

# **Leadership, leader-follower relationship, and subordinates' behaviors during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

Master, International Management & Leadership

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Dornbirn, 29.07.2021

## Abstract

Long before the pandemic leaders were facing advancing technologies leading to digitalization processes, and the multigenerational workforce that changed the values and needs of the subordinates. During the pandemic the way organizations and their workforce are organizing their operations changed drastically and at full speed. In fact, COVID-19 is an accelerating force that is stretching transformational processes to their limits, forcing organization to remote and hybrid working models. We were right to assume that these operational changes had to be made without regards to leaders and subordinates' ability to comply to these challenges. This assumption led us to a main question: "How is remote leadership correlated to the leader-follower relationship, and the subordinates' behaviors in the new workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic?". To answer our question and find these correlations, we identified leadership, leader-follower relationships, and subordinates' behaviors as the key elements we wanted to explore in our theoretical framework. Initially we reviewed previous and well-known transactional and transformational leadership theories that created leadership models helping leaders to create an optimal relationship with their subordinate. Then we reviewed the interrelation between leadership style and subordinate's behavior, that lead to analyzing the most recent transformational leadership theories and models that focus on remote leadership. As "context" is one of the major elements that influence and help unveil one's ability to overcome challenges. We contextualized our theoretical framework to new challenges organizations are facing during the pandemic. We used a qualitative empirical research method, and we selected to proceed using two methodologies in our data collection strategy: "case study", and "semi-structured interviews". We discovered that when leading at distance the teams' needs for interactions that were previously met in the workplace are now missing and have to be replaced. What we observed in our empirical findings, bring us to conclude that leaders should adapt to the subordinates' maturity level and act accordingly to their individual needs. In fact, we are of the opinion that next to a transformational leadership, mediated by Eikenberry and Wayne's "Three O Model of Leadership model and individual approaches tailored to the characteristics of the subordinates will bring their subordinates to high levels of trust in leadership, organizational commitment, and performance. Ultimately, we believe that the fulfilment of the subordinate's will results in operational success for the leaders and the organization. Once forced by COVID-19 in a remote or hybrid environment, in their new "remote role", managers and executives' styles and behaviors correlate to the level of perceived control, and trust they have in their subordinates. We observed that the level of mutual trust correlates to either the positive or the negative intensification of the leader-subordinate relationship. Based on our learnings, findings, and discoveries, in the next chapter we provided the readers with our recommendation and a set of best practices to follow in a remote or hybrid environment.

## Zusammenfassung

Schon lange bevor der Pandemie mussten sich Führungskräfte voranschreitenden Technologien und dem damit verbundenen Digitalisierungsprozess widmen. Genauso veränderten sich die Werte und Bedürfnisse der generationenübergreifenden Belegschaft. Während der Pandemie beschleunigte sich die Art und Weise, wie Unternehmen und ihr Personal ihre Arbeit organisieren, dramatisch. Tatsächlich stellte sich COVID-19 als beschleunigende Kraft heraus, die Transformationsprozesse ans Limit bringt und Organisationen dazu zwingt Remote- und Hybridmodelle einzuführen. Wie angenommen, mussten diese operativen Veränderungen gemacht werden, ohne Rücksicht darauf nehmen zu können, ob Führungskräfte und ihre Belegschaft die Fähigkeit haben diesen Anforderungen zu entsprechen. Diese Annahme führte uns zu der Frage "Wie korreliert "Remote Führung" mit der Beziehung von Leitern und ihren Anhängern und dem Verhalten der ihnen unterstellten Personen in der Arbeitswelt während der COVID-19 Pandemie?

Um diese Frage zu beantworten und die Korrelationen zu finden, haben wir die folgenden Schlüsselemente identifiziert, die wir im theoretischen Rahmen untersuchen werden: Führung, die Beziehung zwischen Leitern und ihren Anhängern sowie das Verhalten von unterstellten Personen. Zunächst befassten wir uns mit den bekannten transaktionalen und transformativen Führungstheorien, die Führungsmodelle entwarfen, um Führungskräften dabei zu helfen eine optimale Beziehung zu ihren Arbeitskräften aufzubauen. Anschließend wurde der Zusammenhang von Führungsstil und dem Verhalten von Untergebenen analysiert, was uns zur Untersuchung der neuesten transformativen Führungstheorien mit dem Fokus auf „Remote Führung“ brachte.

Da "Kontext" eines der Hauptelemente ist, die uns dabei helfen die Fähigkeit Schwierigkeiten zu bewältigen zu erkennen, haben wir diese Herausforderungen, mit denen Unternehmen während der Pandemie konfrontiert sind, in Zusammenhang gebracht. Dafür wurden qualitative empirische Forschungsmethoden verwendet und haben uns für zwei Methodologien zur Datensammlung entschieden: Fallstudie und teilstrukturiertes Interview. Dabei wurde festgestellt, dass remote geführte Teams, Möglichkeiten zum Austausch fehlen, die zuvor am Arbeitsplatz stattgefunden haben und nun ersetzt werden müssen. Was in unseren empirischen Erkenntnissen festgestellt worden ist, bringt uns zum Schluss, dass Führungskräfte sich an den Reifegrad der jeweiligen Arbeitskräfte, und dementsprechend an deren individuellen Bedürfnissen, anpassen müssen. Tatsächlich vertreten wir die Meinung, dass neben einem transformativen Führungsstil, vermittelt von Eikenberry und Waynes "Three O Model of Leadership"-Theorie sowie individuelle Ansätze, die auf die Persönlichkeit des Untergebenen maßgeschneidert sind, zu einem hohen Niveau an Vertrauen in die Führungskraft, sowie zu Engagement und Leistung unter der Belegschaft führt. Letzen Endes glauben wir, dass die Erfüllung der Wünsche von Untergebenen zu operativem Erfolg für Führungskräfte und Unternehmen beiträgt.

Als man durch COVID-19 in eine remote oder hybride Umgebung gezwungen wurde, hingen die Führungsstile mit empfundener Kontrolle sowie Vertrauen in die Untergebenen zusammen. Es wurde festgestellt, dass die Höhe an gegenseitigem Vertrauen mit der entweder positiven oder negativen Entwicklung der Leiter und Anhänger Beziehung zusammenhängen. Basiert auf den Entdeckungen wurde in den nächsten Kapiteln ein Reihe an Vorschlägen und "Best Practices" für remote und hybride Umgebungen bereitgestellt.

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## Abbreviations and Symbols

Abbreviation	Explanation
<b>EUROSTAT</b>	The statistical office of the European Union
<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligences
<b>5G</b>	Fifth generation
<b>IoT</b>	Internet of Things
<b>Gen X</b>	Generation X
<b>Gen Y</b>	Generation Y
<b>Gen Z</b>	Generation Z
<b>Xers</b>	Generation X
<b>1G</b>	First Generation
<b>SLT</b>	Situational Leadership Theory
<b>SME</b>	Small and Medium Size Enterprise

# 1. Introduction

As we are starting our journey to discover the way remote leadership interrelated with the leader-follower relationship, and how did this impact the subordinates' behaviors in the workplace over the course of COVID-19. We would like to take a moment to remember those no longer with us and send our thoughts and prayers to the heroes of this pandemic, the doctors, the nurses, the paramedics, and the volunteers every day risking their lives to save others.

## 1.1.1. COVID-19

The Coronavirus disease 2019, also known as COVID-19, had its first known case identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. Since then, the disease spread worldwide, leading to an ongoing pandemic that as per May 2021 counts over one-hundred-fifty million cases and more than three million deaths worldwide.

The exponential spreading of the virus all over the globe, and the thousands of deaths that followed the few months from the first case discovered in China, drove most governments in the European Union to take drastic measures and impose new hygienic restrictions, social distancing, curfews, and lock downs. However, the new set of regulations did not only impact people by restricting their individual right of association and inhibiting other forms of individual freedoms; it also impacted organizations globally, restricting their operation by placing travel restrictions and travel bans ultimately impeding the right of free movement of workers and goods.

In fact, if over the first months of lockdown we were living our lives in the comfort of our households with the occasional expedition to the so called "essential retailers", the economy worldwide froze, and most companies did not initially know how to react.

According to the data provided by the Statistical Office of the European Union (EUROSTAT), over the initial months of the pandemic the European Economy experienced a severe decrease in industrial production, and a substantial loss in turnover for total trade, wholesale trade, retail trade. However, whilst industrial production has almost been recovered to the pre-crisis levels, the turnover levels had already been regained in the autumn of 2020.

Initially organizations of all sizes did not know how to adapt to this unique scenario, and with the new set of regulations that followed the expansion of the pandemic Companies and their Leaders had to readjust all operations to a "digital environment". However, we are progressing at full speed into the Fourth Industrial Revolution where everything, from creative artworks to scientific breakthroughs, can be digitized and shared with the masses through digital medium of communication.

## 1.1.2. A "Digital World"

As the age of AI, 5G, virtual reality, and quantum computers continues to spread its influence over every industry "*digital*", "*digitization*" and "*digitalization*" are terms that became of common use, often closely associated and used interchangeably as synonyms. However, Brennen and Kreiss argued that there is a clear distinction between them. The authors define "*digitization*" as the processes, of converting an analog stream of information into digital and data driven systems; and "*digitalization*" as the way digital innovation is restructuring many domains of our social and working life around new digital systems. (Brennen, Kreiss, 2016)

The “*Digital World*” revolutionizes around “*Big Data*”, which is available through the “*Internet of Things*” and analyzable in the cloud. Big Data is not only instrumental as source of information, but it is also becoming an undeniable financial asset for any organization. Gartner, focuses its definition on the business aspect of “*digitalization*”, defining it as “the use of digital technologies to change a business model and provide new revenue and value-producing opportunities; it is the process of moving to a digital business.” ([gartner.com/it-glossary](http://gartner.com/it-glossary)).

Whether to increase sales, reduce overall costs, increment the workforce efficiency and performance, or improve their product and services, organizations are collecting, analyzing, sharing, trading “*Big Data*”. However, companies have to enforce innovative business models that will help their people with the transition from an analog world to a digital one. We are living a fundamental transformation in the way we work, and if on one side AI and Machine Learning algorithms are changing the organizational structure and replacing jobs, on the other side digitalization is also opening new career paths and possibilities of entrepreneurship that no one would have think of a few years ago.

Since McKinsey and Co. declared the “War for Talent” (Chambers et al., 1998), companies are creating strategies to attract and retain technical savvy employees. However, whilst digitalization is creating new jobs at the same time it is changing the skills companies are looking for in their people. Digitalization is also changing the way the workforce is interacting, transferring knowledge and cooperating in teamwork. However, if from one side the digital world is changing the way organizations are operating, from staffing to retirement plans, the workforce is naturally becoming younger, and organizations employ a variety of people in different age groups.

### 1.1.3. Generational diversity in the workforce

At the moment the global population is distributed in six generational groups, from the oldest, the veteran generation, to the youngest., the alfa generation. For obvious reasons, at least in the majority of Western countries, these two generations are not part of the workforce.

In fact, the labor population is currently composed by four generations:

- Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964;
- Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980;
- Generation Y or Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996;
- Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012.

**Baby Boomers**, the so called “greatest generation”, were born during or after World War II. The greatest generation is a hard-working group considered to have a positive attitude but often lacking empathy and at times displaying arrogant, and selfish behaviors that could result in conflict and pure despotism. (Agarwal, 2010).

**Generation X**, also known as “Gen X” and “Xers”, were typically raised in a household where both parents were working, and because of that they had to take care of themselves since a young age. The members of this generation are normally self-sufficient, resourceful, and individualistic. The Gen X group is willing to advance their career, seems to be eager to get ahead, are not afraid to change employers, and can easily accustom to changes (Kane, 2010).

**Generation Y**, also known as “Gen Y” and “*Millennials*”, tend to be different from the previous generations. This group grew up with direct access to the first generation of digital devices

such as home PCs, cell phones and also the first to use the internet from a young age. They are digital natives and digitally omnipresent, prefer digital communication and digital knowledge-sharing platforms, and are at ease with change and cultural differences. The Gen Y group is focused on success, career, and money but require meaningful work with solid learning opportunities from their employers. However, Millennials are likely to renounce to high paying jobs for fewer working hours, and flexible work environments (Kane, 2010).

**Generation Z**, also known as Gen Z and the “Facebook Generation”, was born into a globalized and digitized world, deeply changed by the technological breakthroughs we have experienced since the 2000s. The Gen Z group feels efficient in this world, and it is important for them to be surrounded by a technological environment. Similarly, to Gen Y, the “*Facebook Generation*” is not not afraid of continuous changes and feel empowered by the “*Internet of Things*”, where they find all the information they are looking for as well all the solutions to their problems (Tari, 2011). The members of Gen Z group that has already joined the labor market, are an excellent workforce characterized by being professionally ambitious and owning a high-level of technical knowledge and technical know-how. (Elmore, 2014).

These generations are different and the differences in behavior, values, and motivators propose a difficult challenge for organizations and their leaders. As observed above digitalization has a primary role in restructuring and changing the values of the youngest generations that are careerist, open to changes, and not afraid to speak their minds. These flexible and adaptable generations ask from their employers the same flexibility and adaptability and are aspiring to work for a purpose in a flexible work environment. The new values of Gen Y, and Gen Z are affecting the way corporations are designing their organizations, opening the way for teams to work in new and flexible work environments.

#### 1.1.4. New Workplaces

In a Globalized World, digitalization helped and is helping Leaders and their teams, distributed all over the world, to find solutions for all the challenges a global and distributed workforce might face. Based on where individuals working in teams physically operate from, Eikenberry and Turmel, in “The Long-Distance Leader”, identified three main work environments. The three different types of teams that are generated from this differentiation are:

- **Co-located teams.** In this type of teams “everyone is working in the same location the vast majority of the time.”
- **Completely remote teams.** According to the authors, “in remote-teams people work together toward a common goal, but they do most of their work physically separated from each other. Most communication then will not be face-to-face. A classic example is a sales manager with one direct report per region.”
- **Hybrid teams.** Here “some people share a workspace; others are in other locations. This might include full-time teleworkers, people in other offices, or even those working on a client site. A subset of the hybrid team is when people work from home a couple of days a week—or whenever they feel like it. If you’ve ever held a meeting with some people in a conference room and others dialing in on a speakerphone, you know there are some unique challenges. One of the fastest-changing challenges for hybrid teams is that people are constantly changing where they work—sometimes they’re in the office, sometimes they’re away—so processes and access to information can change almost daily. Your team might be a hybrid, with most people in the office one day, then completely virtual the next.”

Any of these teams can be found across organizations in all industries, with maybe some small variations depending on some specific needs of a department. However, while some organizations are oriented towards a more conservative workplace preferring their teams to operate in co-located environments, on the other side of the spectrum we find many others leading the change and operating fully remote since their inception. Gitlab Inc. are the pioneers of creating a fully remote organization, and because of their “*Open Source*” culture they are building a platform with the aim to understand how remote work is changing our society and the way people interact at work.

GitLab surveyed 3,000 professionals, aged 21 and older, having roles with digital outputs, who work remotely or at least have the option to work remotely. According to Gitlab Inc. survey in 2020 more than one in four of the respondents was operating in an all-remote organization, an organization with no offices, and employees distributed all over the globe and operating asynchronously.

Although the essential functions of supporting a multinational team do not change when that team is working remotely, some of the details do. We could argue whether remote organizations and working remote are in fact the “future of work” but we cannot deny that remote teams and remote organizations are here to stay. However, working remote is not for every individual and might not work in every organizations.

Nevertheless, over these times of Covid-19 organizations could mostly only operate remote, and have employed most of their workforce in hybrid and/or remote teams. As we can observe from the data provided by the EUROFOUND in the graphic below all over the European Union most of the workforce was able to operate exclusively or at least partially remote over the pandemic.

## Remote Work over the Pandemic

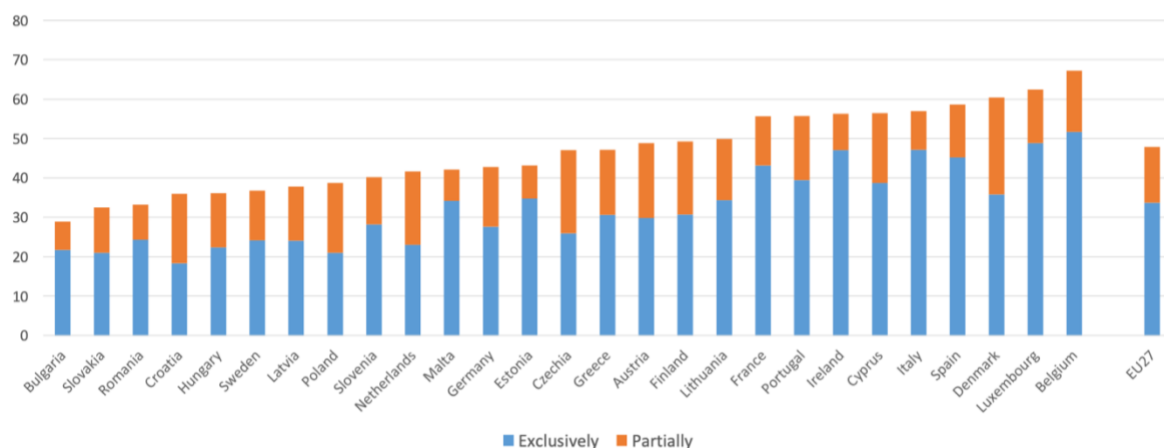


Figure 1: Teleworking During the Pandemic. Source: International Labor Organization (ILO), EUROFOUND

Hybrid and Remote teams call the need for a new Leader, a “*Remote Leader*”. A leader able to quickly adapt to changes and comfortable to use digital mediums of communication to influence their subordinates now operating remotely.

### 1.1.5. Remote Leadership

Over the past decades, organizations have made remote working arrangements with their employees, creating a distributed workforce that is now widespread. In most cases, besides helping them to better handle workplace-related challenges, leaders have a profound influence on their subordinates and could be able to evoke a spirit of innovation and creativity and inspire their followers to reach their full potential.

Digitalization, and the change in values of the new Generations have modified the workplace and forged new ways of working. Extra-ordinary times require extra-ordinary Leaders, and indeed the times we are living in, are all but ordinary. COVID-19 has been accelerating the process and forced organization to use extra-ordinary measures. Therefore, we need Leaders that can “inspire followers to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the organization and are capable of having a profound and extraordinary effect on their followers.” Robbins, Judge (2007) Organizational Behavior, Twelfth Edition, Pearson p.437.

Kelloway et al. (2003) defined Remote Transformational Leadership as “interactions characterized by electronically-mediated communication between geographically and physically isolated leaders and followers.” E. K., Kelloway; J., Barling; E., Kelley; J., Comtois; B. Gatién. “Remote transformational leadership”. Leadership & Organization Development Journal 24/3 (2003) pp. 163-171

Over the ongoing pandemic, leaders and their subordinates have been operating at least to some extent remotely. However, as mentioned above working remote is not for every individual and some might find it difficult to adjust to a remote work environment.

## 1.2. Problem Statement

If Digitalization and the generational change in values have been transforming the way companies design their structure and orchestrate their operations, creating new ways of working and flexible work environments, COVID-19 was an accelerating force that stretched this transformational process to its limits as it forced organization to a remote model without any regards to their readiness levels.

The organizational changes induced by the new advancement in technology and the flexibility requested by the new generations present in the workforce have been challenging all type of organizations for at least the past two decades. From what observed above we can deduct that before the pandemic we had organizations that would have either a) already embrace the new way of work and had teams in their ranks operating in hybrid or remote environments; or b) were in the process of experimenting new ways of work and had their teams or part of them operating in a hybrid environment; or c) were not interested in moving their operations and their workforce to a hybrid or remote workplace, and were either eager to keep operating in a co-located work environment.

As we observed, due to the restrictions that followed the pandemic, most companies moved their operation to teleworking. Hence, to keep the same productivity levels all organizations, their teams and leaders had to adapt to the new environment.

Therefore, our intent is to understand **how “Remote Leadership” interrelated with the Leader-Follower relationship and the subordinates’ behaviors in the workplace during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

### 1.3. Objective Statement

The objective of our paper is to review the characteristics remote leaders should possess to lead and motivate their subordinates in a remote environment with the intent to create a set of recommendation for all leaders. We also aim to create a list of behavioral recommendation coming from the investigation of leader-follower relationships in a remote environment, and its interrelation to the subordinates' behavior in the workplace over the course of the pandemic.

We hope our research will help leaders and followers sharing, exchanging, and improving knowledge and experiences in remote environments.

### 1.4. Structure of the thesis

After the introductory phase of our paper, we will be introducing our theoretical framework in the second chapter. Over this chapter we will be reviewing the literature on "Situational Leadership theory", "Transformational Leadership theory", "Charismatic Leadership theory", and "Distributed Leadership theory". We will be focusing on the role of the relationship between leaders and their followers, and on the subordinates' behavior in the workplace, leadership styles and the subordinates' behaviors interrelation, exploring also multigenerational factors. We will be reviewing the most recent literature on remote leadership theories and models.

In the third chapter we will be concentrating on case studies having as subjects remote leaders and their subordinates' behaviors during the pandemic. We will be reviewing how organizations have been successfully operating remote and identify the best practices that will be ultimately help as a reference for our conclusion.

In the fourth chapter of our paper will be describing the research methodology we used to unveil our empirical findings that we will be analyzing in the fifth chapter. Following the analysis of the results of our research, we will discuss the outcome of our investigation in the sixth unit of our work. We will be concluding our work in the seventh chapter, where we will be to our conclusion and deliver a set of practical recommendation for leaders and followers working in Remote or Hybrid environments.

### 1.5. Dissociation

Our paper does not have the intent to investigate or provide recommendation on Crisis Management, Talent Management, or Change Management over an international emergency. Neither we are posing any objective aiming at the creation of a new leadership model especially tailored for extra-ordinary time.

### 1.6. Definition of Terms

For the purpose of clarification, the important terms used in this paper have been defined using the Oxford English Dictionary as a reference. The following terms are:

**Artificial intelligence** - is the study and development of computer systems that can copy intelligent human behavior.

**Fifth generation** - used to describe technology that has been developed to send data to mobile phones, etc. at higher speeds than fourth-generation devices.



**Digitization** - the process of changing data into a digital form that can be easily read and processed by a computer.

**Digitalization** - the process of changing data into a digital form that can be easily read and processed by a computer.

**Big data** - sets of information that are too large or too complex to handle, analyze or use with standard methods

**Fourth Industrial Revolution** - is the ongoing automation of traditional manufacturing and industrial practices, using modern smart technology.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

A company is a universe with a myriad of microcosmos where group dynamics dictate the environment. Digitalization, a diverse and changing workforce, and ultimately COVID-19, have been pushing organizations and their leaders to react to the different challenges they have been confronted with

In the following sub-chapters, we will be reviewing the theoretical foundations of our paper.

