragmentation may result in:

- Teams prioritizing local outcomes over broader organizational goals
- Technical decisions diverging to create inconsistency across systems
- Duplicate work increasing as visibility across teams decreases
- Unexpected dependencies emerging in less structured and more disruptive ways
- Strategic priorities becoming harder to enforce across autonomous groups

Without the leadership capacity to maintain alignment across autonomous teams, organizations can end up moving faster, but not always in the same direction. As the number of teams increases, so does the need for leaders who can provide clear priorities, reinforce shared context, and ensure that decisions made locally still support global outcomes.



Employee empowerment increases agility—while raising the bar for talent

Beyond structural changes, many tech organizations are cultivating a culture of empowerment that trusts employees at all levels with more autonomy and an agile mindset.

While this improves execution velocity, empowerment fundamentally changes the requirements for talent. After all, when each employee can make critical decisions, then each employee is a leader in their own right who must be able to prioritize effectively and make decisions that align with company goals.

Once every employee is a decision maker, it raises the bar across the organization. But if you create a culture of empowered talent without the talent to back it up?

Get ready for:

- Inconsistent decision quality across teams
- Leaders getting pulled back into decisions they intended to delegate
- Execution varying widely depending on individual judgment
- Teams hesitating or stalling out when priorities are unclear
- Hiring mistakes becoming more visible, more disruptive, and more costly

As organizations increase autonomy, they increase their need for people worthy of being empowered. Because empowerment can scale faster than talent quality, organizations without a strategy can quickly become constrained by their ability to hire and develop high-judgment talent.



Hybrid work increases flexibility-while requiring a new operating system

While hybrid and remote work can provide access to broader talent pools and employees who value flexibility, employers still struggle to accommodate collaboration that takes place across locations, time zones, and asynchronous workflows.

In the office, coordination can take place informally, with decisions made in hallway conversations and issues resolved quickly through real-time interaction.

In a remote or hybrid organization, everything becomes an email, text, or Slack message, leading to:

- Friction in decision-making as teams wait for input across time zones
- Fragmented communication across tools and channels
- Weaker alignment as teams operate with different context, assumptions, and priorities
- Difficulty creating culture without the proximity to reinforce it

As organizations become more distributed, they also become more dependent on explicit systems for how decisions are made, how information flows, and how teams stay aligned.



Is your organization designed for today's trends?

Flatter organizations, cross-functional teams, empowered employees, and hybrid work all help reduce friction and accelerate decision making. But without the right organizational design, these trends can create complexity that wipes out any gains.

Flatter organizations and autonomous teams mean leadership capacity is stretched and diffused, making oversight and alignment harder to maintain. Meanwhile, supporting empowered and distributed employees requires top-level talent that can be trusted to operate and make decisions independently, not just do the work.

For many organizations, the demands created by these trends are outpacing their ability to support them. The ability to consistently hire high-judgement leaders and talent isn't scaling at the same rate as autonomy, complexity, and speed. The result is an organization that feels like it's moving fast, yet struggles to translate that activity into consistent outcomes.

Building a modern leadership and talent leverage model

Modern organizational design raises the bar for how organizations must be led, staffed, and operated. To make these models work in practice, HR teams need to get four things right.

01 Treat hiring as one of your primary scaling levers

As organizations push decision-making closer to the edge, the role of hiring fundamentally changes, with each new hire increasing decision-making capacity along with execution capacity.

In an empowered organization, every individual is expected to prioritize effectively and make decisions that align with broader company goals. The speed at which you can identify, attract, and onboard high-judgment talent becomes directly tied to how effectively the organization can scale.

Prioritize individuals who can operate with autonomy and sound judgment in ambiguous environments. The most effective hires are those who can make decisions with incomplete information, understand the downstream impact of those decisions, and adjust on the fly as conditions change. In many cases, this requires placing greater weight on adaptability and awareness than on experience within a narrowly defined role.