### 2.1. Leadership Theories

#### 2.1.1. Transactional and Transformational Leadership

Over the course of this paper, we have analyzed transactional leadership theories such as the path-goal theory. If *transactional leaders'* characteristics enable guidance and motivation in their followers, *transformational leaders* can "inspire followers to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the organization and are capable of having a profound and extraordinary effect on their followers." S.P., Robbins; T.A., Judge. "Organizational Behavior, Twelfth Edition, Pearson (2007) p. 437.

The first to further develop the concept of "*transformational leadership*", was leadership expert and presidential biographer James MacGregor Burns. Burns affirmed that leaders can either have transformational or transactional characteristics.

However, was Bernard M. Bass in 1985 that developed what is today referred to as Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory by describing the cognitive mechanisms that determine transformational and transactional leadership.

Bass (1990) suggests that if transformational leadership could be based on one's background characteristics, values, ethics, or traits, then these traits were universal to mankind.

Below we list the characteristics of transactional and transformational Leaders as identified by Bass in "*From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision*".

---

#### Transactional Leader

**Contingent Reward:** Contract exchange of rewards for effort, promises rewards for good performance, recognizes accomplishments.

**Management by Exception (active):** Watches and searches for deviations from rules and standards, takes. Corrects action.

**Laissez-Faire:** Abdicates responsibilities, avoids making decisions.

---

#### Transformational Leader

**Idealized influence:** Provides vision and sense of mission, instills pride, gains respect and trust.

**Inspirational Motivation:** Communicates high expectations, uses symbols to focus efforts, expresses important purposes in simple ways.

**Intellectual Stimulation:** Promotes intelligence, rationality, and careful problem solving.

**Individualized Consideration:** Gives personal attention, treats each employee individually, coaches and advises.

*Figure 2: Transactional and Transformational Leadership styles. Bass, Avolio. Source: S.P., Robbins; T.A., Judge. "Organizational Behavior, Twelfth Edition, Pearson (2007) p. 437.*

### 2.1.2. Situational Leadership Theory

The Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) is a contingency theory that focuses on the followers and their readiness. Effective Leaders are those able to change according to the "situation" and adapt their style in response to the subordinate level of maturity. Situational leadership theory varies according to circumstances, maturity of the leaders, the level of knowledge, and skills.

According to Robbins and Judge, the leader–follower relationship has similarities to the relationship between parents and their children. As parental control diminishes over time with the development of the infant through the different stages of life to adulthood, so too should Leaders adapt their behavior in relation to the level of maturity of their subordinates.

Hersey and Blanchard identified four specific leaders' behaviors, from highly directive to highly delegating, and their work concluded that "the most effective behavior depends on a follower's ability and motivation". SLT opens different scenarios and attribute to each circumstance a different management style. Hersey and Blanchard identified four different leadership styles in their Situational Leadership Theory.

**Directing** - when something is new and there is little to no knowledge to the task, everyone would need to start with some directions. However, when confronted by new challenge such as a new work environment, followers could be unable, unwilling, or insecure. Unable because of lack of pre-existing experience, unwilling or insecure as direct result of their relationship with their leaders. This group of followers will need clear and precise guidance over this period and as long as their motivational levels remain low. Hersey and Blanchard suggest leaders to use a directing leadership style when the maturity level of their followers is low, and ask leaders to give clear and specific directions, as the subordinate has to be instructed on every aspect of the tasks, they will be responsible for.

**Coaching** - after the initial phase of adaptation, subordinates do possess more knowledge, but they are still inexperienced, as they just started adapting their existing set of skills to the new task whilst having to learn new ones. However, what differentiate followers in this stage of maturity is their motivations. Followers in this group might not have the knowledge needed to deliver the task but if motivated they will be willing to take the extra steps their leaders ask from them.

The authors suggest that over this period of growth and adaptation in addition to following their subordinates to assure their operational success, leaders have to encourage their subordinates in order to build the basis for a strong commitment and relationship.

**Supporting** - in the supporting phase, although the staff is knowledgeable their performance is still somewhat inconsistent in the delivery and not yet fully committed to their leader's vision and their organization goals. As the subordinates are confronted for the first time with the tasks they have been preparing for, they might experience lack of results for quite a time. The lack of results might cause frustration that could negatively impact the follower motivations, interest, and enthusiasm levels. Over this period, Leaders need to trust their subordinates with

the tasks of their responsibility and focus on their relationship. Leaders must create a bond with their followers and empower them.

**Delegating** - over the delegating phase leaders have to monitor the results of their team members while still being part of the decision-making process. The energy level of the subordinates in this phase has to be regularly observed by their leaders that should commit to further develop their subordinates and the relationship they have, creating opportunities to focus on each of them individually.

As we have observed above the Situational Leadership theory finds in the role of the followers, in their ability to learn and/or to adapt, and in their motivations, the primary factors that a leader need to take into consideration when selecting what type of behavior, they should adopt. Hence, the leadership style can compensate to the follower lack of previous experience and expertise and to their motivational limitations. Below a graphical representation of the Situational Leadership model in correlation to the stage of development of the follower.

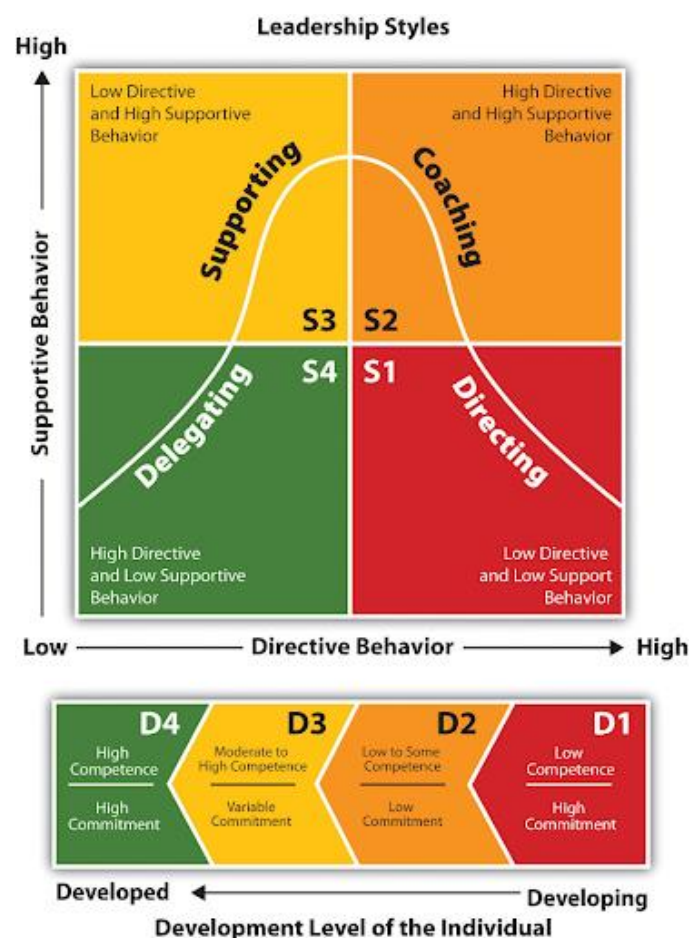


Figure 3: Hersey and Blanchard Situational Leadership model. Source: S.P., Robbins; T.A., Judge. "Organizational Behavior, Twelfth Edition, Pearson (2007)

According to Blanchard and Ridge in "Improve your career performance", situational leaders to be effective must master three fundamental skills: competence, partnering for performance, and flexibility. Leaders' knowledge and their individual skills represent the set of competence they put at disposal of the organization and the team in any phase of the development. The ability of leader of partnering with their staff opens communication between them and their direct reports and increases the quality and quantity of the conversations. S.P., Robbins; T.A., Judge. "Organizational Behavior, Twelfth Edition, Pearson (2007)

Leaders that can adapt their leadership style to the contingency they are confronted with, are enabling their followers to move through the development phases. A Leader's ability to move from one leadership style to the other is a fundamental element for the success of the subordinates, and ultimately the organization they both are serving. Although flexibility being a crucial expertise, most managers don't seem to have acquired it yet.

Blanchard's and Ridge's research result have led to the conclusion that "54% of leaders tend to use only one management style, 35% tend to use two styles, 10% percent tend use three styles, and only 1% use four styles." However, "to be effective, leaders must be able to use all four styles". K. Blanchard, G., Ridge. "Improve Your Career Performance". Pearson Prentice Hall, 1 edition (2013)

### 2.1.3. The Path-Goal Theory

Martin G. Evans was the first to theorize that leadership behaviors and the follower perceptions of the degree to which following a particular behavior (path) will lead to a particular outcome (goal). R.J., House. "Path-goal theory of leadership: Lessons, legacy, and a reformulated theory". *Leadership Quarterly*. 7 (3): (1996) pp. 323–352.

Influenced by the work of Evans, Robert House developed, in 1970, the *Path-Goal Theory* that "proposes two classes of contingency variables that moderate the leadership behavior-outcome relationship – those in the environment that are outside the control of the employee (task structure, the formal authority system, and the work group) and those that are part of the personal characteristics of the employee. (locus of control, experience, and perceived ability)." S.P., Robbins; T.A., Judge. "Organizational Behavior, Twelfth Edition, Pearson (2007) p .416

### The Path-Goal Leadership Theory

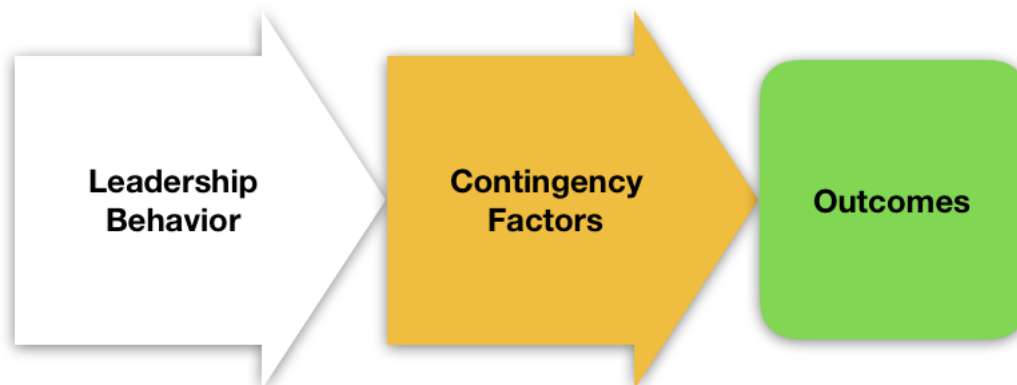


Figure 4: Path-Goal Theory, Source: M.A, Hitt; C.C. Miller; A., Colella. "Organizational Behavior: A Strategic Approach, Second Edition". Wiley. (2008)

According to House in "A path-goal theory of leader effectiveness", "leaders will have to engage in different types of leadership behavior depending on the nature and the demands of a particular situation. It is a leaders' commitment to assist their followers in attaining goals and to provide the direction and support needed to ensure that their goals are compatible with the organization's goals." R.J., House. "A path-goal theory of leader effectiveness". *Administrative Science Quarterly*. 16 (3): (1971) pp. 321–339.

House identified achievement-oriented, directive, participative, and supportive leadership behaviors:

- **Directive leadership:** this type of leadership style is adopted when the leader is letting the followers know what is expected of them and is telling them how to perform their tasks. The theory argues that this behavior has the most positive effect when the subordinates' role and task demands are ambiguous and intrinsically satisfying. R.J., House.; T.R.Mitchell. "Path-goal theory of leadership". Journal of Contemporary Business. 3: (1974). pp. 1-97.
- **Achievement-oriented leadership:** this behavior refers to situations where the leader sets challenging goals for followers, expects them to perform at their highest level, and shows confidence in their ability to meet this expectation. R.J., House.; T.R., Mitchell. "Path-goal theory of leadership". Journal of Contemporary Business. 3: (1974). pp. 1-97.
- **Participative leadership:** involves leaders consulting with followers and asking for their suggestions before deciding. This behavior is predominant when subordinates are highly personally involved in their work. R.J., House. "Path-goal theory of leadership: Lessons, legacy, and a reformulated theory". Leadership Quarterly. 7 (3): (1996) pp. 323-352.
- **Supportive leadership:** is directed towards the satisfaction of subordinates needs and preferences. The leader shows concern for the followers' psychological well-being. R.J., House.; T.R., Mitchell. "Path-goal theory of leadership". Journal of Contemporary Business. 3: (1974). pp. 1-97.

According to House, the environmental factors are the ones determining the type of leader behavior that is required to complement the follower and assure the outcomes are to be maximized, while the personal characteristics of the subordinates are determining how the entire environment and leader behavior are interpreted. The Path-Goal theory proposes that leaders' behavior is to be considered effective when their central purpose is to help their subordinates defining and reaching their goals efficiently.

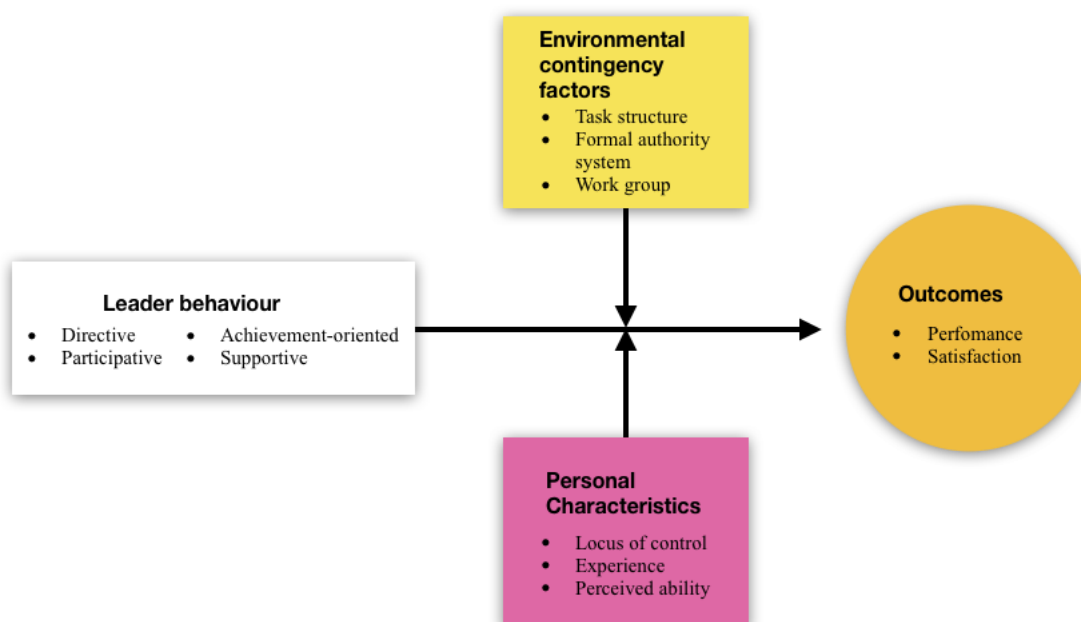


Figure 5: S.P., Robbins; T.A., Judge. "Organizational Behavior". Twelfth Edition, Pearson (2007) p.416

According to DeCaro in "an Investigation of Path-Goal Theory, Relationship of Leadership Style, Supervisor- Related Commitment, and Gender" (2005), the adoption of appropriate behavior depends on the change in situational factors like organizational culture, task

uncertainty, and subordinates' characteristics ... the path-goal theory focuses on "leaders influence[ing] subordinates' perceptions of their work goal, personal goals and paths toward goal attainment". D.A., DeCaro, *Emerging Leadership Journeys*, Vol.6 Iss. 1, pp. 13-44 © 2013 Regent University School of Business & Leadership

Using different leadership styles as tools to engage with their followers depending on the nature of their personal characteristics, could help leaders and their organizations.

In fact, "leadership style appears to be a "practical" tool for answering the ... need for an engaged workforce, particularly since service specificities and high levels of environmental complexity characterize the sector" (Sarti, 2014, p. 213)

However, the attempt to test the Path-Goal theory brought the scholars taking different positions with regards to the House's theory. Robbins and Judge argued that the "jury is still out regarding the validity of the path-goal theory because it is so complex to test, that may remain the case for some time to come". Robbins, Judge (2007) *Organizational Behavior*, Twelfth Edition, Pearson p.417

#### **2.1.4. Charismatic Leadership Theories**

The first scholar to discuss charismatic authority was the sociologist, historian, jurist, and political economist, Max Weber. Acclaimed as one of the most important theorists of the western society, Weber's idea revolutionized social science.

Weber distinguished three bases of legitimate authority: the rational, the traditional, and the charismatic, emphasizing the importance of charisma as an innovating power in the institutional sphere.

Weber defines the term "charisma" to be applied "to certain qualities of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from other men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities."

According to Weber these qualities are not accessible to ordinary people, but "are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader". Weber finds the only basis of legitimacy for the charismatic authority is the "personal charisma" of the Leader, and according to Weber if the charismatic leader is perceived as such by the followers, the charismatic inspiration remains.

The leader - follower relationship is for Weber a communistic and collective relationship, where the leadership tends to live primarily in a community providing the means for the followers as which a voluntary gift.

However, Robert House was the first to consider Charismatic Leadership in terms of organizational behavior and have been developing his theory over the years. In his charismatic leadership theory House affirms that followers "make attributions of heroic or extraordinary leadership abilities when they observe certain behaviors".

According to House "the characters of the charismatic leaders include self-confidence in subordinates, ideological vision, and use of personal example", while the followers characteristics are: "identification with the leader's mission, exhibit extreme loyalty to and confidence in leader, emulate the leader's values, behaviors and derive self-esteem from their relationship with the leader". A. Chandramohan, *Human Resource Management (text and cases)*. APH Publishing. (2008) pp 235

To communicate the vision to subordinates, Charismatic Leaders need to showcase high levels of self-confidence, dominance, influence, and strong conviction.

Personal characteristics	Behaviors	Effects on Followers
Dominant	Sets strong role model	Trust in leader's ideology
Desire to influence	Shows competence	Belief similarity between leader and follower
Self-confident	Articulates goals	Unquestioning acceptance
Strong moral values	Communicates high expectations	Affection toward leader
	Expresses confidence	Obedience
	Arouses motives	Identification with leader
		Emotional involvement
		Heightened goals
		Increased Confidence

Figure 6: R. J., House, *Charismatic Leadership Theory*. Source: P.G., Northouse. "Leadership: Theory and Practice, Seventh Edition." SAGE Publications, Inc. (2016)

In "The Motivational Effects of Charismatic Leadership: A Self-Concept Theory", the authors identified four-steps process for Charismatic Leaders to effectively influence others.

1. A Vision – leaders need to have a clear long-term strategy for developing talents and how to attain goals. In the case of talent development this vision could for example represent career growth for the employee, and a better future for the individual and for the organization.
2. A vision statement – a formal articulation of an organization mission. In terms of talent development, we could take as an example of Deloitte mission where they embraced an environment focused on develop employee and improve productivity, performance, and engagement.
3. Set expectations – over this step leaders are setting high performance expectations and motivating the team
4. Extra-ordinary behavior – with this last step the leader sets an admirable behavior that sets as an example to follow for others. Leaders with a diversified set of skills and experience, that keep learning and improving will set high educational standards that will lead the follower to develop in an environment that promote learning.

Based on the four steps process B. Smamir; R.J. House; M.B. Arthur, "The Motivational Effects of Charismatic Leadership: A Self-Concept Theory". Organisation Science (1993) pp.577-94

In organizations having in their ranks Charismatic Leaders, followers will be most likely to positively confront the challenges they are faced with.



### 2.1.5. Distributed Leadership

Over time, the concept of distributed leadership has been called with names such as “dispersed” (Gordon, 2010), “co-leadership” (Vine et al., 2008), “shared” (Conger and Pearce, 2009) and “rotated” or “team” leadership. Moving to a more interactive collaborative process that brings to the core the importance of human abilities and human relationships.

However, “distributed leadership theories do not disavow vertical leadership, but propose gifted leaders to lead from behind by empowering their subordinates”. J. Bratton. “Organizational Leadership”. SAGE Publications, Inc. (2020) p.183

Academics have defined distributed leadership as “an interactive process disassociated from the Organizational hierarchy (Harris and Spillane, 2008). Executive leaders are normally decision makers involved in strategy formulation (Parker, 2018).

On the other side, in distributed leadership the people involved have less power but engaged in operational activities, which, it is argued, could have a positive impact on developing employee cohesion and vision building. (Ensley et al., 2006) Also, research evidence suggested that distributed leadership has a positive relationship with performance outcomes (Ensley et al., 2006)

Since the 1980s concerns with regards to “re-engineer” organizations (Hammer and Champy, 1993), to create “lean” workplaces (Womack et al., 1990), have been at the centre of academics and practitioners’ discussions. The self-management work teams (SMWT) movement intent is to redesign organisations to allow members to undertake a wider range of tasks, including self-inspection, decision making and leadership responsibilities (Bratton, 2020).

The SMWT movement stresses the importance of nurturing a culture in which team members can take part into decision making processes, quality assurance and leadership. In this leadership model *Human Resource Management* has a crucial role as the reward is focused on quality and not on quantity and learning and development is implementing training to increase leadership skills at every level of the organization.

In this scenario, it is crucial for Human Resource Management and Leadership to be aligned on the new organizational architecture and work practice (Danford. et al., 2008).

To enable a high-performance team is generally necessary a mutual reciprocation in the leader-follower relationship: “leaders develop high commitment and trust-building work practices, and, in return, subordinates experience higher levels of job autonomy, involvement and leadership engagement (Boxall and Macky, 2009; Bridger, 2015).” J., Bratton. “Organizational Leadership”. SAGE Publications, Inc. (2020) p.184

In order to practice distributed leadership, John Bratton suggested to organise the work characteristics into four main groups: structural and job design, HRM policies and practices, the behaviour of appointed leaders, and organizational culture and climate.

Below a graphical representation of the author's suggestion on how to organize the organization when leaders choose to adopt a distributed or shared leadership model in their work.

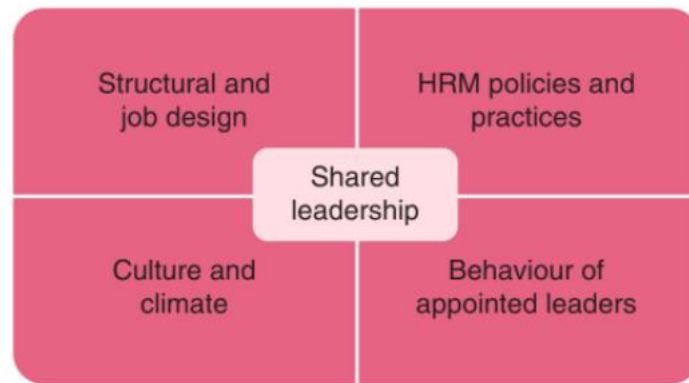


Figure 7: Practicing Distributed Leadership, . Bratton. "Organizational Leadership". SAGE Publications, Inc. (2020) p.187

**Structural and job design** - the structural and organisational design is an organisational configuration of the roles and the "modus operandi" of the organization, normally displayed in an organizational chart. The organizational charts play a crucial role in an autonomous distributed environment facilitating knowledge sharing and decision making. Job design is the process of assigning tasks to a role and its correlation with other roles in the organization.

**Human Resources Management policies and practices** - as previously mentioned, Human Resources Management policies and practices must be aligned with leadership in order to create a reward policies and bonus structures focused on the quality of the deliverables and trainings developing leadership skills among the members of the organization.

**Behaviour of appointed leaders** - leaders must nurture the development of decentralized autonomous decision-making environments and researchers have found that when multi-tasking and autonomy is sponsored by leaders self-managed work teams (SMWT) are more likely to develop shared/team leadership skills (Bratton, 2020).

**Culture and climate** - undoubtedly, what so far observed is all related to the culture and the climate the organization can create and nurture. A Distributed organization to be successful must make all the aspects observed as part of their culture. Scholars have identified the importance of culture and climate and the influence these two elements have on group behaviour and shared leadership. (Bratton, 2020)

## 2.2. Leadership styles and subordinates' behavior interrelation

### 2.2.1. Leadership Styles

According to Avolio and Bass (1991), "people's implicit theories of leadership are likely to be more transformational than transactional".

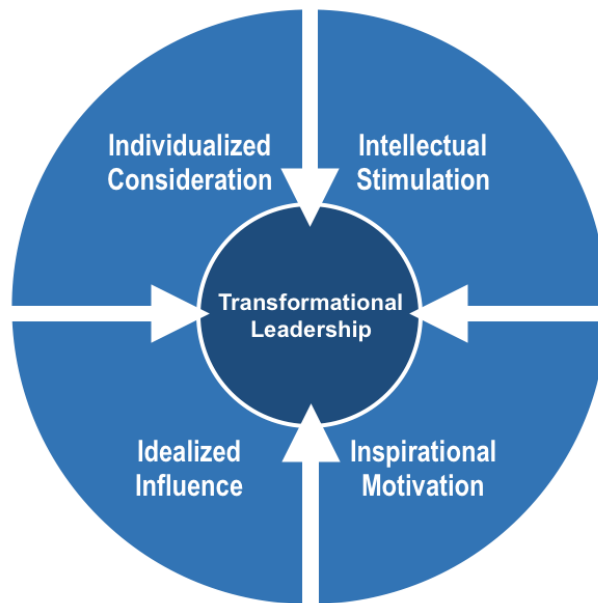


Figure 8: B.M. Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory. Source: B.M., Bass., "From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision", *Organisational Dynamics*, Winter (1990)

In the Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) Avolio and Bass (1991) distinguished transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership styles.

As shown in the graphical representation below, these leadership styles can be sorted according to a leader's engagement towards their team from passive to active and increased effectiveness. In the second edition of Full Range Leadership Development, Bruce J. Avolio's, affirms that "how people, timing, resources, the context of interaction, and expected results in performance and motivation all contribute to effective leadership." B.J., Avolio. "Full Range Leadership Model, Second Edition." (2011)

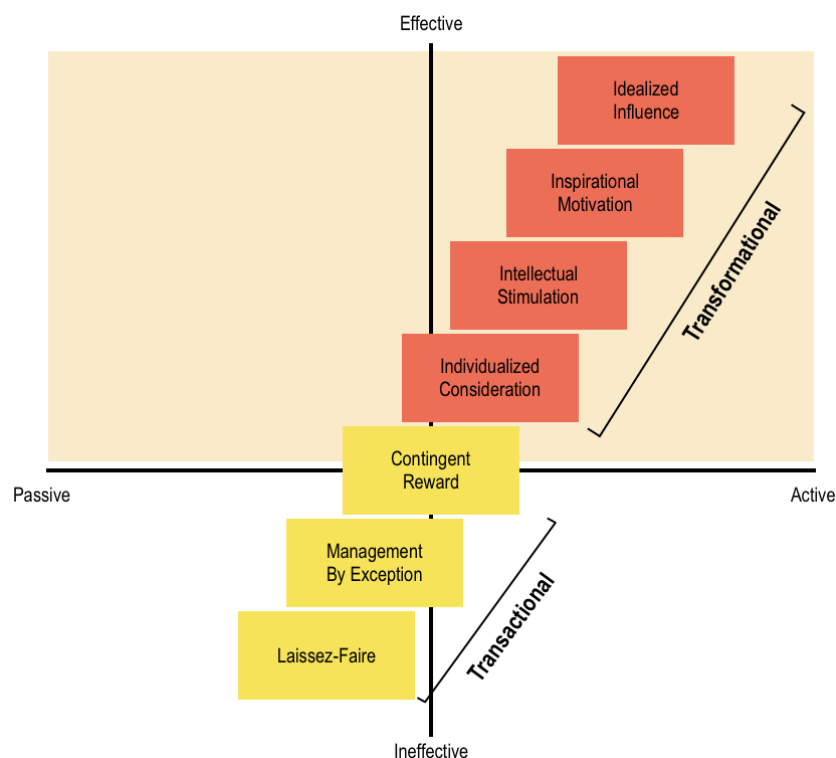


Figure 9: Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) Avolio and Bass (1991) Source: S.P., Robbins; T.A., Judge. "Organizational Behavior, Twelfth Edition". Pearson. (2007) p.438

As can be observed above the “Laissez-Faire Leadership Style” is most passive and ineffective of the leadership behaviours and has no influence in generating motivation in the follower and not indicated to be embraced by Leaders embracing the hard challenge of creating a learning organisation.

Leaders that manage their followers by exception are still considered ineffective by the authors. This type of leadership behaviour is characterised by the tendency of the leader to be accessible only in the presence of an issue. The “contingency reward” leadership behaviour can in certain cases be effective. However, the motivation of the follower is contingent to a compensation and has no impact in creating engagement in the follower that will go beyond the reward.

The four remaining behaviours are characteristics of Bass’ Transformational Leadership model. As previously mentioned, transformational leadership is characterised by the “inspire followers to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the organization and are capable of having a profound and extraordinary effect on their followers.” S.P., Robbins; T.A., Judge. “Organizational Behavior, Twelfth Edition”. Pearson. (2007) p.437.

An organisation needs leaders able with their vision to generate an influence in their subordinates that brings followers to run the “extra-mile”. Leaders giving personal attention to their teams, treating everyone with consideration and providing coaching advice have talent development as a clear priority. In this scenario, we can only assume that Transformational Leaders should be able to reduce the insufficiency of talents they are confronted with.

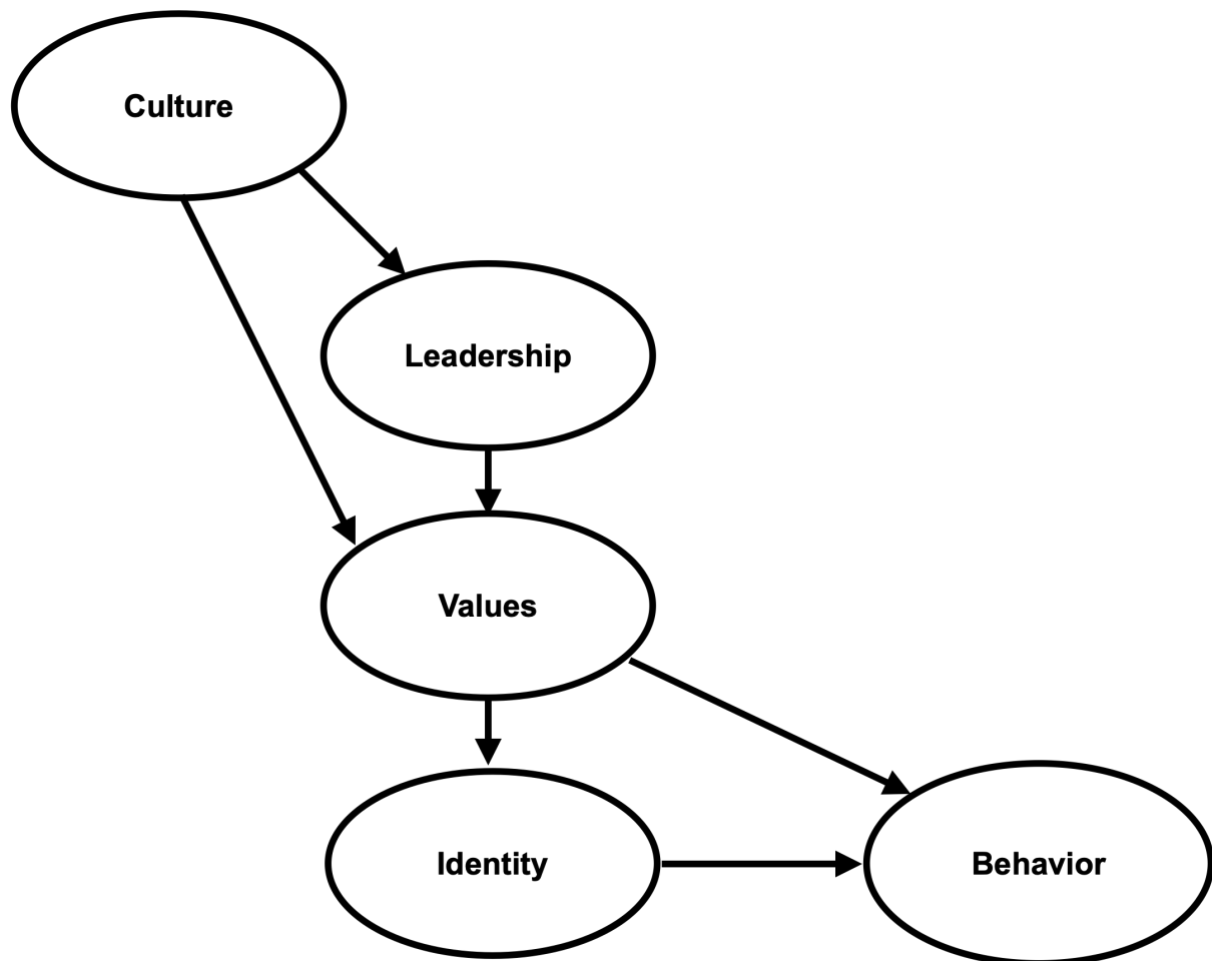
However, Bass identifies the risk of confusing authentic transformational leadership with what the scholars identified as *pseudo-transformational leadership*. The author assesses the contrast between authentic and pseudo “in terms of the four components of transformational leadership: “idealized influence” (or charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. B. M., Bass; P. Steidlmeier. “ETHICS, CHARACTER, AND AUTHENTIC TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP”. Center for Leadership Studies, School of Management, Binghamton University, NY. (1999)

### **2.2.2. Subordinates’ Behavior**

As observed over the leadership theories reviewed in this paper, leaders that can best adapt to the subordinates’ maturity level and act accordingly to their individual needs are the ones capable to inspire their followers and help them throughout their development.

Crowe et al. (1972) experiment is a remarkable example of how leaders confronted with variations in their subordinates’ behaviour will adapt their behaviors to match the subordinates’ need. According to the findings of the authors this is meant to happen even if it means for the leader to completely reverse their style. In the experiment the subjects acted as democratic and autocratic managers and were assigned both democratic and autocratic subordinates. The authors found that both types of managers adapted to their subordinates’ preference despite their own could be found on the other side of the spectrum. The results lead to the conclusion that the subordinate’s behavior is strong enough to take the leader from one side of the spectrum to the other.

According to what we observed so far transformational leaders can inspire their followers by providing them with support, mentoring and coaching whilst aligning the objectives and goals of each individual team member to the objectives and goals of their organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006)



*Figure 10: Linkage of exogenous factors (Culture and Leadership) to subordinates' internal self-regulator structures (Values and Self-Concepts). Source: R.G., Lord; D.J., Brown. "Leadership, values, and subordinate self-concepts". The Leadership Quarterly,*

In their model, Lord and Brown, implied "that leaders are an immediate source of activation for values and identities, but that culture can also have an important effect. Because both values (Schwartz, 1999) and self-concepts (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) have been tied to broader differences among cultures, these constructs can assist scholars in understanding cross-cultural differences in subordinates' reactions to leadership. Importantly, both values and self-concepts tend to be internalized and unquestioned. Maio and Olson (1998), for example, have concluded that an individual's values are truisms that lack cognitive support, being applied in an automatic and unquestioned manner. This fact suggests that these processes reflect fundamental, rather than surface, differences among cultures (Schein, 1992)". R.G., Lord; D.J., Brown. "Leadership, values, and subordinate self-concepts ". The Leadership Quarterly, Volume 12, Issue 2 (2001) p. 136

### **2.2.3. Leading a multigenerational workforce**

Another layer of complexity a leader is faced with, is having subordinates in different stages of their lives. As we briefly mentioned over the introduction, this multigenerational workforce has in its ranks four different generational groups that have different, and in some cases divergent, characteristics. Each generation is a product of its experiences, and because of these differences, each brings a vast array of assets to their organization.

In the table below we report the research published by Tóth-Bordásné and Bencsik in 2011. The research shows different generational characteristics in terms of teamwork and

knowledge sharing, characteristics that are crucial to an organization success as well in our daily lives. the most important role in both daily life and in the life of a successful company as well.

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
<b>Teamwork</b>	Unknown	Natural Environment (multinational companies)	Believe in the success of common effort	On a virtual level (only if forced)
<b>Knowledge Sharing</b>	Willingly, voluntarily	It is based on mutuality and cooperation.	Only in cases of self-interest or if forced	On virtual level, easily and rapidly, no stake, publicly

Table 1: Different generational characteristics from a viewpoint of teamwork and knowledge sharing. Bencsik A.; Horváth-Csikós G.; Juhász, T. "Y and Z Generations at Workplaces". *Journal of Competitiveness*. Vol. 8, Issue 3, (September 2016)

Following the previous research, Bencsik and Machova, (2016). noted characteristics which represent a challenge from the respect of knowledge sharing and intergeneration management. Below we report the table published by Bencsik et al. in September 2016.

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
<b>View</b>	Communal, unified thinking	Self-centred and medium-term.	Egotistical, short-term	No sense of commitment, be happy with what you have and live for the present
<b>Relationship</b>	First and foremost personal	Personal and virtual networks	Principally virtual network	Virtual and superficial
<b>Aim</b>	Solid existence	Multi-environment, secure position	Rivalry for leader position	Live for the present

<b>Self-realization</b>	Conscious carrier building	Rapid promotion	Immediate	Questions the need for it at all
<b>Technology</b>	It is based on self-instruction and incomplete	Uses with confidence	Part of their every-day life	Intuitive
<b>Values</b>	Patience, soft skills, respect for traditions, EQ, hard work	Hard work, openness, respect for diversity, curiosity, practicality	Flexibility, mobility, broad but superficial knowledge, success orientation, creativity, freedom of information takes priority	Live for the present, rapid reaction to everything, initiator, brave, rapid information access and content search
<b>Other possible characteristics</b>	Respect for hierarchy, exaggerated modesty or arrogant inflexibility, passivity, cynicism, disappointment	Rule abiding, materialistic, fair play, less respect for hierarchy, has a sense of relativity, need to prove themselves	Desire for independence, no respect for tradition, quest for new forms of knowledge, inverse socialization, arrogant, home office and part-time work, interim management, undervalue soft skills and EQ	Differing viewpoints, lack of thinking, happiness, pleasure, divided attention, lack of consequential thinking, no desire to make sense of things, the boundaries of work and entertainment overlap, feel at home anywhere

Table 2: Generational behavioural characteristics of different age-groups, A , Bencsik.; G ,Horváth-Csikós.; T., Juhász. "Y and Z Generations at Workplaces". *Journal of Competitiveness*. Vol. 8, Issue 3, (September 2016). p. 95

According to what observed by the authors, "the table shows similarities, easily handled gaps and discrepancies. Management, however, has to deal with serious generational differences if the aim that knowledge sharing, as the result of the work of a collaborative organisational community, is to be realized." A , Bencsik.; G ,Horváth-Csikós.; T., Juhász. "Y and Z Generations at Workplaces". *Journal of Competitiveness*. Vol. 8, Issue 3, (September 2016). p. 95

Already in 2006, Cara Spiro stressed the importance of using "personalized motivation" as a method to help leaders and organizations to meet the needs of their workforce. The "personalized motivation" method was a New Age idea introduced in the 2000s to the business world. According to Spiro, leaders have to profile each subordinate in order to "determine how each individual prefers to be managed", and continues Spiro, "these approaches can be easily

implemented and, in no time, enable employees to give managers information on the best ways to motivate them and, therefore, maximize their potential.” C., Spiro. Generation Y in the workplace. Workplace transformation. Defense AT & L. (2016)

Spiro suggests to leaders to use three of the most basic questions used in this method:

- What would you like to do more of?
- What would you like to do less of?
- How would you like to be managed?

C., Spiro. Generation Y in the workplace. Workplace transformation. Defense AT & L. (2016)

Following Spiro’s footsteps, we found again a call for importance of personalized motivation method when leading a multigenerational workforce, in “Strategies for Leadership Styles for Multi-Generational Workforce” (Ahmed Al-Asfour, 2014). In the author’s research, we can observe how the analysis portrayed by the author led to the conclusion that the need to identify employees’ critical motivators is not fulfilled because “most managers are not skilled at motivating their employees”. In fact, argues the author, “when managers don’t know what motivates an individual, they mistakenly assume that all employees like to be managed in the same way.” According to Al-Asfour, “the personalized motivation methodology increases open communication in the workplace and better understanding of what will get the best performance out of each employee.” A., Al-Asfour. “Strategies for Leadership Styles for Multi-Generational Workforce”. Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics vol. 11(2) 2014 pp. 66-67

The author recommends to leaders faced with a multi-generational workforce to use different leadership styles. However, “this may lead to treating employees differently, which could cause legal ramifications for employers. The academic literature suggests that leaders need to “adjust” their style of leading in order to become more effective leaders. Adjustments are recommended as long as it does not lead to favoritism or discrimination of employees based on their generational cohort.” A., Al-Asfour. “Strategies for Leadership Styles for Multi-Generational Workforce”. Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics vol. 11(2) 2014 p. 67

Hence, adjusting leadership styles to a style that is more coherent with the individual needs of each group requires leaders able to understand the four generations currently in the workforce: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z. “Crampton and Hodge (2007) indicated that implications of multi-generational differences on general management practices have not been fully understood. Hence, more research into leadership styles of different generations is needed.” A., Al-Asfour. “Strategies for Leadership Styles for Multi-Generational Workforce”. Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics vol. 11(2) 2014 pp. 66-67

#### **2.2.4. Leadership style and subordinates’ behaviors interrelation.**

As we observed several times over the course of this paper the leadership style is to be considered of particular importance to raise performance among the subordinates in order to achieve the organization’s objectives.

However, the leadership style cannot be considered the only factor responsible for “the performance of workers, nor for the attainment of organizational goals.” According to *McColl-Kennedy et al.* the subordinates too play a crucial role. In fact, the authors find in the subordinates’ “perceptions of their leader’s style, and their feelings about their ability to perform and achieve organizational goals appear to be important factors. Furthermore, the employees’ perception of their relationship with their manager, and in particular the level of support they receive from their manager, would seem to influence performance.” J.R. McColl-Kennedy; R.D. Anderson. Impact of leadership style and emotions on subordinate performance. The Leadership Quarterly, 13(5). (2002) p. 547



Various academic researchers have demonstrated the relationship between leadership styles and reaching the organizational objectives; leadership style and emotions; feelings of optimism and performance. *McColl-Kennedy et al.* attempted to develop a “model of leadership style and emotions as mediators of performance.” J.R. McColl-Kennedy; R.D. Anderson. Impact of leadership style and emotions on subordinate performance. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(5). (2002) p. 547

The authors developed a model based on the benefits of optimism that have been praised for years by many academics, “that have demonstrated that transformational leaders are more optimistic than other types of leaders and tend to have strong positive feelings about their environmental surroundings. Self-regulation theory, which in part describes the series of events thought to occur when barriers to goals being obtained are presented (Carver & Scheier, 1985), suggests that people engage in efforts to achieve goals when they feel optimistic. In contrast, a pessimistic viewpoint may result in reduced effort (Bandura, 1977).” J.R. McColl-Kennedy; R.D. Anderson. Impact of leadership style and emotions on subordinate performance. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(5). (2002) p. 548

The authors differentiate between the “*optimism–performance relationship*” and “*frustration–performance relationship*”. They defined the “*optimism–performance relationship*” as the “direct relationship between the level of optimism and the amount of work employees expend” and “*frustration–performance relationship*” J.R. McColl-Kennedy, R.D. Anderson / *The Leadership Quarterly* 13 (2002) p548 In fact, according to Schulman subordinates who have an optimistic view of the world are likely to “see adversity as a challenge, transform problems into opportunities, put in the hours to refine skills, persevere in finding solutions to difficult problems, maintain confidence, rebound quickly after setbacks and persist”. J.R. McColl-Kennedy; R.D. Anderson. Impact of leadership style and emotions on subordinate performance. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(5). (2002) p. 548

On the other side of the spectrum the *McColl-Kennedy et al.* identified the “*frustration–performance relationship*”. According to the authors subordinates “who feel that they have little or no control over a desired objective will be unlikely to put in the work that is required to achieve that objective (Campbell & Martinko, 1998; Martinko & Gardner, 1982; Seligman, 1975). Moreover, workers who have attempted to succeed in the past but have been unsuccessful or who do not possess an optimistic outlook will become frustrated and come to the view that any extra work is only wasted effort. They rationalize this behavior by explaining failures according to attribution theory that is based on the dimensions of stability (stable/unstable), specificity (global/specific), and focus (internal/external) (Weiner, 1986; Wimer & Kelley, 1982).” J.R. McColl-Kennedy; R.D. Anderson. Impact of leadership style and emotions on subordinate performance. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(5). (2002) p. 548

Below a graphical representation based on *McColl-Kennedy et al.* work, where they examined the relationship between leadership style and performance.