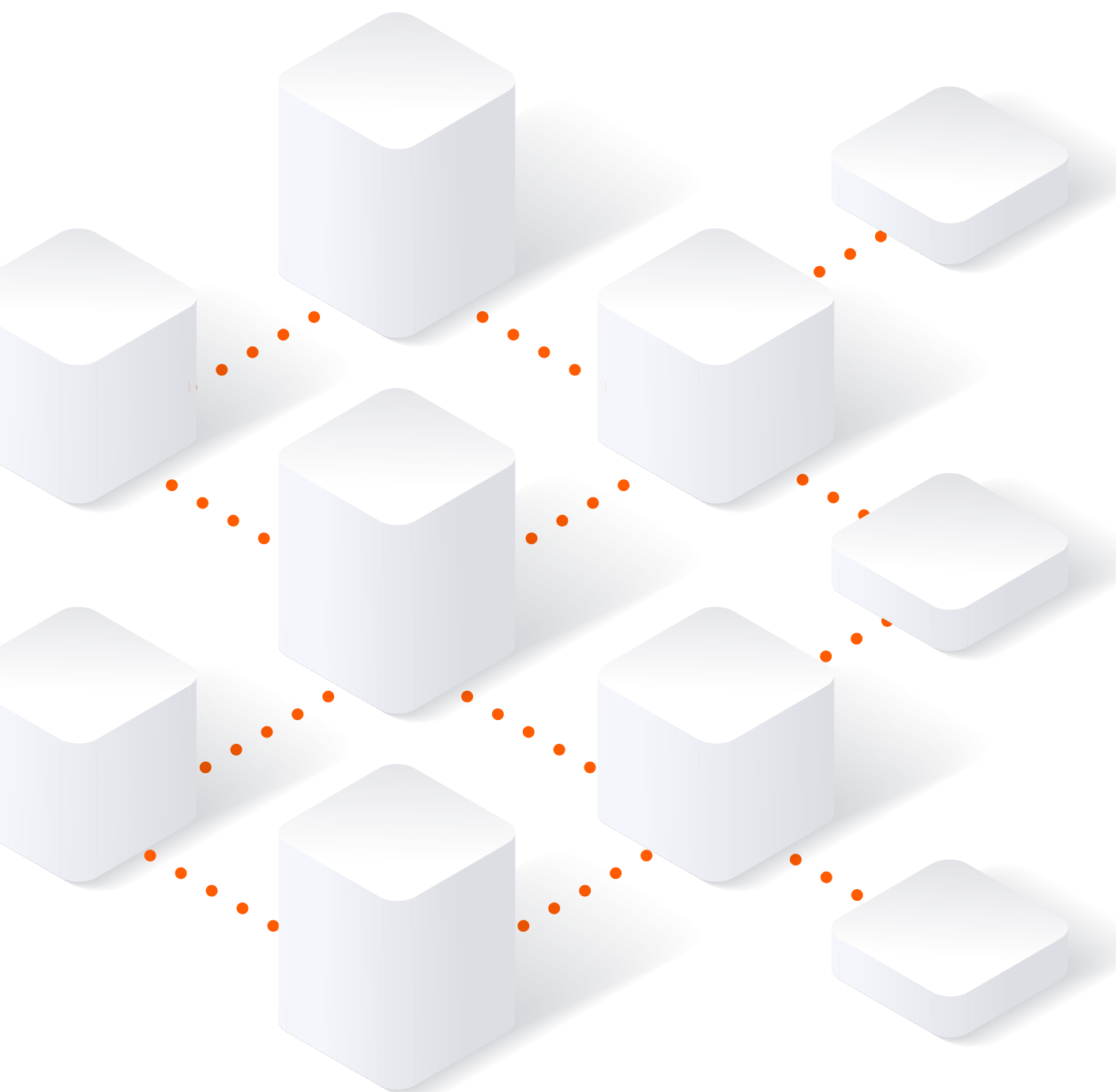
When hiring becomes your primary scaling lever, watch out for the strain it can place on your internal recruiting teams.



Not only are you asking them to fill critical roles, but to identify and close high-quality talent fast enough to keep pace with the business.



Many technology organizations address this by augmenting their internal teams with external partners in high-priority areas, allowing them to scale hiring capacity without compromising on talent quality or slowing down execution.



02 Increase your leadership density

Flattening reduces layers while increasing the need for leadership. This requires organizations to be more deliberate about where they place experienced leaders.

Rather than concentrating your strongest leaders at the top or spreading them evenly across teams, deploy them where the complexity is highest, such as areas with the greatest cross-team dependencies or the highest cost of misalignment.

As decision-making becomes more distributed across fewer layers, leadership must exist throughout the organization instead of at the top. Without increasing leadership density, you run the risk of your organization becoming fragile as too much responsibility becomes concentrated in too few people.