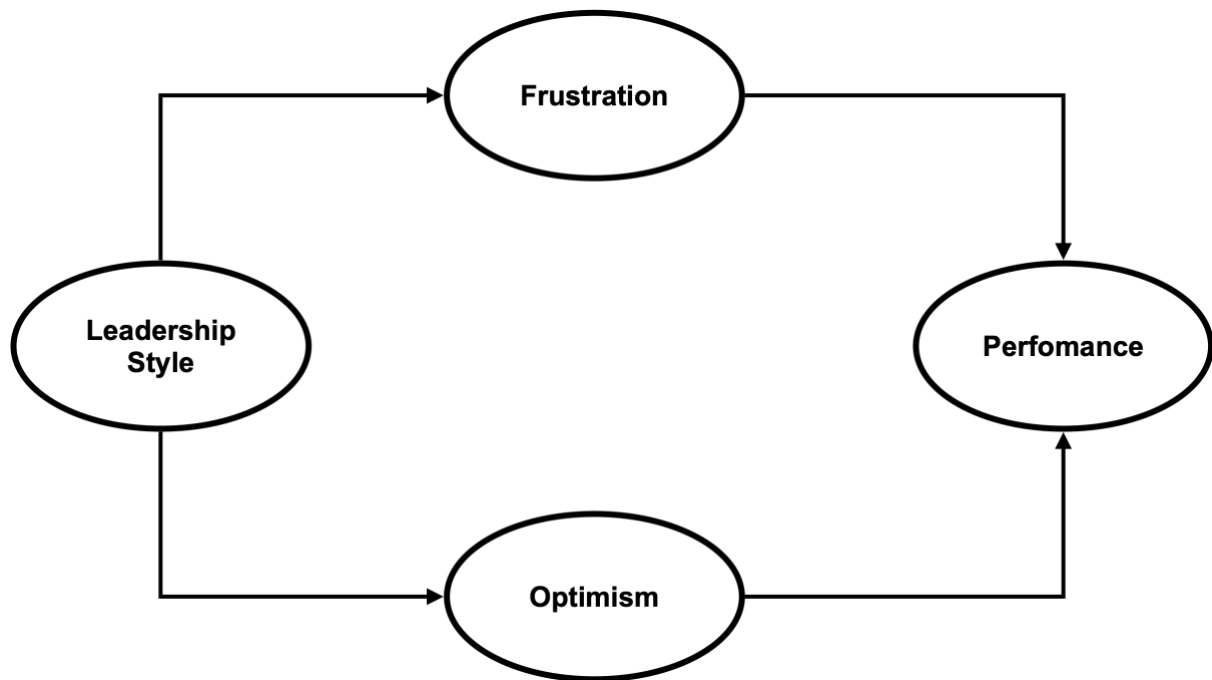


Figure 11: Frustration and optimism fully mediate the relationship between leadership style and performance. Source: J.R. McColl-Kennedy; R.D. Anderson. Impact of leadership style and emotions on subordinate performance. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(5).

The study demonstrated that the subordinates' "perceptions of a high transformational leadership style—one that evidences personal attention to the subordinate, emphasizes use of the subordinate's intelligence, increases the subordinate's level of enthusiasm, and transmits a sense of mission—can positively influence the employee in two key areas: directly increasing optimism and indirectly increasing performance." J.R. McColl-Kennedy; R.D. Anderson. Impact of leadership style and emotions on subordinate performance. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(5). (2002) p. 555

Behavioural and motivational factors reside in the leader-follower relationship, and the more trust and engagement leaders are capable to attain from their followers, the more likely followers will take the "extra-ordinary" path needed to achieve their organization's objective.

### 2.3. Remote Leadership

Digital solutions have been increasingly used by organizations to enable their workforce to work from any geography and managers are increasingly asked to lead at distance. As mentioned over our introductory chapter, Kelloway et al. (2003) defined "*Remote Transformational Leadership*" as leader-follower "interactions characterized by electronically-mediated communication between geographically and physically isolated leaders and followers." E. K., Kelloway; J., Barling; E., Kelley; J., Comtois; B. Gatién. "Remote transformational leadership". *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 24/3 (2003) pp. 163-171

### 2.4. Remote leadership model

It is obvious, that a "remote environment is characterized by physical distance and often, reduced face-to-face interaction; specifically, the individuals and their leaders work in different locations" (Zimmermann et al., 2008). With leaders required to lead subordinates they might never meet in person, Kelley and Kelloway (2012) have been the first to explore the leader-follower relationship that is built in a virtual environment.

Over the course of their research the authors analyzed 402 responses received from through a web-based survey, “the sample consisted mostly of individuals in either professional or management positions (33.8% and 49%, respectively), with the majority (67%) between the ages of 30 and 50 years.” E. Kelley; E.K., Kelloway. “Context Matters: Testing a Model of Remote Leadership”. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. (2012) p. 438.

The authors identified four pre-existing contextual elements: perceptions of control, prior knowledge of leader, quality, and quantity of the communication.

**Perceived control.** “Perceived control has previously been directly associated with individual and organizational outcomes, such as performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, stress, and organizational climate in face-to-face environments (Aiello & Douthitt, 2001; Schat & Kelloway, 2000; Yagil, 2002). It is considered especially important inservice organizations where employees frequently operate on their own and are difficult to monitor (Yagil, 2002). Using this logic, perceived control may be particularly important in the remote context.” E. Kelley; E.K., Kelloway. “Context Matters: Testing a Model of Remote Leadership”. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. (2012) p. 438.

**Prior knowledge.** According to the authors “prior relationships among members of virtual and proximal teams suggest that prior knowledge significantly affects trust formation, subsequent performance, and member satisfaction (Alge, Wiethoff, & Klein, 2003). Members with strong personal relationships have been found to share a common understanding and require less clarification in their communication (Hart & McLeod, 2002). Even one inaugural face-to-face meeting of virtual teams, a form of prior knowledge, is associated with greater team effectiveness, facilitating members’ use of leaner media to communicate effectively and allowing them to build a shared interpretive context (Alge et al., 2003; Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000; Suchan & Hayzak, 2001).” E. Kelley; E.K., Kelloway. “Context Matters: Testing a Model of Remote Leadership”. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. (2012) p. 439.

**Quality of communication.** According to Purvanova and Bono (2009) the quality levels of digital communication is minor than the face-toface interactions. “Nonverbal cues, which may convey as much as two thirds of message content, are reduced or lost, potentially resulting in misinterpretation, increased role ambiguity, decreased trust, cue substitution, inaccurate perceptions of self and others, lowered leader influence, and reduced group cohesiveness (Antonakis & Atwater 2002; Avolio, Kahai, Dum Dum, & Sivasubramaniam, 2001; Hambley, O’Neill, & Kline, 2007b; Hart & McLeod, 2002; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1998; Kayworth & Leidner, 2002). Furthermore, context cues may also be lost; head nods and eye contact facilitate and regulate interaction and indicate whether a message requires further explanation, thereby reducing ambiguity and error (Straus & McGrath, 1994). Social context cues, which contribute to perceptions of leader legitimacy, expertise, and status may also be reduced, affecting perceived power and leader influence.” E. Kelley; E.K., Kelloway. “Context Matters: Testing a Model of Remote Leadership”. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. (2012) p. 438.

**Quantity of communication.** Increasing the quantity of communication in virtual teams appears to improve “working relationships among team members, increased job satisfaction, and increased perceptions of trust in leaders (Hart & McLeod, 2002; Staples, 2001). Specifically, more frequent and higher quality communication has been found to strengthen the relationship between affective commitment and transformational leadership.” E. Kelley; E.K.,

Kelloway. "Context Matters: Testing a Model of Remote Leadership". *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. (2012) p. 439.

To create a remote leadership model based on Bass' transformational leadership theory where leaders are able to enable their subordinates and make them "transcend their own selfinterests for a higher collective vision and thereby, exceed performance expectations". E. Kelley; E.K., Kelloway. "Context Matters: Testing a Model of Remote Leadership". *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. (2012) p. 440

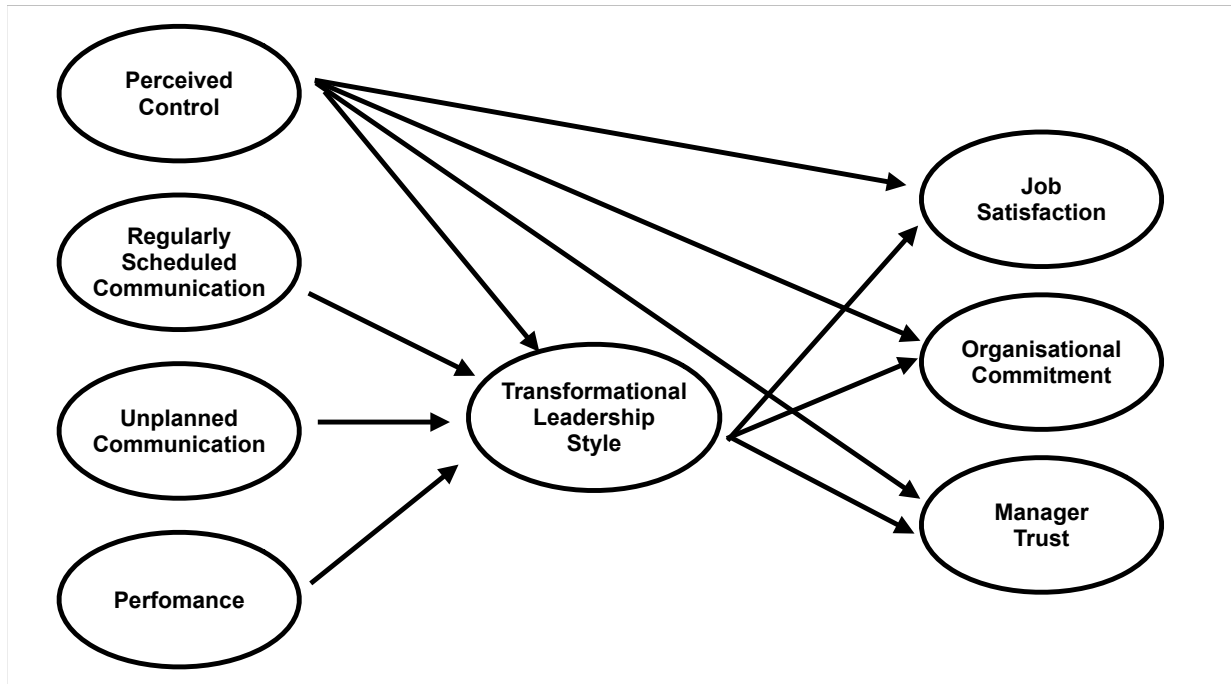


Figure 12: Remote Leadership Model based on Kelley and Kelloway (2012) Source: E. Kelley; E.K., Kelloway. "Context Matters: Testing a Model of Remote Leadership". *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. (2012) p. 438.

Using the transformational leadership style as a mediator to regulate the leader perception of control, enable the creating of strong personal relationships, and increase the quality and the quantity of communication the authors identified three individual outcomes in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the leader trust in the subordinate.

**Job satisfaction.** "In general, lower levels of job satisfaction have been reported in virtual teams (Martins et al., 2004; Straus & McGrath, 1994; Warkentin, Sayeed, & Hightower, 1997). Satisfaction with technology, use of multiple communication methods, and nature of task have all been positively related to the job satisfaction of virtual teams' members (Kayworth & Leidner, 2002; Martins et al., 2004; Morris, Marshall, & Rainer, 2002). Both cognitionbased and affect-based trust were found to significantly affect job satisfaction of remote workers (Staples, 2001). Studies of telecommuters have yielded conflicting findings (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999), with Golden and Veiga (2005) suggesting a curvilinear link between extent of telecommuting and job satisfaction." E. Kelley; E.K., Kelloway. "Context Matters: Testing a Model of Remote Leadership". *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. (2012) p. 439.

**Organizational commitment.** "The importance of subculture and satisfaction with control to organizational commitment in the proximal environment suggests that context and other aspects of the culture of the remote workplace may be more influential than the culture of the larger organization (Lok & Crawford, 1999), and that it is important to determine which factors affect the remote worker's satisfaction with level of control. Boshoff and Mels (1995) found that leadership styles incorporating participation in decision making and goal setting increased individuals' organizational commitment. However, a meta-analysis by Mathieu and Zajac

(1990) demonstrated that, in the traditional environment, the relationships between various leader behaviors and organizational commitment are contingent on other factors in the work environment.” E. Kelley; E.K., Kelloway. “Context Matters: Testing a Model of Remote Leadership”. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. (2012) p. 439.

**Manager trust in employee.** “In all leader–member relationships, reciprocal trust is important. Typically, follower trust in leader is included in perceptions of transformational leadership, both by construct definition and in this study, statistically. However, leader trust in remote follower has not been previously investigated, other than minimally in the literature on telecommuting (Harrington & Ruppel, 1999). In remote relationships, both the reality and the perception are important. In the proposed model, however, it is the perception of leader trust in follower that is posited as an outcome of perceptions of transformational leadership.” E. Kelley; E.K., Kelloway. “Context Matters: Testing a Model of Remote Leadership”. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. (2012) p. 439.

The findings of the research brought Kelley and Kelloway to conclude that in a remote environment “context is so omnipresent that it filters the way in which individuals perceive and interpret leader behaviors.” In fact, according to the authors “to manage perceptions of leadership style in the remote environment, it is not sufficient to exhibit specific transformational behaviors; leaders must manage, consider, and adapt to the characteristics of the context in which the relationships are conducted.” E. Kelley; E.K., Kelloway. “Context Matters: Testing a Model of Remote Leadership”. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. (2012) p. 446.

### **2.4.1. Leading at Distance**

Although leading at distance in business seems a nuance of the past quarter of a century, in a broader sense leading at distance has been part of human history for millennia. Afterall, Marcus Ulpius Trajanus, the greatest Roman Emperor that expanded the Roman Empire to its largest extent (from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf), never had a Skype call or used Jira for project managing his team. Likewise, Genghis Khan, Napoleon, Queen Victoria, Franz Joseph I of Austria, and many other leaders of the course of history never had a single conference call. What is common to all the leaders of the past is that their orders were punctually transcribed by professional scribes to assure those commands would be exactly communicated down the line of command.

In 2017 Eikenberry and Turmel conducted a survey of more than 225 with at least part of their team working remotely. The findings brought the authors to the conclusion that the challenges remote leaders are faced because of “the distance between people and the use of technology to bridge those gaps”. K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “The Long-Distance Leader”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018), p. 20

The survey focused on the issues that do emerge when leading at distance, and the use technology to overcome those obstacles. Although the small sample size, in the survey the respondents crossed between every possible industry and discipline. Leading the authors to the conclusion that working remotely is a spread reality and not limited to certain industries or disciplines. Another observation coming from the results of the survey suggested that the size of the teams have been increasing over time and “may indicate a new trend toward broader spans of control, which only exacerbates the challenges of leading remotely.” K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “The Long-Distance Leader”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018), pp. 234-35

Another interesting fact coming out from the analysis of the results showed that over 70 percent of leaders said they had a “hybrid” team. Hence, “remote teams” doesn’t mean everyone’s working elsewhere. However, the remaining 30 percent had a fully (or mostly) remote team which remains as per today the fastest growing segment of the workforce.

From a demographic perspective the respondents were 60 percent male, and 40 percent female; 34 percent of which aged forty to forty-nine and 37 percent fifty to fifty-nine, with the remaining 19 percent aged over sixty. At the moment of the survey 78 percent of the respondents had at least eight years of experience leading a team, with confirmed for the authors the assumption that “time as a leader doesn’t seem to make the transition to long-distance leadership any easier K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “The Long-Distance Leader”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018), p. 37

The authors asked in the survey about four specific challenges leaders face when leading at distance.

28%	46%	52%	58%
How do we know people are really working?	Are people getting enough social interaction?	Are getting good feedback when we need to consider options?	Can we be as effective a leader as when we’re co-located?

Table 3: “Four specific challenges leaders face when leading at distance.” Source: K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “The Long-Distance Leader”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018), p. 39

As we can observed above when asked “how do we know people are really working?” only 28% of the respondents considered this as a challenge. However, according to the authors this question is most frequent in organization when working remotely is new, or in organizations or industries where the level of trust is traditionally low, such as highly regulated union environments and governments. In fact, in these organizations “senior leadership is overly worried about precisely what people are doing at any given time K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “The Long-Distance Leader”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018), p. 39

How we can observe in Figure 11, remote leaders seem to be much more concerned with the remaining three challenges, social interactions, feedback quality, and leadership efficacy, which are aspects intrinsic to the individual.

## 2.4.2. What changes when leading at distance

If some of the challenges raised by leading in *a remote workplace* are mitigated by the usage of technology-based communication, knowledge management, and project management tools, the focus remains on what has always made leaders effective.

In fact, although too often leaders forget to take into consideration feelings, emotions, needs, and personal objectives of their subordinates, leaders primary focus should be people and the more leaders are able to understand the fundamentals of human behavior the more successful they will be. Also, the traits and characteristics of leadership have not changed with people migrating from working at the office to working from home. As well the role of leaders within the organization did not change, they are still expected “to coalesce and collaborate with teams, set goals, and lead change.” K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “The Long-Distance Leader”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018), p. 65

**Geography.** However, as already mentioned some things have been changing in past quarter of a century. As we have observed the workforce is changing, and the changes are not limited to teams’ geographical dispersion. In fact, “now you don’t just have distance but time zones, cultural norms and expectations, and generally more complexity to ... work as a leader”. K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “The Long-Distance Leader”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018), p. 67

**Awareness.** What also changes in a remote context, is the opportunities and mediums leaders have at their disposal to influence their subordinates. In fact, leading by example is much easier if people you want to inspire are able to experience their leaders in action in real life.

Another aspect that changes when leading at distance is related to the awareness, that lead the authors to conclude that the leaders' "physical presence conveys the power of" their "position and" their "willingness to lead." This will ultimately bring subordinates that "haven't developed a warm personal relationship" with their leaders, "to have both immediate and long-term problems to overcome". Therefore, "whether we're talking actual physical presence or "virtual presence" where you are available and visible to your people, "being seen" is critical to leadership and suffers in a long-distance relationship K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. *"The Long-Distance Leader"*; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 67-68

**Technology.** "Recognizing the technology available to you and using it appropriately and effectively can be a big lever for your success as a Long-Distance Leader." According to Eikenberry and Wayne, in a team the success factor in effectively using a tool is determined by how well leaders are using the tools. In fact, leaders that are inefficiently using the tools at their disposal, will encounter more resistance in their teams. (Eikenberry, Wayne; 2018) K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. *"The Long-Distance Leader"*; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018), pp. 68-69

**Working Relationships.** In remote environments people are definitely not working in same room, building or even on the same continent for what we have observed, and although is true that "relationships don't develop or improve simply because of regular face-to-face interaction, personal contact provides a boost in creating working relationships." Indeed, the need for "working relationships (both practically and psychologically) doesn't change when people work remotely from each other, but the opportunities and context for building those relationships changes drastically. Learning how to build and maintain them is always an important part of your work as a leader. Virtual communication changes the interpersonal dynamic, even if you don't want it to. As a Long-Distance Leader, it gets harder—and perhaps even more important—to intentionally nurture relationships with all your team members." K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. *"The Long-Distance Leader"*; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 69-70

**Communication.** Over the course of a face-to-face conversation, we are able to receive instant feedback, much of which involuntary. "Some of it is purposeful— people can ask questions or comment, and as a leader you should encourage honest responses to your messages. When working at a distance, the balance of communication modes changes. Email, texts, and online communication are your most frequent methods of passing information back and forth. That often feels impersonal and cold. It's one-way communication and demands that" leaders "hone all" their "communication skills, not just" their "verbal ones." K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. *"The Long-Distance Leader"*; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 70-71

**Information.** "The way information is received is often filtered and mediated in unexpected or unintended ways." Leaders send and receive messages "in mass quantities and multiple forms". In a remote environment where it is usual receiving information over the phone or during a virtual meeting, it is hard to make sure that everyone is "really reading carefully, processing the information clearly, and responding in ways" leaders can be proud of. K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. *"The Long-Distance Leader"*; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 72-73

**Leadership control.** As we have been observing over the course of this paper most leaders belong to the oldest generation, making their experience as leaders starting when co-located environment was considered by the workforce the normal and standard workplace. At the time some of these leaders "relied on the old "command and control" method of getting things done ("Because I said so"). Because they were nearby or could pop in at any moment, they watched everything" their team members "did and made sure" they "did it exactly the way they wanted it done." However, remote teams are "scattered to the far corners of the continent, and "it is impossible to know what every person is doing all the time." Therefore, leaders "need to find ways to make sure people have the proper guidance for their tasks, are clear on the metrics, and their progress is communicated to" the leader "in ways that give" them what they "need to maintain progress" K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. *"The Long-Distance Leader"*; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 73-74

**Change (need for).** As already observed “the basic needs of humans don’t change, but the context of working locations may make some needs more important or obvious than they were in the past.” When leading at distance the team “may have interaction needs that were previously met in the workplace that now are missing. Long-Distance Leader ... must notice the needs that surface and find ways to help meet them... Because as those needs are met, people are better able to focus on and complete their work successfully. K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “The Long-Distance Leader”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 74-76

**Individual work.** “Often as people work remotely, their work becomes more focused on individual tasks and individual contributions. This shift to an individual focus and away from “the team” isn’t necessarily bad; in some cases, it probably leads to better results. It is, however, a change that needs to be recognized by the organization, by ... leaders, and perhaps most importantly by the individuals doing the work. Recognizing this focus and making it overt—and at the same time not inadvertently individualizing the focus too much—is a nuance worth noting.” K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “The Long-Distance Leader”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 76

**Isolation.** “While it’s lovely to have uninterrupted time to get your work done, part of the joy of leadership is being with other people. Hearing other opinions, getting timely answers to questions, brainstorming, and building on ideas” is a critical part of the role of a leader. The authors survey confirmed “that feeling isolated from their teams is a huge concern for leaders and impacts their effectiveness and job satisfaction.” K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “The Long-Distance Leader”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 76-77

### 2.4.3. The “Three O Model”

Eikenberry and Wayne, after been consulting thousands of leaders, found a consensus on the common understanding and acceptance of what leadership is about. There seems to be two elements of leadership that are common to the majority of professionals: **outcomes**, intended as “goals,” “mission,” “vision,” “objectives,” and “success” in an organization; and **other people**, intended in terms of “influencing,” “coaching,” “communicating,” and “building teams”. (Eikenberry, Wayne; 2018)

Based on their experience and research Eikenberry and Wayne, created the “Three O Model of Leadership” that outlines three main areas of focus that according to the authors “leaders must recognize and use to reach their maximum success.” K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “The Long-Distance Leader”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). p. 97



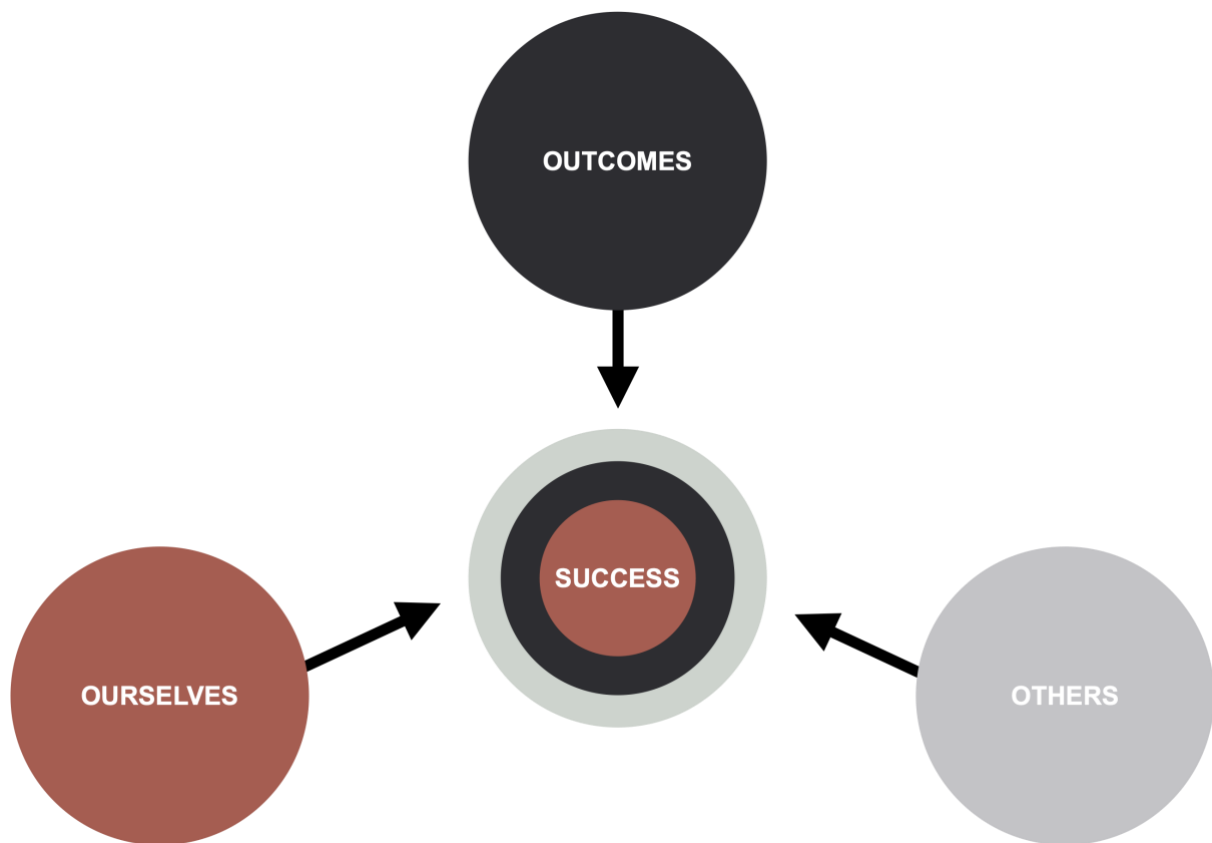


Figure 13: The Three O Model of Leadership. Source: K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. "The Long-Distance Leader"; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). p. 97

As we can observe in Figure 12, next to the two elements already identified the authors introduce a third factor to be considered if leaders want to achieve their maximum success, **ourselves**.

1. **Outcomes.** Leaders "lead their people with the purpose of reaching a desired outcome."
2. **Others.** Leaders "lead with and through other people to reach those outcomes."
3. **Ourselves.** Leaders can't leave themselves out of the model. "While leadership is about outcomes and other people, none of that happens without you whether you like it or not."

K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. "The Long-Distance Leader"; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). p. 98

In the pages that follow we will have a closer look at the components of the "Three O Model of Leadership".

### Outcomes

"At the highest level, organizations exist to reach outcomes of one sort or another. While it is in vogue for many of these "mission statements" to be a bit esoteric and written in Ho, some are more straightforward". K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. "The Long-Distance Leader"; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). p. 100

This is case of Google's mission statement which is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful". (source: <https://about.google>)

According to Eikenberry and Wayne Remote Leaders' focus on outcomes is even more important and can definitely be harder because of three factors that might influence the so desired success. These factors are isolation, lack of environmental cues, and less repetition of messages.

**Isolation.** As already observed when working remote people are likely to be alone most of the time. This isolation often leads to silos of the smallest nature—people acting as if they are a team of one” and “over time, without guidance, they become focused on individual goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) rather than team goals.” K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “*The Long-Distance Leader*”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). p. 102

**Lack of environmental cues.** As mentioned, a “common work location provides very clear clues and cues that reinforce important messages that are missing when you work from a home office.” K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “*The Long-Distance Leader*”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). p. 103

**Less repetition of messages.** “Unless leaders are consistently, and in a variety of ways, communicating and reiterating the goals and outcomes for the team and organization, people may get lost in their own bubble.” K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “*The Long-Distance Leader*”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 103-104

### **Others**

Leaders are concerned with a multitude of aspects that scream for their attention. Budgets, projects, process improvements, new product/service development, sales, customer service, and margins, are some of the items on list leaders have to deal with on a daily basis. (Eikenberry, Wayne; 2018)

However, whilst having to deal with all these things, leaders are still faced with many others challenges. Coaching, supporting, and guiding their subordinates; communicating priorities and projects; hiring and on-boarding; are still on the list. In order to “overcome the conundrum of lots of important things and not knowing what to focus on”, Eikenberry and Wayne, suggest to leaders to focus on **others**. K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “*The Long-Distance Leader*”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). p. 105

The authors provide seven reasons why focusing on others is a must for remote leaders.

1. Leaders cannot do it alone.
2. Leaders are winning when their team members are winning.
3. Leaders build trust when they are focusing on others.
4. Leaders build relationships when they are focusing on others.
5. Leaders are more influential when they are focusing on others.
6. Team members are more engaged when leaders focus on them.
7. Leaders succeed at everything on “the list” when they are focusing on others.

K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “*The Long-Distance Leader*”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 106-109

### **Ourselves**

According to Eikenberry and Wayne, the great paradox of leadership is that it is not about leaders at all, being fundamentally about outcomes and other people. However, the way leaders behave “plays a huge role in how effectively they will approach outcomes and others.” In other words, “leaders are at the core of leadership, but certainly not at the center of their leadership universe.” K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. “*The Long-Distance Leader*”; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 113-114

This O, the “*Ourselves*”, cannot be denied or ignored. When focusing on Ourselves, leaders should agree to place it in the third place in a rate of importance. According to the authors, this way leaders will be able to serve “both others and outcomes best.” At the core of leaders are beliefs that drive their actions, the way they engage with their teams, how well they are able to influence them, and ultimately on how subordinates will respond to and perform with

their leaders. K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. *"The Long-Distance Leader"*; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 115

When leading at a distance, who leaders are and how they lead is important but somehow this is less transparent, and leaders' beliefs and assumptions are even more crucial."

The authors provide three reasons to support their statement.

1. Assumptions. "Leaders have assumptions about what it means to work remotely" and a leader's assumption about their team members has always impact on the way they lead.
2. Intention. "Intention is important, but not enough." Here, though, the challenge lies in the gap between what leaders want and mean to do, and what they actually do.
3. Decision making. Long-Distance Leaders "must decide to do the unnatural things", they "must focus (even) more on" their "team members, must be diligent in supporting them and their needs"

K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. *"The Long-Distance Leader"*; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 115-118

According to the authors, the Three O Model can adapt to any leadership model and "on top of any organization's competency model". In fact, Eikenberry and Wayne argued in their book that "regardless of the skills or competencies, in the end the best leaders will be effectively managing their focus and activity among their three O's, which are the things that everything about leadership rests on."

K., Eikenberry; T., Wayne. *"The Long-Distance Leader"*; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., (2018). pp. 118-119

### **3. Remote Organizations over Covid-19**

As we have observed in our introductory chapter quarantines, lockdowns, and hygienic restrictions have pushed organizations around the world to keep tens of millions of their employees to work from home. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November of 2020, Lund et al. published on the McKinsey Global Institute, a research on remote work. The authors have analyzed 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries to understand COVID-19 impact on the future of work.

According to the authors, the pandemic has been “accelerating a workplace experiment that had struggled to gain traction before...Now ... the limitations and the benefits of remote work are clearer.” As economies are reopening at full-speed, and vaccines are being given to the population many members of the workforce have been returning to the office. However, “the virus has broken through cultural and technological barriers that prevented remote work in the past, setting in motion a structural shift in where work takes place, at least for some people.”

From a performance perspective, according to the researchers of the McKinsey Global Institute, “more than 20 percent of the workforce could work remotely three to five days a week as effectively as they could if working from an office. If remote work took hold at that level, that would mean three to four times as many people working from home than before the pandemic and would have a profound impact on urban economies, transportation, and consumer spending, among other things.” Lund, S; Madgavkar, A; Manyika, J; Smit, S; “What’s next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries”; The Future of Work; McKinsey Global Institute; (23 Nov 2020)

However, if on one side of the coin the pandemic “has broken through cultural and technological barriers that prevented remote work in the past”, on the other side “more than half the workforce, however, has little or no opportunity for remote work”. Lund, S; Madgavkar, A; Manyika, J; Smit, S; “What’s next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries”; The Future of Work; McKinsey Global Institute; (23 Nov 2020)

Their findings brought the authors to the conclusion that remote work might create risks that could accentuate social inequalities. (Lund et. al, 2020)

#### **3.1.1. COVID-19: A digitation accelerator**

As we mentioned digitation and generational changes in the workforce, created the basis for remote working environments. However, having in place a substantial digital infrastructure that supports people in any organization operating virtually is a crucial factor for the success of the operations. We already mentioned that COVID-19 moved millions of workers in a remote environment in a swift. Work from home (WFH), created pressing demands that were to be answered fast.

According to Deloitte some of the challenges organizations have been faced with since the pandemic started, are “providing secure system access to employees, and digitizing processes, including previously paper-based transactions, in-person meetings, business travel, and other “normal” day-to-day operations.” Caldwell, J.H.; Krishna, D. “The Acceleration of Digitization as a Result of COVID-19”, Deloitte, Blog: Risk Advisory. (30 Jul 2020)

This tremendously accelerated digital transformation “has enabled organizations to respond and thrive during the pandemic”. In May 2020 the World Economic Forum posted that “the transition to a new model for supply chains will be underpinned by a rapid and wholesale digitization of the paperwork that accompanies global trade.” However, this transformation has also introduced new risk into business operations – and it is important for organizations to

understand and mitigate those risk as we enter into the “Next Normal.” Caldwell, J.H.; Krishna, D. “The Acceleration of Digitization as a Result of COVID-19”, Deloitte, Blog: Risk Advisory. (30 Jul 2020)

As we already mentioned some organizations had begun their digital journey before COVID-19. According to the research published by Deloitte, organizations that before the pandemic were using collaboration technologies tools “were in the strongest position to maintain steady business operations when social separation and work-from-home (WFH) became new realities. Likewise, those with robust security mechanisms in place, such as sufficient VPN licenses and multifactor authentication, were better positioned to transition to virtual working while protecting sensitive information. And organizations that increased their internet and network capacity before the pandemic found it easier to connect to remote employees, customers, suppliers, partners and other stakeholders.” Caldwell, J.H.; Krishna, D. “The Acceleration of Digitization as a Result of COVID-19”, Deloitte, Blog: Risk Advisory. (30 Jul 2020)

On the other end of spectrum, “companies with bandwidth constraints prior to the coronavirus pandemic had a difficult time in the WFH environment, as did those with inflexible legacy systems and processes that could not keep up with user demand ... These older systems can’t be migrated to the cloud quickly, so IT departments were stressed finding “workarounds” to the problem. Other problems arose in cases where there was no pre-existing mobile strategy.” Caldwell, J.H.; Krishna, D. “The Acceleration of Digitization as a Result of COVID-19”, Deloitte, Blog: Risk Advisory. (30 Jul 2020)

According to Caldwell and Krishna, organization that were able to successfully respond to COVID-19 had a few consistent technological attributes:

**Technology Preparedness** – “This includes the adoption of virtualization and cloud technology. Whether it’s servers, networks or desktops, virtualization enables organizations to dynamically scale their IT resources up or down as needed, while also providing centralized management and control. Virtualization can also enable more efficient use of existing IT resources, which generates greater return on investment.” Caldwell, J.H.; Krishna, D. “The Acceleration of Digitization as a Result of COVID-19”, Deloitte, Blog: Risk Advisory. (30 Jul 2020)

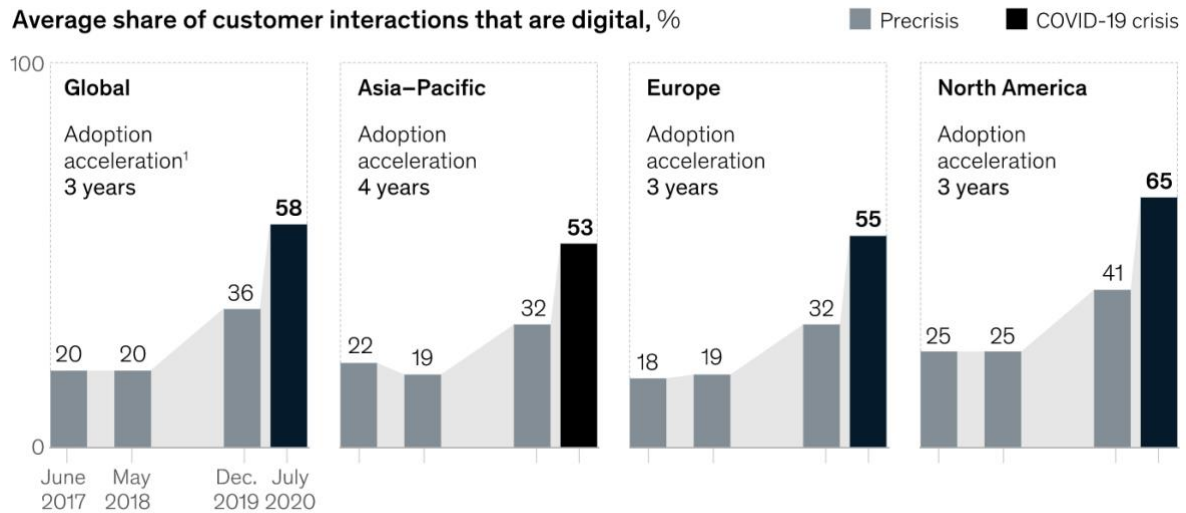
**Improved Cyber Security including Identity and Access Management (IAM)** – “WFH has obliterated many remnants of the traditional network perimeter, and with it the concept of perimeter security, where virtual “fences” keep the bad guys out. Identity has become the new paradigm of enterprise security – if you can ensure that only the right resources are accessed by the right people doing the right things, then you have a more secure environment. Modern IAM systems provide flexible authentication that enables people to work from home or anywhere else. And, with many companies announcing they plan to maintain expanded WFH policies beyond the pandemic, IAM has become the foundation in the modern secure working environment.” Caldwell, J.H.; Krishna, D. “The Acceleration of Digitization as a Result of COVID-19”, Deloitte, Blog: Risk Advisory. (30 Jul 2020)

In July 2020, McKinsey & Co. surveyed 899 C-level executives and senior managers representing the full range of regions, industries, company sizes, and functional specialties. All C-level executives and senior managers agreed that COVID-19 “have accelerated the digitization of their customer and supply-chain interactions and of their internal operations by three to four years.” McKinsey & Co. Survey, October 2020 “How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point and transformed business forever”. (2020) [Source : https://www.mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com)

According to the survey during the pandemic companies and industries have responded to the consumers behavior that drastically moved towards online channels. The results from the survey confirm the rapid shift of most customers interaction through digital means of communication. According to McKinsey & Co. the “respondents are three times likelier now than before the crisis to say that at least 80 percent of their customer interactions are digital

in nature.” McKinsey & Co. Survey, October 2020 “How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point and transformed business forever”. (2020) [Source : https://www.mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com)

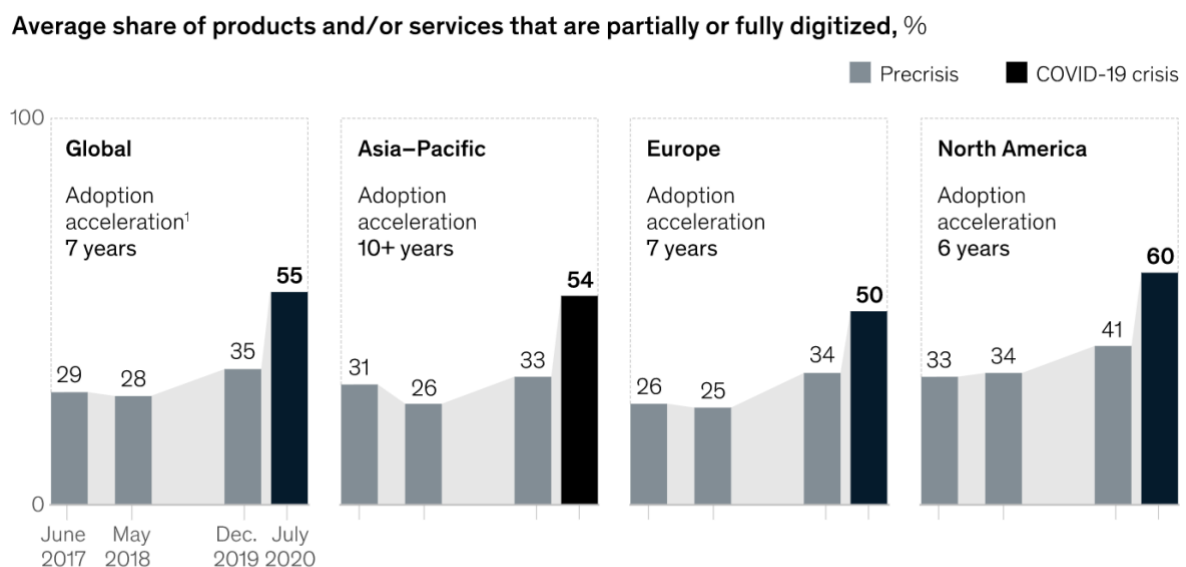
## COVID-19 crisis accelerated the digitalization of customer interactions by several years



<sup>1</sup>Years ahead of the average rate of adoption from 2017 to 2019.

Figure 14: Average share of customer interactions that are digital. Source : <https://www.mckinsey.com>

Perhaps more surprising is the speedup in creating digital or digitally enhanced offerings. Following the survey results that suggest on average a seven-year increase “in the rate at which companies are developing these products and services.” The findings suggested that “during the crisis, companies have probably refocused their offerings rather than made huge leaps in product development in the span of a few months.” McKinsey & Co. Survey, October 2020. “How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point and transformed business forever”. (2020) [Source : https://www.mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com)



<sup>1</sup>Years ahead of the average rate of adoption from 2017 to 2019.

Figure 15: Avg. share of products/services that are partially digitized in %. McKinsey & Co. Survey, October 2020 “How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point and transformed business forever”. (2020) Source : <https://www.mckinsey.com>

Across sectors, the results suggest that rates for digitalization in the business have been extraordinary, but what accordingly the authors at McKinsey is remarkable is the way companies have responded to a range of COVID-19-related changes. McKinsey asked the respondents “about 12 potential changes in respondents’ organizations and industries. For those that respondents have seen, we asked how long it took to execute them and how long that would have taken before the crisis. For many of these changes, respondents say, their companies acted 20 to 25 times faster than expected. In the case of remote working, respondents actually say their companies moved 40 times more quickly than they thought possible before the pandemic. Before then, respondents say it would have taken more than a year to implement the level of remote working that took place during the crisis. In actuality, it took an average of 11 days to implement a workable solution, and nearly all of the companies have stood up workable solutions within a few months.” McKinsey & Co. Survey, October 2020 “How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point and transformed business forever”. (2020) Source : <https://www.mckinsey.com>

Below we report the results from the survey on the time organizations required to implement changes in the following areas: remote working and/or collaboration; customer demand for online purchasing; advanced technologies in operations; advanced technologies in business decision making; customer needs/expectations; migration of assets to cloud; ownership of last mile delivery; nearshoring and/or insourcing practices; spending on data security; and redundancies into supply chain.

**Time required to respond to or implement changes,<sup>1</sup> expected vs actual, number of days**

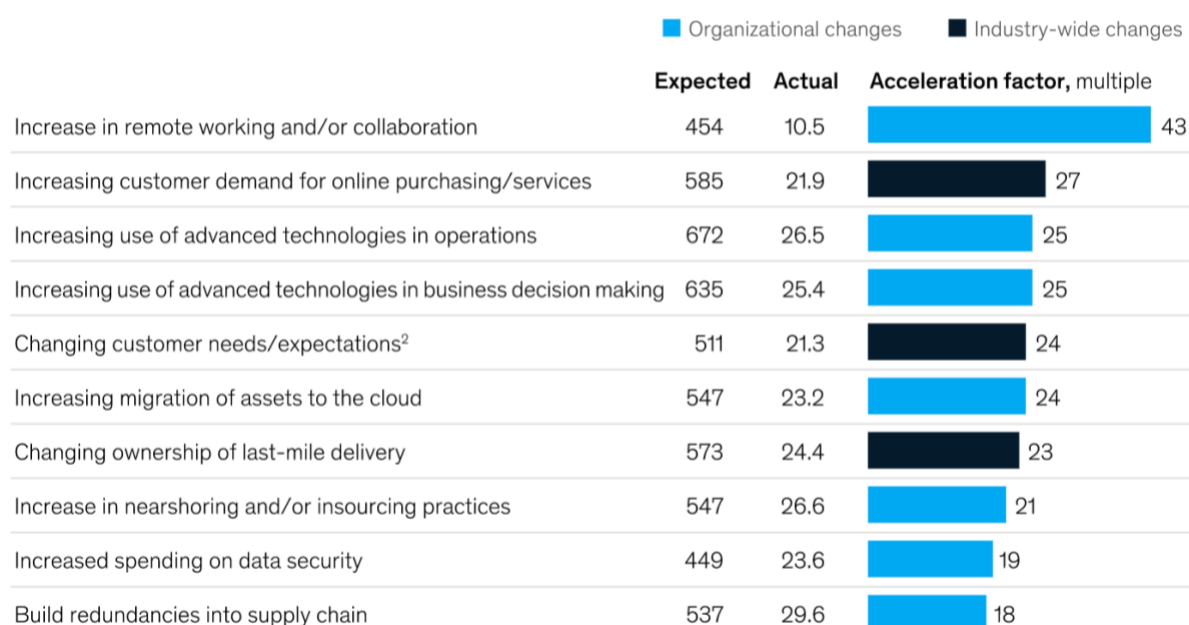


Figure 16: Time required to implement changes. McKinsey & Co. Survey, October 2020 “How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point and transformed business forever”. (2020) Source : <https://www.mckinsey.com>

Only 14 percent of all respondents say a lack of leadership alignment hindered the actual implementation of these changes. More than half of the respondents said that these changes were not implemented before the pandemic because they weren’t a top business priority, and it seems the crisis removed these barriers.