When hiring leaders, look for people with proven experience navigating ambiguity, aligning stakeholders, and making decisions that account for downstream impact across teams. Traditional indicators like team size or scope of ownership are less predictive of success than a leader's experience exerting influence across functions, managing competing priorities, and maintaining alignment in a dynamic environment.

You may also need to rethink how you evaluate and incentivize these leaders, as impact is often created across teams rather than within a single domain. Leaders should be measured both on their team's output and their ability to drive alignment, unblock others, and contribute to broader organizational outcomes.

03 Make alignment a leadership responsibility

Tech organizations that leverage a network-of-teams approach can't rely on their organizational structure to ensure overall alignment. As teams become more autonomous, alignment has to be internally created and maintained instead of externally enforced through hierarchy.

Effective leaders in these environments continuously reinforce priorities, clarify tradeoffs, and ensure that decisions made in one part of the organization don't create unintended consequences in another. They make alignment an ongoing activity by actively connecting roadmaps across teams so they can resolve conflicts before they escalate and help others move faster with confidence.

When hiring, prioritize those who are comfortable operating beyond their immediate scope. Leaders and team members who maintain alignment in network-style organizations are able to influence decisions even when lacking formal authority. They understand not just what their team is responsible for, but how their team's work fits into the broader system, and can adjust accordingly.

In autonomous environments, effective alignment work is largely invisible. In addition to evaluating potential leaders based on their team's execution, make sure to probe their ability to reduce friction across teams, resolve tradeoffs early, and contribute to shared outcomes beyond their immediate domain.

04 Build operating discipline for a distributed environment

Communication, collaboration, and coordination all require intentional effort in a remote or hybrid model. This requires your organization to clearly define how decisions get made, how information is shared, and how teams stay aligned.

Just as importantly, it requires your leaders to consistently reinforce those behaviors so teams know how to operate without in-office oversight.

Prioritize hiring those who can create clarity from ambiguity.



The most effective leaders in distributed organizations are those who make expectations explicit, communicate decisions in a way that others can act on, and establish rhythms that allow teams to stay aligned without relying on proximity.

Where should you start?

Shifting toward a flatter, more autonomous, and more distributed organization is not something you can do all at once.

The good news is that you're probably already operating in this way to some degree. **To make the most out of these trends, the most effective approach is to identify where your organization is under the most strain and start there:**



Evaluate your hiring throughput and quality.

How quickly can you identify and onboard high-judgment talent into critical roles, and where are gaps in hiring affecting execution?



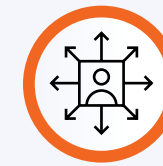
Examine how decisions are actually being made across the organization.

Where are they slowing down, being escalated unnecessarily, or revisited multiple times?



Look at how teams operate relative to one another.

Where are dependencies creating friction, or where are teams moving quickly but producing inconsistent outcomes?



Assess how your leadership is deployed.

Are your most experienced leaders positioned in the areas of highest complexity and impact, or are they concentrated elsewhere?



Final takeaway

As organizations move away from centralized control and toward distributed decision-making, performance is driven by the quality of leadership and talent across the system.

The organizations that get it right are those that:

- ✓ Increase their leadership density where it matters most
- ✓ Treat alignment as an active responsibility
- ✓ Prioritize hiring as a core scaling lever
- ✓ Build operating discipline that allows distributed teams to execute with consistency



Paragon by Riviera Partners helps technology organizations build the leadership and talent systems required to operate at modern speed. We partner with CEOs and HR leaders to identify, evaluate, and place the leaders and talent who can scale decision-making, maintain alignment across teams, and drive consistent execution in increasingly complex environments. Our network spans industries, growth stages, and operating models, giving organizations access to leaders who can navigate ambiguity, connect teams, and translate transformation into sustained impact.

Let us help you build the leadership and talent capacity that turns organizational ambition into execution.

About Riviera Partners

Riviera Partners is a global driver of innovation for today's most influential companies – expertly placing executive talent in the crucial areas of IT, software engineering, product management, security, AI/ML/Data, and design. Riviera combines over two decades of recruiting expertise with a proprietary platform that uses machine learning to score and predict the best candidate for a company's specific needs, driving successful outcomes. As a result, the company has become the go-to talent partner for leading private equity investors, venture capitalists, public companies, and technology innovators.

About Paragon

Paragon by Riviera Partners is a full-service global talent acquisition partner for technology founders, leaders and investors. Working with your hiring team, we help you find talent, scale organizations, and get to market faster.