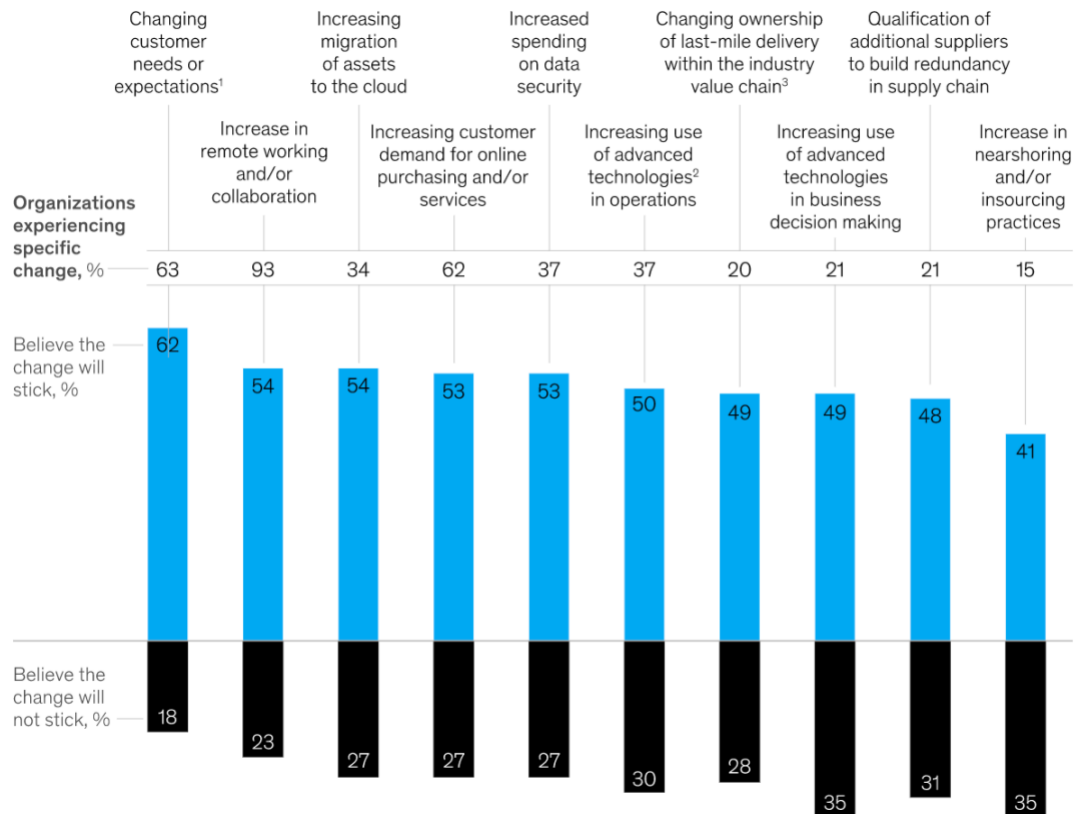


Figure 17: 12 Changes faced by organizations. “How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point and transformed business forever”. (2020) Source : <https://www.mckinsey.com>

The common barriers often cited by the respondents are: the failure to prioritize; customer resistance to changes; and organizational, and technology issues. Of the 12 changes McKinsey & Co. asked in their survey, “respondents across sectors and geographies are most likely to report a significant increase in remote working, changing customer needs (a switch to offerings that reflect new health and hygiene sensitivities), and customer preferences for remote interactions.” “How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point and transformed business forever”. (2020) Source : <https://www.mckinsey.com>

According to McKinsey & Co., “companies are making these crisis-related changes with the long term in mind. For most, the need to work and interact with customers remotely required investments in data security and an accelerated migration to the cloud. Now that the investments have been made, these companies have permanently removed some of the precrisis bottlenecks to virtual interactions. Majorities of respondents expect that such technology-related changes, along with remote work and customer interactions, will continue in the future. Nearly one-quarter of respondents also report a decrease in their physical footprints. This signifies a longer-term shift than would likely occur among the 21 percent reporting a drop in their number of full-time equivalents—at some companies, that could represent a temporary move in the earlier days of the crisis. What’s more, when we asked about the effects of the crisis on a range of company measures (including head counts), respondents say that funding of digital initiatives has increased more than anything else—more than costs, the number of people in digital or other technology roles, and the number of customers.” “How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point and transformed business forever”. (2020) Source : <https://www.mckinsey.com>

According to the results analyzed by McKinsey & Co., of the 12 changes, “remote working and cloud migration are the two that respondents say have been more cost effective than precrisis norms and practices. Remote working is much less likely to meet customer expectations better



than it did before the crisis; the changes that have done so best are, unsurprisingly, responses to the increasing demand for online interactions and to changing customer needs. Investments in data security and artificial intelligence are the changes respondents most often identify as helping to position organizations better than they were before the crisis. Across these changes, remote working is the likeliest to remain the longer the crisis lasts, according to 70 percent of the respondents.” “How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point and transformed business forever”. (2020) Source: <https://www.mckinsey.com>

### **3.1.2. Tasks and activities in a remote environment**

As we have observed over the course of our paper, remote work increases challenges for both, employees, and employers. While organizations are trying to find ways “to deliver coaching remotely and how to configure workspaces to enhance employee safety”... their employees are seeking “the best home-work balance and equip themselves for working and collaborating remotely”. S., Lund; A., Madgavkar; J., Manyika; S., Smit. “What’s next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries”. The Future of Work. McKinsey Global Institute. (23 Nov 2020)

In their article, the authors’ aim was “to define the activities and occupations that can be done from home to better understand the future staying power of remote work.” S., Lund; A., Madgavkar; J., Manyika; S., Smit. “What’s next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries”. The Future of Work. McKinsey Global Institute. (23 Nov 2020)

Lund et al. analyzed more than 2,000 activities in more than 800 occupations and identified which activities and occupations have the greatest potential for remote work.

According to the researchers the potential for remote work depends on the mix of activities undertaken in each occupation and on their physical, spatial, and interpersonal context.

Although over the pandemic organizations could assess that some tasks can be done remotely, according to the authors’ findings, some of the tasks are much more effective when administrated in person.

It is of course obvious that many physical and manual activities cannot be performed remotely. Some of these activities “include providing care, operating machinery, using lab equipment, and processing customer transactions in stores. In contrast, activities such as information gathering and processing, communicating with others, teaching and counseling, and coding data can theoretically be done remotely.” S., Lund; A., Madgavkar; J., Manyika; S., Smit. “What’s next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries”. The Future of Work. McKinsey Global Institute. (23 Nov 2020)

However, the authors suggested a series of activities that are more effective when performed face-to-face: “coaching, counseling, and providing advice and feedback; building customer and colleague relationships; bringing new employees into a company; negotiating and making critical decisions; teaching and training; and work those benefits from collaboration, such as innovation, problem-solving, and creativity.” S., Lund; A., Madgavkar; J., Manyika; S., Smit. “What’s next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries”. The Future of Work. McKinsey Global Institute. (23 Nov 2020)

According to the analysis performed by the authors of the McKinsey Global Institute, “the activities with the highest potential for remote work include updating knowledge and interacting with computers.” S., Lund; A., Madgavkar; J., Manyika; S., Smit. “What’s next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries”. The Future of Work. McKinsey Global Institute. (23 Nov 2020)

Following we report the research performed by Lund et al. on the activities and their potential in a remote environment, the demographic of Figure 19 is referred to the United States of America.

**Activities with the highest potential for remote work include updating knowledge and interacting with computers.**

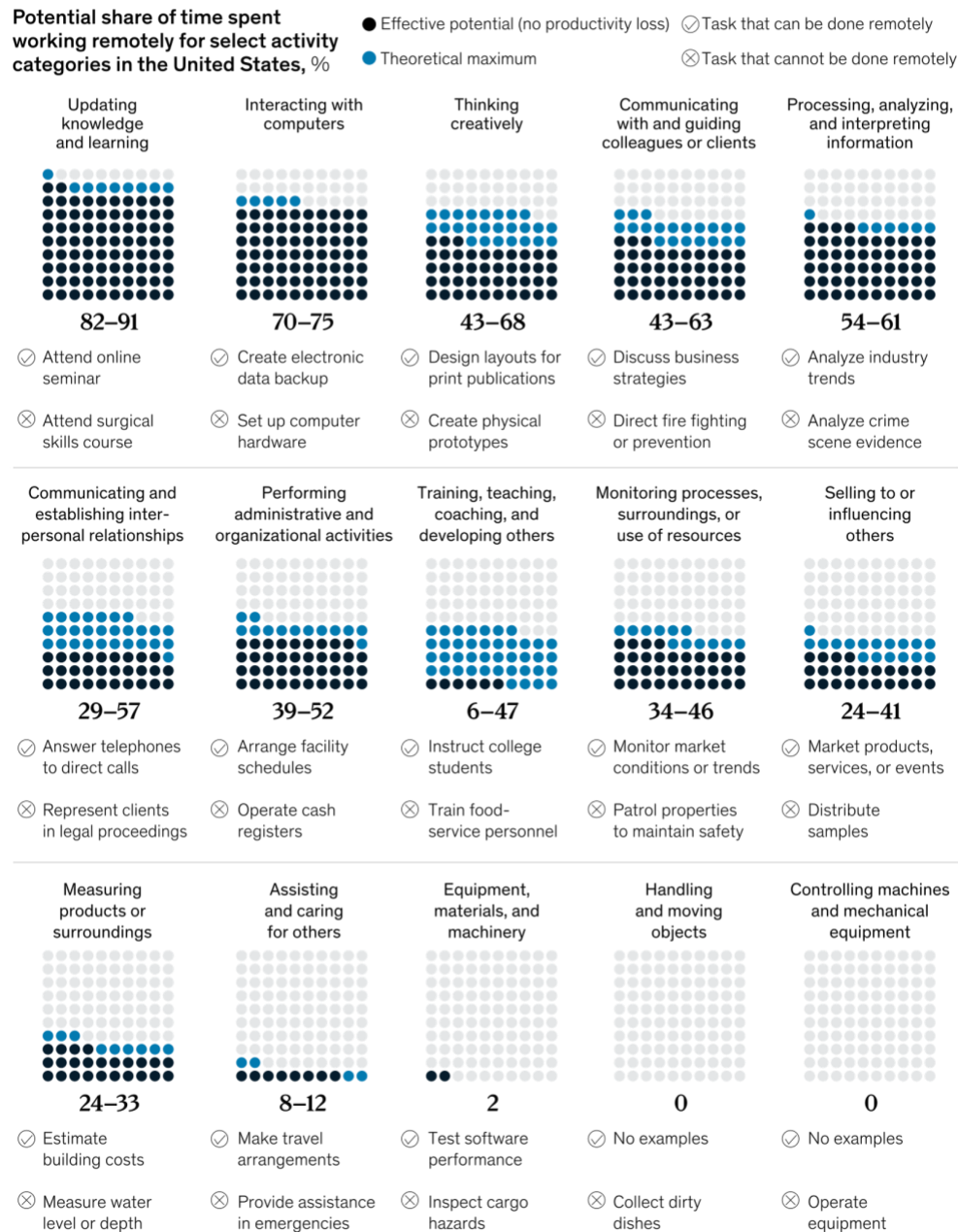
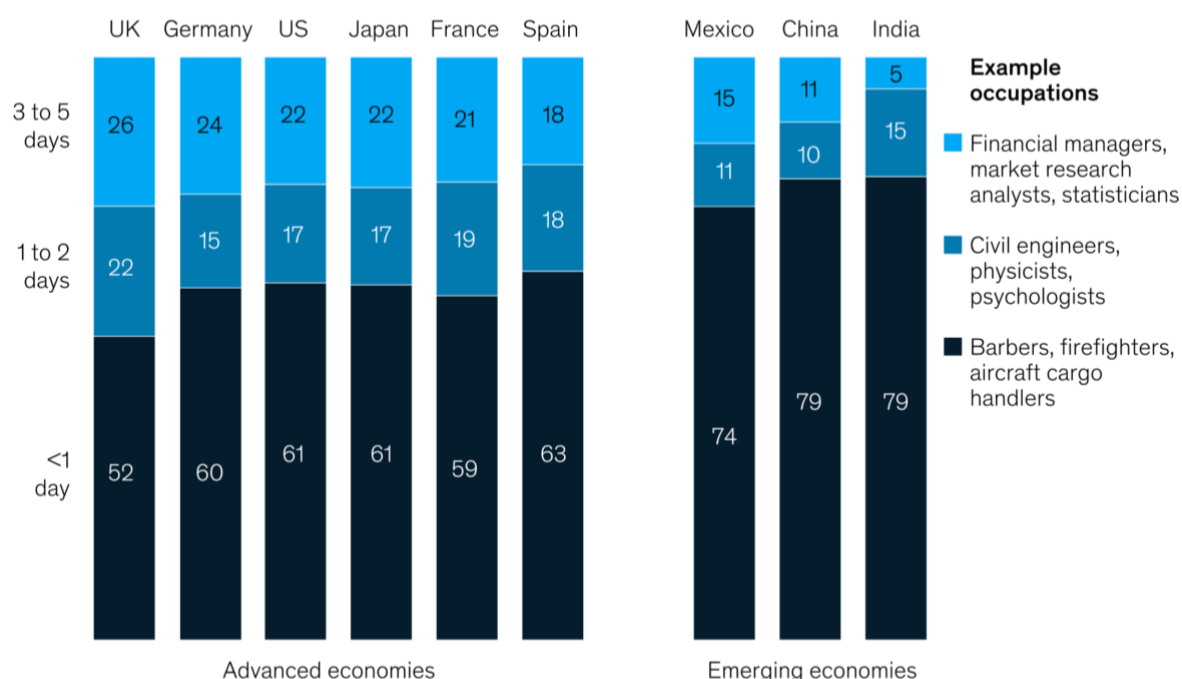


Figure 18: Work activities potential in a remote environment, USA. Source: S., Lund; A., Madgavkar; J., Manyika; S., Smit. "What's next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries". The Future of Work. McKinsey Global Instit

In Figure 19 we can observe how employee have spent their time on activities that could effectively be performed in a remote environment.

We can observe how the workforce with remote-work potential is distributed by activities in relation to the number of days per week potential remote work can be performed without productivity loss, that is for the authors the “effective potential”.

**Workforce with remote-work potential by number of days per week, % of 2018 workforce**  
Number of days per week of potential remote work without productivity loss (effective potential)<sup>1</sup>



Note: Figures may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.

<sup>1</sup>The effective potential includes only those activities that can be done remotely without losing effectiveness. Model based on more than 2,000 activities across more than 800 occupations.

Figure 19: “Workforce with remote-work potential by number of days per week, % of 2018 workforce” Source: S., Lund; A., Madgavkar; J., Manyika; S., Smit. “What’s next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries”. *The Future*

From what we can observe in the authors findings, we can conclude that remote work potential is concentrated in a few sectors: finance, insurance, management, business services, and information technology.

### 3.1.3. Remote work potential

As we were able to observe in the previous pages, the potential for remote work varies across activities, industries, and countries. In the United Kingdom business and financial services make up for a large portion of the workforce, and theoretically people employed in these areas could work remotely one-third of the time without any loss of productivity. (Lund et al., 2020)

As we can observe in Fig 21, the potential share of time employees spent working remotely varies in correlation to the economical level of the country. The workforce in advanced could operate 28 to 30 percent of their time working remotely with the same level of performance and without any productivity loss. However, in emerging economies we can observe how “employment is skewed toward occupations that require physical and manual activities in sectors like agriculture and manufacturing.” S., Lund; A., Madgavkar; J., Manyika; S., Smit. “What’s next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries”. *The Future of Work*. McKinsey Global Institute. (23 Nov 2020)

### Potential share of time spent working remotely by country, %

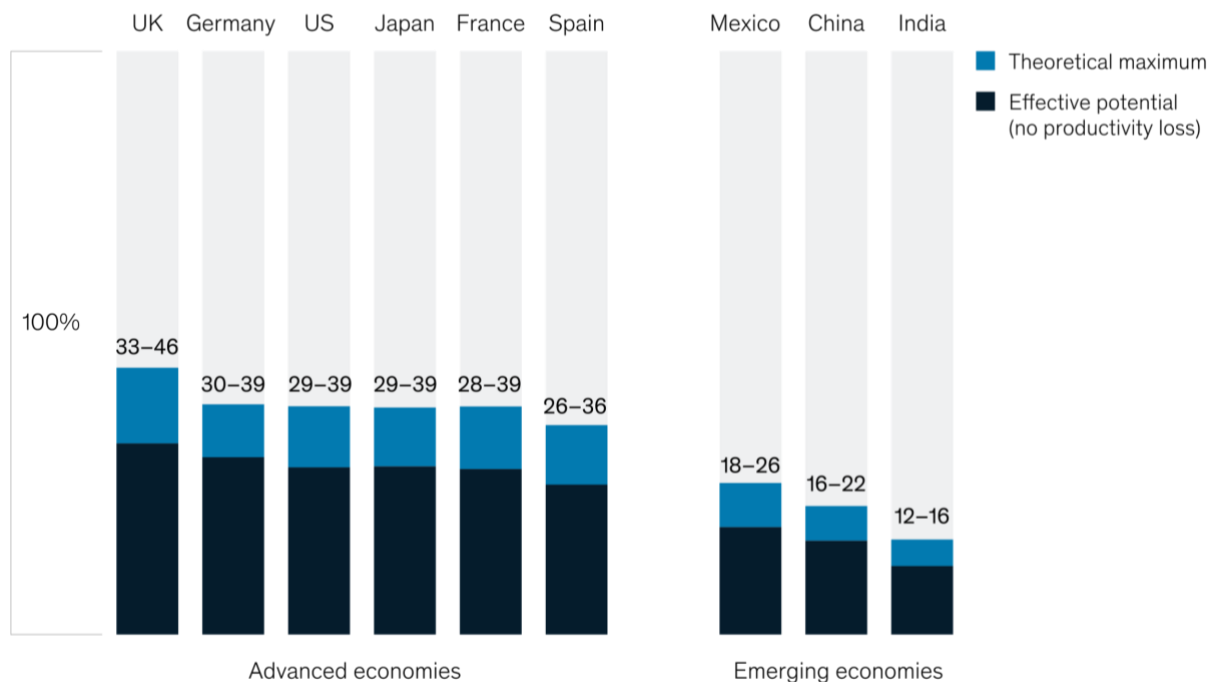


Figure 20: "Potential share of time spent working remotely by country". Source: S., Lund; A., Madgavkar; J., Manyika; S., Smit. "What's next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries". *The Future of Work*. McKinsey Global I

### 3.1.4. Remote work as an emerging reality

Prithwiraj (Raj) Choudhury, associate professor at Harvard Business School, started his focus on the "work-from-anywhere movement" long before the pandemic forced the majority of workforce in a remote environment work. According to Choudhury an increasing number of companies are implementing remote work in their business strategies, allowing to reduce costs on real estate and incrementing the employee engagement and productivity.

According to Choudhury et al. (2020), "work-from-anywhere is an emerging form of remote work, in which workers are awarded geographic flexibility, that is, the flexibility to choose where to live." The authors studied the productivity effects of employees transitioning from a work-from-home (WFH) to a work-from-anywhere (WFA) regime at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). The authors findings suggest that the transition from WFH to WFA resulted in a 4.4% increase in employee output, with no increase in rework. P(R), Choudhury; C., Foroughi; B., Larson. "Work-from-anywhere: The productivity effects of geographic flexibility." *Strat Mgmt Journal*. (2021) pp. 655– 683

In September 2020 the Conference Board surveyed more than 330 HR executives at large U.S. companies and reported that one-third expect 40% or more of their employees to work virtually past the spring of 2021, while 36% say they are now willing to hire workers who are 100% remote V., Sawhney. "What do we like about WFH?". *Harvard Business Review*, (March-April 2021)

As we have observed there are some downsides to remote working, such as monotony, social isolation, burnout of working. According to what reported by the HBR in April 2021 in a survey released in 2020, employees working in isolation "were most concerned about diminished collaboration and communication, increased loneliness, and being unable to unplug. And studies show that what remote workers gain in efficiency and productivity, they lose in harder-

to-measure benefits such as creativity, innovation, teamwork, trust, and empathy.” V., Sawhney. “What do we like about WFH?”. Harvard Business Review, (March-April 2021)

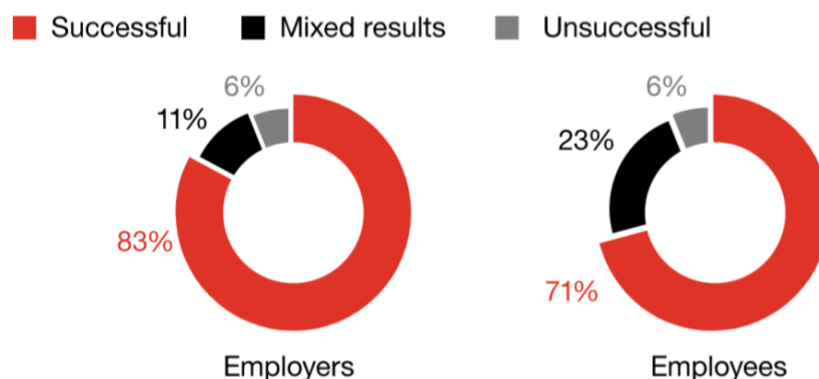
In “Working from Home: Making the New Normal Work for You”, Karen Mangia executive at Salesforce reckons that a fully remote career is a viable choice as long as people can avoid the greatest risk of this type of context. “Like those pretzels or potato chips or donuts right there in your kitchen, work is always available,” she warns. “But you know that always grazing isn’t a healthy strategy.” V., Sawhney. “What do we like about WFH?”. Harvard Business Review, (March-April 2021)

Rachael A. Woldoff and Robert C. Litchfield, interviewed 70 location-independent professionals for their book “Digital Nomads: In Search of Freedom, Community, and Meaningful Work in the New Economy.” The interviewees were mostly in the Gen Y group “fled cities, corporate offices, and cultures of busyness in search of more autonomy and mobility and a better quality of life while remaining gainfully employed thanks to telecommuting technologies.” V., Sawhney. “What do we like about WFH?”. Harvard Business Review, (March-April 2021)

The authors note that although Covid-19 disrupted the globe-trotting lifestyle of these “Digital Nomads”, “people can still be mobile and work flexibly within their home countries”. V., Sawhney. “What do we like about WFH?”. Harvard Business Review, (March-April 2021)

In January 2021 PwC published their results on the future of work. They surveyed 133 executives and 1200 subordinates. According to their survey remote work has been a success, as we can observe in Fig 22 only 6 percent of both, leaders and subordinates considered the remote work experience as unsuccessful.

## Remote work has been a success



Q: How successful would you say the shift to remote work because of COVID-19 has been for your company?  
(Responding 'successful' and 'very successful')  
Source: PwC US Remote Work Survey  
January 12, 2021. Base: 133 US executives, 1200 US office workers

Figure 21: Remote Work Success. Source: <https://www.pwc.com/us/remotework>

This model embraces the flexibility that most employees (and some employers) crave after working from home for months. It’s also a complicated way to organize the work week and is likely to transform a company’s culture, employee engagement, the way the work gets done and how office space is used.” Source: <https://www.pwc.com/us/remotework>

According to their results most of the executives and employees expect the hybrid workplace reality to begin to take shape already in 2021.

Also, according to McKinsey & Co., leaders in organizations say that remote work is here to stay. In their research for the future of work, the researchers at the McKinsey Global Institute interviewed 899 executives distributed through various industries.

As we can observe in Fig 23, according to what reported by McKinsey & Co., as per July 2020 the leaders interviewed reported that at least 10 percent of the employees in their company or business area worked remotely at least two days a week before the pandemic, in the report these results are compared with the percentage who expect at least 10 percent of the employees to be working remotely at least two days per week in 2022.

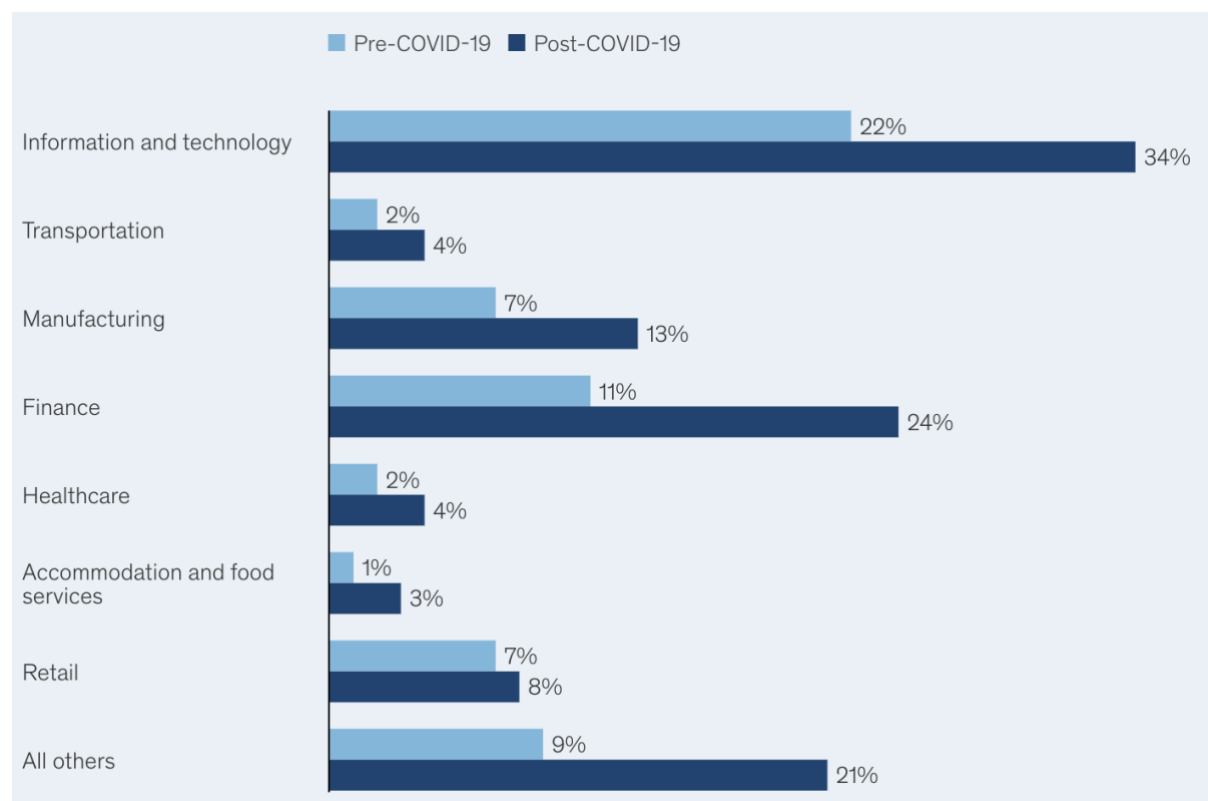


Figure 22: "Remote Work". Source: <https://covid.mckinsey.com/future-of-work>

## Employee engagement, well-being, and effectiveness over COVID-19

According to McKinsey & Co. "organizations have done well in addressing immediate safety and stability concerns. But a full return requires organization-wide commitment to a broader range of needs and to the strongest drivers of work experience, effectiveness, and wellness." Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

## Employee engagement, well-being, and effectiveness are driven by a set of employee experience factors.

### Top employee needs and experience factors by core themes of employee experience

Theme	Need (rank)	Employee experience factors	Improvement		
			Work effectiveness	Engagement	Well-being
Stable, secure work experience	Job security (1)	Organizational stability	+16.9%	+52.9%	+53.3%
	Financial stability (2)				
	Physical and mental health (6)	Compensation and benefits	+21.2%	+45.6%	+44.5%
	Being rewarded (8)				
Trusting relationships	Working with people I can trust (5)	Trust in leadership	+23.7%	+47.6%	+45.4%
		Relationship with company	+20.9%	+49.9%	+51.3%
	Being recognized for my work (10)	Nonfinancial recognition	+20.4%	+55.1%	+49.3%
Social cohesion and inclusion	Being treated fairly (4)	Fairness	+22.3%	+48.0%	+52.3%
		Involvement	+14.8%	+32.4%	+51.1%
	Having supportive coworkers (9)	Respect	+15.7%	+51.8%	+49.8%
		Equality	+16.2%	+50.8%	+50.9%
Individual purpose and contribution	Achieving work goals (7)	Alignment with organizational purpose and values	+20.3%	+49.0%	+49.3%
	Balance of work and private life (3)				
	Fulfilling my personal purpose at work (12)				

Figure 23: Employee engagement, well-being, and effectiveness by are driven by a set of employee experience factors. Organizations can build on the trust they have earned during the COVID-19 crisis. Source: Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. CO

However, as we observed over the course of our paper already decades ago, “need-based theories of motivation have emphasized the importance of need fulfillment on employee motivation and behavior. Applied to employee experience management, organizations should seek to address the most critical, prominent needs of the broader workforce while taking stock of unique needs of different segments and individuals.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

As we can observe in the figure above “to address employees’ needs and help them thrive during the return, organizations should focus on four areas: safety and security, relationships, culture, and purpose.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)



**While all workers are experiencing some degree of disruption, the range of experiences is wide.**

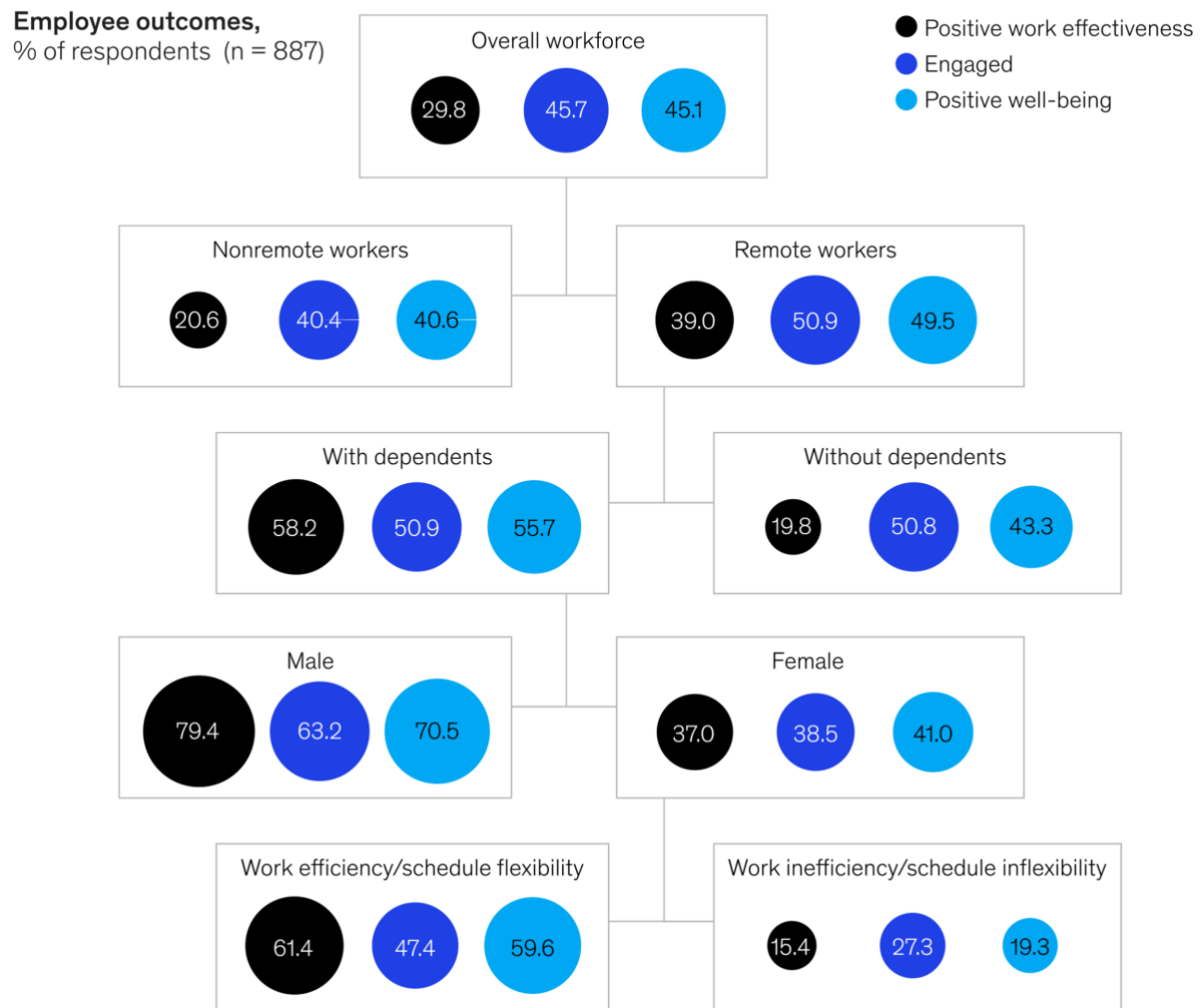


Figure 24: Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

What is interesting to mention that according to what emerged from the data in the survey, “remote-working mothers who report work efficiency (that is, effective time management) and schedule flexibility—both being key indicators of work–life balance—are three times more likely than those who report work inefficiency and schedule inflexibility to have a positive state of well-being. Again, flexibility and work efficiency are aspects of employee experience that organizations can start to address without significant capital investment.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

In fact, from what observed in McKinsey survey respondents “with dependents appear to be faring better than remote workers without dependents are. The data show that a diminished sense of community is a key driver of the negative impact on those without dependents. However, remote-working mothers aren’t realizing this benefit, faring well below remote-working fathers on all major dimensions we assessed: work effectiveness, engagement, and well-being. That gender difference can be explained, in part, by differences in “workplace needs.” In fact, the survey indicates “that the top priority for remote-working women right now is balancing work and private life. For remote-working men, that need doesn’t even rank in the





top ten. Anecdotally, the challenges of balancing work and private life in the current climate are evident, but the data reveal what a powerful variable this balance is.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

However, according to the authors “results are just a small slice of the insights that effective segmentation can provide. There are also likely to be meaningful variations within groups. For example, even within the group of remote-working fathers who seem to be doing well as a group, 17 percent indicate that they are disengaged, and 15 percent report a negative sense of well-being. The lesson for leaders is that a one-size-fits-all approach to experience management simply won’t work. Instead, they must aspire to address individuals in the same manner they do their customers.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

## Leaders styles and behaviors in a digital environment

Below we report a set of key actions Emmett et al. recommend for leaders to be “readily available and helping employees give meaning to a crisis (“sense making”), leaders can build employee resilience and social capital with their people. Moreover, they can help connect employees to the organization and to one another and can help enhance social connection and affiliation—not just formally, but also by allowing informal and organic conversations to emerge“. Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

### Four key actions

<p><b>1</b> </p> <p><b>Make it credible</b></p> <p>Give employees air time through town halls, pulse surveys, listening tours, and story sharing; have trusted leaders speak transparently and empathetically about what employees are going through; use data to analyze related information and communicate findings to employees regularly</p>	<p><b>2</b> </p> <p><b>Make it feasible</b></p> <p>Prioritize timely action instead of waiting for transformative solutions; push responsibility to edges to accelerate change (eg, create digital channels for people to engage with each other directly rather than running everything through a central hub)</p>	<p><b>3</b> </p> <p><b>Make it sustainable</b></p> <p>Develop a plan to embed changes beyond the crisis; communicate to employees specifics about open-ended changes being made; ensure that employees know that, as the crisis is not time bound, support from leaders has no end point</p>	<p><b>4</b> </p> <p><b>Make it personal</b></p> <p>Find creative ways to use advanced analytics, behavioral science, and digital technology to put employees in charge of their own journeys; tailor interventions to individual contexts and evolving needs</p>
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*Figure 25: Organizations can build on the trust they have earned during the COVID-19 crisis. Source: Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can seize the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)*

## Safety and security

**Demonstrate compassionate leadership.** “Leaders should focus on making a positive difference in people’s lives by demonstrating awareness, vulnerability, and empathy. Exhibit deliberate calm and bounded optimism. In communications, leaders need to strike the right balance between realism about the challenges ahead and confidence that the organization will find its way through the crisis.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

**Invest in relationships.** “While it may be a natural tendency for leaders to focus inward on the business itself, our survey results show that sustaining trust and acknowledging employee efforts are critical to employee engagement, well-being, and effectiveness. Organizations that have been building social capital during earlier phases of the crisis will be in better positions than others as the workforce transitions to the return phase.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

## **Employee relationships**

**Coach managers on the “trust quotient.”** “Charles H. Green developed an assessment of trust that distills trust into four attributes: high credibility, reliability, intimacy, and low self-orientation. By developing the mindset and capabilities to deliver on those attributes, managers will be better able to support employees today and to earn their followership going forward.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

**Invest in the development of employee-to-employee relationships.** “It would be a mistake to assume that the camaraderie that has sustained many employees early in the crisis will endure long term. Leaders need to take active steps to ensure continued relationship building, particularly for remote workers. Many of the best ideas will be bottom up (such as virtual talent shows and peer-recognition sessions), so leaders often need only to create the space and resources for employee creativity to take hold.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

**Create and maintain a culture that values inclusion, individuality, and social harmony.** “As ways of working shifted dramatically with the COVID-19 pandemic, many workers had to transition to new work duties, processes, and modes of communication and collaboration. Our research shows that having a foundation of involvement, fairness, respect, and equality can help employees adopt to new ways of working and interacting. As we face a future of vastly different working models and team structures, building such an integrated culture now will only benefit organizations in the future.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

## **Positive culture**

**Create a network of teams.** “Leaders can set up a network of teams to promote cross-functional collaboration and transparency. This team structure can tackle an organization’s most pressing problems quickly while also enhancing the strength of random connections across the network for effective team building.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

**Cultivate inclusion and psychological safety.** “Leaders and managers can help create inclusive and psychologically safe team environments by modeling behaviors that value the inputs of all members, encourage individuality, and allow members to experiment without fear of negative consequences.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

**Connect people to something bigger than themselves and help them contribute.** “The emergence of purpose as a driving force is particularly compelling, given its overarching impact on all aspects of work and business. A sense of purpose can help employees navigate high levels of uncertainty and change and ensure that their efforts are aligned with the highest-value activities.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

## Sense of purpose

**Embed purpose in how you talk to employees.** There are avenues for organizations to move from the “why” to the “how” in establishing and linking employees to a clear purpose. Link your organization’s “why” to your employee communications. As you make changes in how the business operates through the crisis, consistently link the changes back to your purpose. Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

**Bring purpose to life.** Share stories (through video or town halls) of colleagues who are embodying purpose through the period of crisis. Now is the time to celebrate and create role models of those who are living their purpose. Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

**Start a longer-term conversation about purpose.** Begin the hard work of defining or revisiting your organization’s purpose now. Explain how employees will play a critical role. Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

**Tailor your approach: Employees’ needs and experiences vary.** “While all workers are experiencing some degree of disruption, the range of experiences is wide, from the very positive to the very negative. For example, of the population of fathers working at home, 79.4 percent report positive work effectiveness, with 63.2 percent feeling engaged and 70.5 percent saying they have a positive state of well-being. Conversely, of the group of employees working in nonremote positions with little workplace flexibility, 70.5 percent report negative work effectiveness, with 50.4 percent feeling disengaged and 57.6 percent saying they’re struggling. There are distinct challenges faced by nonremote workers compared with remote workers in the current crisis. The impact on working mothers versus working fathers is quite different. Our data suggest a nuanced picture of employee experience.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

To tailor employee-support approaches, the authors recommend two key actions:

1. **Use segmentation to identify who is struggling and what they need.** “Complement publicly available data with internal tools, such as open-listening channels, pulse surveys, and advanced analytics. Use these tools to understand the diverse set of challenges that individuals and teams are facing and identify the best ways of supporting them where they’re struggling the most.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)
2. **Take a personalized approach to fostering culture and enabling change in this new world.** In driving new mindsets and behaviors (such as adapting to a new virtual-working model) at scale, it’s important to engage employees in a continual two-way dialogue that takes into consideration their specific needs, allows them to configure their own journeys, delivers personalized coaching, and provides them with a forum to share best practices with others who may share similar challenges. Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://mckinsey.com)

McKinsey & Co. suggest to organizations to seize the opportunity to “improve employee experience during the return phase of the COVID-19 crisis by shifting from a focus on meeting health and safety needs to a more nuanced approach that recognizes differences among the workforce. Employee experience drivers—perspectives and needs that vary between and

even within those segments—may be somewhat heightened and more fluid right now, given the constantly shifting landscape. But organizations that set a course focused on employee experience will create meaningful impact now and well into the future.” Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com)

### **3.1.5. Implication of remote work on urban economies**

According to what observed by McKinsey & Co., 15 to 20 percent of the workforce should be shifting into a remote work environment. And according to McKinsey Global Institute, people spending more time at home and less commuting to their offices will have a profound impact on urban economies. As we observed over the course of the pandemic people reducing the time spent commuting had significant economic consequence on transportation, gasoline and auto sales, restaurants and retail centers, and demand for office real estate.

In May 2020, McKinsey & Co. surveyed office space managers and according to the McKinsey Global Institute findings, leaders in this area “expect a 36 percent increase in worktime outside their offices, affecting main offices and satellite locations.

Moody’s Analytics predicts that the office vacancy rate in the United States will climb to 19.4 percent, compared to 16.8 percent at the end of 2019, and rise to 20.2 percent by the end of 2022. A survey of 248 US chief operating officers found that one-third plan to reduce office space in the coming years as leases expire.” S., Lund; A., Madgavkar; J., Manyika; S., Smit. “What’s next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries”. The Future of Work. McKinsey Global Institute. (23 Nov 2020)

However, this change will not only did impact the office real estate, but it is also impacting the residential real estate industry. According to what reported by Lund et al., subsequently to tech companies announcing their remote work plans, in San Francisco the median price of a one-bedroom rental dropped 24.2 percent compared to a year ago, while in New York City, which had roughly 28,000 residents in every square mile at the start of 2020, 15,000 rental apartments were empty in September, the most vacancies in recorded history.” S., Lund; A., Madgavkar; J., Manyika; S., Smit. “What’s next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries”. The Future of Work. McKinsey Global Institute. (23 Nov 2020)

In defiance to this trend in the suburbs and smaller cities bidding wars are breaking out. This might lead to a shift in the remote workers’ consumption patterns. With less money spent on transportation, meals, and clothing but they might invest in home office equipment, digital tools, and enhanced connectivity gear. (Lund et al., 2020)

However, before the pandemic both in the United States and Europe, organizations tended to have their workforce concentrated in megacities like London and New York and high-growth technology hubs, like Seattle and Berlin. “These cities have attracted many of the same type of younger, highly educated workers who can best work remotely. It remains to be seen whether the shift to remote work slows that trend, or whether the most vibrant cities remain magnets for such people.” S., Lund; A., Madgavkar; J., Manyika; S., Smit. “What’s next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries”. The Future of Work. McKinsey Global Institute. (23 Nov 2020)

### **3.2. Remote Leaders and multigenerational subordinates’ behavior**

It is now clear more than ever that organizations and their people have changed dramatically since the first European lock down in March 2020. A distributed workforce, virtual teams and digital collaboration become a normality for most.

According to Deloitte, “before COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, one of the pressing human resource issues confronting organisations was managing an increasingly multigenerational

workforce. The crisis provides an opportunity to examine if the traditional approach of segmenting by age groups remains valid in a time when the demographic profile of the workforce is changing dramatically.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

Europe’s aging population is the result of the declining birth rates, with countries facing a “shrinking populations” and organizations are left “*fighting a war*” to access the diminishing pool of younger talent. “Meanwhile, improvements in health and mortality, as well as increases in the minimum age to access retirement benefits, in countries such as Germany, Italy, Ireland and the United Kingdom, means people are working longer.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

According to what observed by Deloitte, “these trends are dramatically altering the demographic profile of the workforce. For example, the number of workers in Europe age 50+ increased by 32% from 2010–19, while those below age 35 declined slightly (-1%). Whereas the 27 countries in the European Union plus the United Kingdom had 58 million workers age 50+ in 2010, in fewer than ten years this number had risen to 77 million. At the same time, those below age 35 fell from 70 million to 69 million.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

However, leading the current multigenerational workforce creates for leaders and their organization a new set of challenges. In fact, according to the authors, “organizations must walk a fine line between creating opportunities for young employees to advance (or risk losing them) while also ensuring veterans, whose skills are needed in tight labour markets, feel included. Further, to maintain productivity and innovation, organizations must persuade employees of different ages and backgrounds to collaborate. This demands an ability to identify the skills and strengths of individuals, recognise how they can contribute and understand how to engage with them.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

The 2020 Deloitte “Global Human Capital Trends“ reported that “only 6 per cent of survey respondents strongly agree that their leaders are equipped to lead such a workforce effectively. The issue is that age and generation have been the traditional lens through which organisations view their workforce. This demographic profiling forms the basis of talent management strategies. Programmes of career and leadership development, compensation, learning and talent acquisition are all premised heavily on employees’ age. As workforce composition becomes more complex, the question arises of whether traditional segmentation, anchored in a generational approach, should remain the focus of future human resources strategies.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

We have already seen how the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated and amplified changes in the workforce and in the workplace. According to Deloitte research the pandemic “provides an opportunity to examine how employees of different ages experience, react and adapt to intense change. Such an examination can serve to highlight possible flaws in relying on a generational lens to segment, manage and develop the workforce.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

The authors argue that “considering the COVID-19 crisis has been global and experienced by whole populations, it could be assumed that there are major disparities between how different age groups within the workforce have experienced the pandemic. Indeed, the results show differences are present between the experiences of the various generations, but not in the manner that could, perhaps, be expected.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

In their “European Workforce Survey“, Deloitte surveyed more than 10,000 employees in seven countries across Europe. What the authors observed in their findings “is that there are distinct generational differences in how respondents perceive the changes wrought by COVID-19. Almost 80% of all respondents report that they have experienced at least one kind of change to their working lives, but it is younger employees who are more likely to report experiencing at least one change to a moderate or significant extent. In comparison, the older the employee, the higher the likelihood is that they experienced no changes at all or only to a small extent.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

Below we report the share of respondents divided by their different experience and age group.

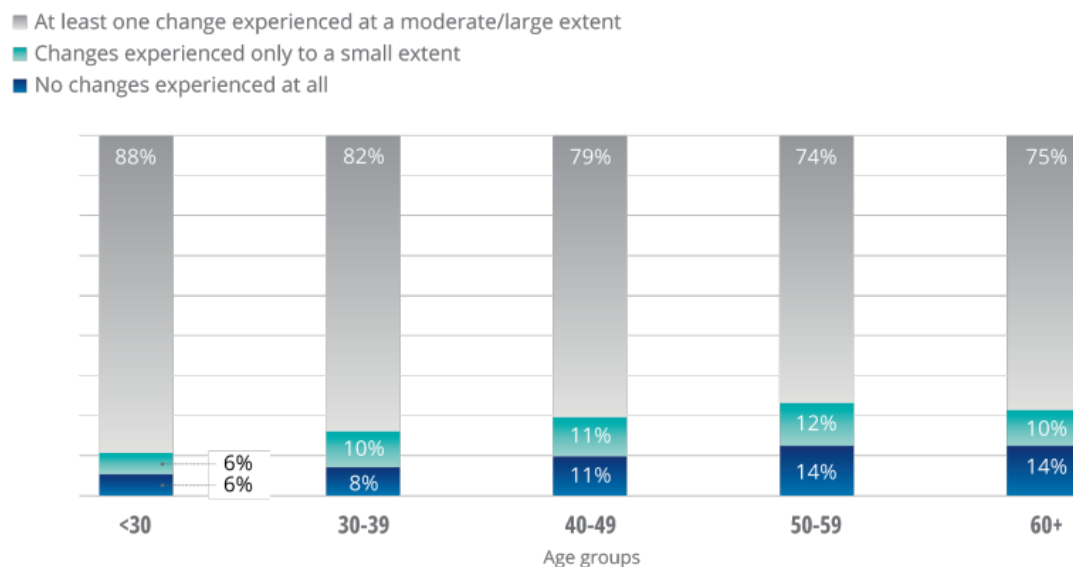


Figure 26: Share of the respondents with different experiences of the pandemic, by age. Source: Deloitte European Workforce Survey. (2020)

In their survey, Deloitte asked about nine specific workplace changes driven by COVID-19, including remote working for an extended period, shift in the skills needed, use of technology and requirement for a more flexible working schedule.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

The results brought Poirel and Coppola to conclude that “the likelihood of having experienced a specific change to a moderate/large extent diminished with age – even when other factors that might explain the answers (such as country, family situation, industry or occupation) are accounted for.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

In fact, the survey reported that “46% of the respondents below age 30 experienced a significant shift in work priorities, only 28% age 60+ reported the same. Similarly, while 44% below age 30 experienced a moderate/large shift in the type of tasks performed, only 26 per cent of those age 50+ had a similar experience.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

However, “it is difficult to imagine that older employees have been spared the effects in such a systematic fashion. What accounts for the difference in responses between generations could be the perception of how far reaching the changes are by the various age groups.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

According to Deloitte’s results, the assumption that older employees struggled to adapt to the new environment more than their younger colleagues seems to have been proven wrong. In

fact, “more than 50% of the respondents below age 30 experiencing at least one change reported they had difficulties adapting. This share drops constantly as age increases, to the point that only one in three respondents age 60+ who experienced changes to a moderate/large extent had at least some difficulties adapting. It seems older employees more easily adapted to the new working conditions.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

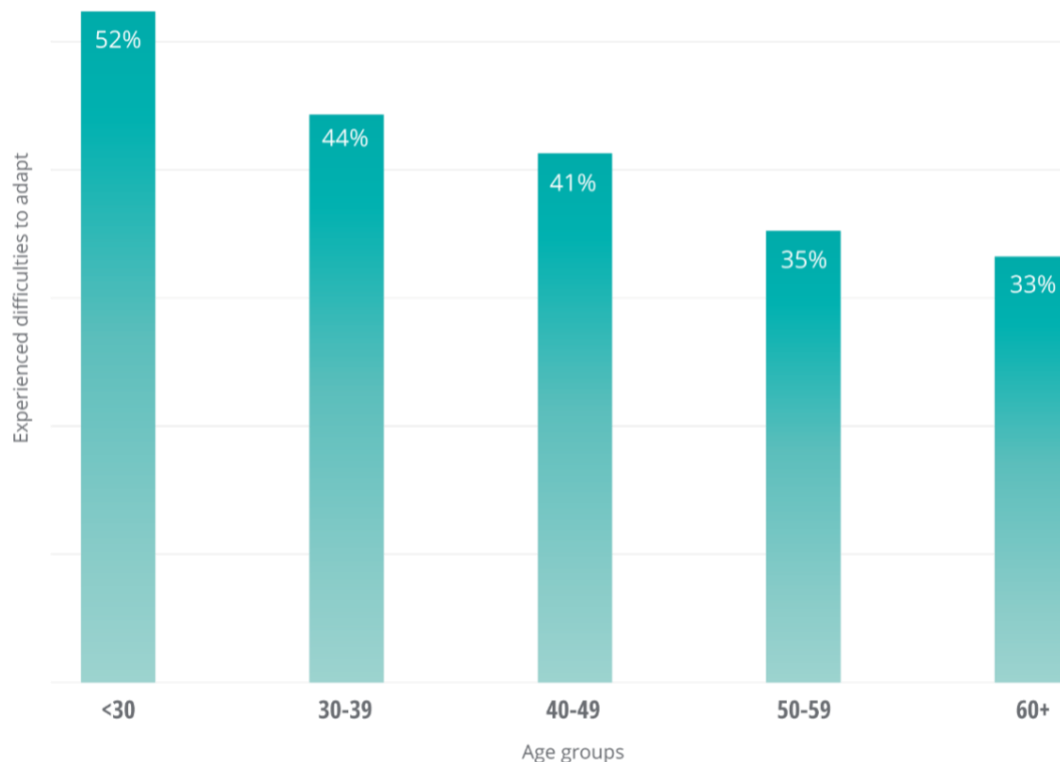


Figure 27: Share of respondents who experienced at least one change to a moderate/large extent and who also reported at least some difficulties to adapt to the change by age of the respondent. Source: Deloitte European Workforce Survey. (2020)

In fact, the results of specific changes forced by COVID-19 suggest that “the differences between age groups disappear once factors such as the type of occupation or the size of the organisation are considered. For example, no significant differences emerge between employees of different ages in adapting to new and unfamiliar technology tools. The share of people reporting at least some difficulties is constant across each age group – debunking a common notion that only ‘digital natives’ are tech-affine.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

A key observation emerging from the results of the survey is that the ability of employees to adapt to change is based on the level of trust and support rather than on the age of the employee. In fact, Deloitte affirms that “trust from leaders and colleagues were among the top factors identified by employees as helping them deal with the changes COVID-19 has imposed. If employees feel a legitimacy in their role, have a sense of belonging to the organisation and feel involved, they show a capacity to manage the situation.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

However, the results show one significant generational difference in the ability to adapt job loss. In fact, the respondents from the older age groups “seem to have a harder time adapting to temporary loss of job or of being furloughed, particularly if their tenure at the current employer has been relatively short. This is possibly due to their fear of losing the job and the



difficulties they expect to encounter with seeking another.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

There are other two areas where the difference in age groups appears: “an increase in autonomy and the assumption of more leadership responsibilities. In both cases, the likelihood of reporting difficulties declines as the age of the respondent increases. In particular, the increase in managerial responsibilities and autonomy placed upon young employees, often experienced for the first time and undertaken in this uncertain environment, means many have struggled to deal with the situation. Notably, younger respondents in organisations where older employees dominate the hierarchy and issue orders are more likely to report difficulties adapting to having more autonomy and an increased leadership role (figure 3). Forty-three per cent below age 30 working in hierarchical organisations report such difficulties; only 27 per cent in the same age group working in organisations where ‘workers of all ages work together’ report difficulties.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

According to the *2020 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends report*, “leadership development and learning are among the programmes most likely to be informed by age and generations criteria. Yet, according to the European Workforce Survey, employees of all ages identify the ‘capacity to adapt’ as the most important capability for them to thrive in the labour market post-COVID-19. When organisations use generations as a segmentation criterion, they could be preventing employees from acquiring these capabilities. They could also be preventing employees from fulfilling their expectations and needs.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

According to the results of European Workforce Survey 2020, what helped most of the respondents coping with the pandemic was the “human factor”. “Trust from leadership, trust from colleagues and time to adjust were all equally underlined by respondents as the most important aspects in helping them adapt. Across all age groups, the responses were similar. While time is more relevant as age increases, younger employees are more likely to report that a network of colleagues helped them adapt.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

However, these “‘human factors’ prevail over technology in terms of support for respondents in all age groups. What employees desire is a personal approach that provides emotional support. Trust, help and time are invaluable to the ability to adapt to a changing work environment. Technology-driven tools are also important, such as the infrastructure to support remote employment, virtual communication and internal trainings, but it is the human factor that is overwhelmingly considered the most critical. It seems that the fundamental things people value at work do not change substantially with age.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>



## Share of employees reporting some difficulties adapting to more leadership responsibilities, by company culture type and age

- Colleagues of different ages work often together, each bringing their own contribution and elaborating/building on the ideas of the other
- Older workers are generally higher up in the hierarchy, issuing orders that younger workers execute

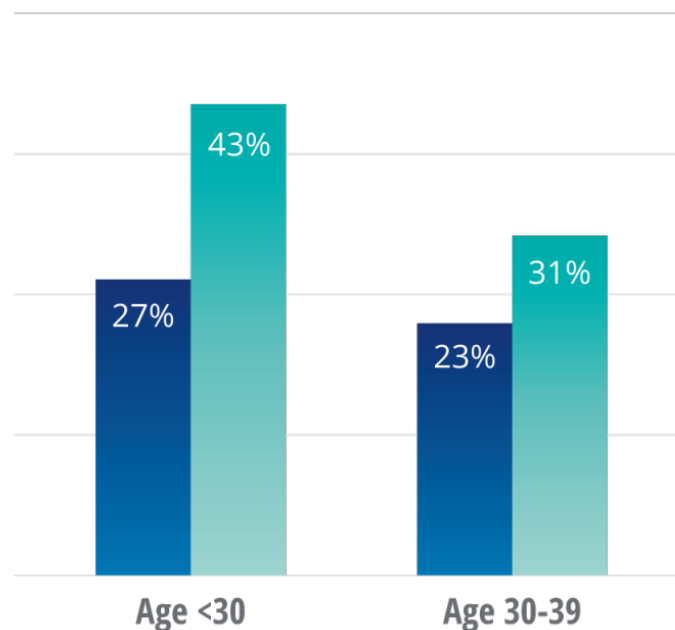


Figure 28: Share of employees reporting some difficulties adapting to more leadership responsibilities, by company culture type and age. European Workforce Survey 2020

Deloitte recommends to leaders to focus on the attitudes and beliefs of their subordinates to really be able to understand and intervene. In fact, when the researchers clustered the respondents based on “their expectations and concerns about the post-COVID-19 work environment”, there are three major groupings emerging from the survey.

- **The Surfers.** These are “employees who see long-lasting changes in the work environment and are concerned about a deterioration in the interpersonal relationships at work.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>
- **The Grounded.** These are employees who foresee no major shifts in their jobs nor have major concerns about the future work environment. Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>
- **The Jugglers.** These are employees who see change coming and are concerned about their ability to survive in the future labour market. They fear rising insecurity and a reduction in opportunities. Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

However, it seems that the age of the members in these three groups tends to curve towards similar age groups. In fact, the grounded “tend to be older, engaged in administrative or technical occupations, and working in large companies (1,000+ employees) with an open-ended contract. In comparison, the juggler is more prevalent among younger employees in sales or customer service, as well as skilled trades and manual jobs, working on fixed-term contracts and in small- to medium-sized enterprises, particularly in retail and hospitality.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

However, according to the authors, “looking at employees through these behavioural and attitudinal lenses provides a more meaningful tool to understand the workforce and to target possible interventions and strategies, making them more personal and dynamic. For example, GROUNDED employees are less likely to see the need to develop new skills and capabilities (irrespective of age). If organisations want to reskill or upskill these employees, offering a rich learning curriculum will be pointless unless effort is also put into communicating the need for developing new capabilities.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

According to what Deloitte stated in their *2020 Global Human Capital Trends report* “organisations must provide both infrastructure and a culture that encourage employees to use emerging technologies without losing information or a sense of belonging. Being able to initiate policies that help employees achieve this, particularly in uncertain times, can be a catalyser for motivation and inclusivity, and thus create a genuine competitive advantage for an organisation.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

According to Deloitte COVID-19 crisis and the European Workforce Survey highlight that “organisational policies and incentives have often used age to roughly categorise employees to define their preferences”, but... “employee perceptions and needs are more complex than simple demographic delineations allow.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

Deloitte suggested some questions that will help organizations relate to their employees “attitudes and behaviours, as well their views about and concerns around the future“. This will help leaders enhances their understanding of the workforce focusing on the complexity of the individuals “that constitute that workforce”. Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

Below we report all the questions suggested by Deloitte for leaders to understand their subordinates:

- Do they work far from home?
- How long have they been working within the structure?
- What types of transport and infrastructure do they have access to?
- What are their main responsibilities?
- Were they trained to have the skills and abilities to fulfil these responsibilities?

According to the authors “by asking such questions and deep diving into the resulting data, organisations can gather valuable insights and predict the best way to support employees. This is essential. Organisations need to acknowledge the complexity of their workforce and understand individuals’ characteristics better. They will then have an opportunity to help develop more personalised policies and programmes based on a deep understanding of the employees’ attributes and needs to foster a greater sense of belonging and knowledge-sharing.” Poirel, G.; Coppola, M. “Wrong Numbers”. Deloitte Insights, March 2021. Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com>

In conclusion it seems that leaders have to acknowledge the complexity of the individuals in their teams, understand each individuals' behavior and characteristics and provide their subordinates with the trust and support they need to thrive.

### 3.3. Remote Leadership and Subordinates' behaviors interrelation

The impact of COVID-19 on workers and workplaces across the globe has been dramatic. Kniffin et al. (2021), research is rooted on work and organizational psychology and aimed to identify the implications of COVID-19 for work, workers, and organizations while also identifying issues for future research and insights to inform solutions." K. M., Kniffin; J., Narayanan; F., Anseel; J., Antonakis; S. P., Ashford; A.B., Bakker; P., Bamberger; H., Bapuji; D. P., Bhawe; V. K., Choi; S. J., Creary; E., Demerouti; F. J., Flynn; M. J., Gelfand; L. L., Greer; G., Johns; S. Kesebir; P. G., Klein; S. Y., Lee; M.v., Vugt. "COVID-19 and the workplace: Implications, issues, and insights for future research and action". *American Psychologist*, 76(1), (2021). pp. 63–77

COVID-19 has been challenging leaders with an immediate and serious need for their adaptability skills. According to Chen et al. (2021), leaders are accountable for "establishing trust, collaborating, and sharing leadership to increase the organization's ability to survive during the time of crisis. Moreover, authentic leadership requires empathy, compassion, and flexibility to manage employees who are stressed by uncertain situations, and leaders require both emotional intelligence and emotional stability to drive their organizations because organizational employees experience genuine difficulties in their daily life. Chen, J.K.C.; Sriphon, T. Perspective on COVID-19 Pandemic Factors Impacting Organizational Leadership. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 3230. p. 3

Following their research, Chen et al. suggested that leaders must "build trust and relationships by presenting actions oriented to empathy and full transparency, since employees need safety and personal security at work as a basic need." J.K.C., Chen; T. Sriphon. "Perspective on COVID-19 Pandemic Factors Impacting Organizational Leadership. *Sustainability*" *13*, 3230. MDPI. (2021) p.3

In March 2020 McKinsey & Co. surveyed 800 US employees on their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to what observed by McKinsey & Co. most organizations were able to successfully address "their employees' basic needs of safety, stability, and security during the first phase of the COVID-19 crisis." However, according to the Emmett et al. the needs are in continuous evolution, and these changes are "calling for a more sophisticated approach as organizations enter the next phase." J., Emmett; G., Schrah; M., Schrimper; A. Wood. "COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can seize the moment." McKinsey & Co. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com)

Employer response effectiveness, % of respondents (n = 887)



Figure 29: Employer response effectiveness. Source: J., Emmett; G., Schrah; M., Schrimper; A. Wood. "COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment." McKinsey & Co. (29 June 2020) [mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com)

As we can observed from Fig 18, organizations are effectively responding to the challenges generated by the COVID-19 crisis, and these actions are having an appreciable impact on

their workforce. “Compared with respondents who are dissatisfied with their organizations’ responses, those who say their organizations have responded particularly well are four times more likely to be engaged and six times more likely to report a positive state of well-being”. J., Emmett; G., Schrah; M., Schrimper; A. Wood. “COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can seize the moment.” McKinsey & Co. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com)

Because of the pandemic, leaders had to quickly adapt to changes that impacted the workforce and the workplace. According to McKinsey & Co., by continuing to be present, action oriented, empathetic, and fully transparent leaders should be able to build trust and affiliation and best address their subordinates most demanding needs. Emmett et al., argue that in addition to basic needs of safety and security, trusting relationships, social cohesion, and individual purpose are having a disproportionate impact on the subordinates’ well-being and work effectiveness. The authors suggest that prioritizing improvements in these areas will address a broad set of needs for most of the workforce. The authors also suggest that to close the gap generated by these changes organizations should be using “a combination of science, technology, data, and analytics to segment ... employees like they would with customers and tailor interventions to support” their “employees in personalized and meaningful ways.” J., Emmett; G., Schrah; M., Schrimper; A. Wood. “COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can seize the moment.” McKinsey & Co. (29 June 2020) Source: [mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com)

## **4. Research Methodology**

### **4.1. Research Design**

As we observed, the organizational changes induced by the new advancement in technology, and the flexibility requested by the new generations present in the workforce have been challenging organizations for past decades.

However, if digitalization and the generational change in values have been transforming the way companies operate, COVID-19 has been an accelerator, and forced all type of organizations, their leaders, and subordinates in at least a hybrid environment.

Our intent in this paper was to better understand the interrelation between remote leadership and the leader-follower relationship, and ultimately how this interrelation is impacting the subordinates' behaviors in the workplace.

In order to achieve our intent, we used a qualitative empirical research method we selected to proceed using two methodologies in our data collection strategy: "case study", and "semi-structured interviews".

#### **4.1.1. Case study**

Our intention to use "case study" as a methodology for our research was to have a multi-perspectival analysis. This enabled us to open our research to a relevant groups of leaders and followers and the interaction between them.

In fact, thanks to the internet of things and ultimately to the digitalization of communication, we were able to access to the latest research conducted over the course of COVID-19 on remote leadership, leader-follower relationships, and the behavior of leaders and followers.

In the chapter on remote leadership, we researched, analyzed, identified, and presented the latest research having a deeper interest into the topics identified below:

- Remote leadership models and theories academics and consultants have developed over the past years that in our opinion best fulfill the need of the new workforce and the new workplace.
- What leading at distance really means for leaders and followers?
- What changes in a remote environment from an operational perspective and how organizations have reacted over COVID-19?
- How did remote working overall impacted the workforce performance.
- What would be the future of work and how remote working could impact the workforce and economies.
- And ultimately, what have been the effects of remote leadership on the behaviors of leaders and followers.

#### **4.1.2. Semi-structured interviews**

We used a semi-structured interview methodology in the attempt to elicit new information or at least the confirmation from what we observed while analyzing the case study chapter.

We identified two experts with several years of experience in change management and digital transformation. Over COVID-19, both experts have served fifteen-people organizations as well

as organizations with thousands of employees, helping them with their transition. The organizations they consult, are mainly based in the DACH region, but do operate globally.

Additionally, we identified three organizations that operate globally, but are based within the borders of the European Union. The interviewees of “Company A” are based in Berlin, Germany; “Company B” has its headquarters in Dornbirn, Austria; and the employees of “Company C” have their offices in Krakow, Poland. These organizations have a workforce of twenty to fifty employees and serve in the Information Technology, and in the Professional Services sectors. We aimed to interview leaders and followers operating in Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) because SMEs represent the 99.7% of companies in Austria and are the backbone of the Austrian economy.

Also, we assured in our interviews to represent the multileveled generational group the workforce is composed (Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z), whether experts, leaders or followers.

For data protection and privacy reasons, all interviewees full names, the name of their companies and the name of external subjects mentioned in the interviews have been anonymized.

Although we initially aimed to interview three to seven people, we ended with eight interviews. We defined a set of questions, and we obviously adapted the questionnaire we created to the interviewees profile (leader, follower, or expert). The interviews were conducted separately, and the interviewees were previously informed about the subject of the meeting. We started the interview with a brief preamble and the interviews lasted from twenty-nine minutes and twelve seconds, the shortest, to one hour, one minute and fifty-three seconds, the longest.

Over the course of the interviews, we proactively asked a series of pre-identified questions, followed by a series of follow-up questions that were requested by the momentum that was created.

We distributed our pre-identified questions into four main categories: digitalization, workforce, leaders and subordinates’ behavior, remote leadership. Below the list of pre-identified questions that have been the basis for our semi-structure interviews approach.

<b>Digitalization</b>	<b>Workforce</b>	<b>Leaders and Subordinates’ relationship</b>	<b>Remote Leadership</b>
Do you consider your organization as fully digitized? Low Level - Medium Level - High Level	What is the average age of the employees in your organization? Gen X, GenY. Gen Z?	How would you describe your manager? Did something change from the start of the pandemic? In there an interrelation to remote leadership?	What changed in leading your team at distance?  How easy was it to adapt to teleworking? As a leader/subordinate
Could you please share what digital means of communication, co-operation, knowledge-sharing, etc. does your company use?	How was your workforce distributed before the pandemic? How have things changed?	How would you describe your team members? Did something change from the start of the pandemic? Is there an interrelation to remote leadership?	What lessons have you learned? Is there something you would do differently?
What is your preferred mean of	Did the motivation of the team members changed since the pandemic started? In		What would be the top 3 recommendations

communication, co-operation, knowledge-sharing, etc.?  Do you prefer digital or face-to-face interactions?	there an interrelation to remote leadership?  Did the performance of the team members change since the pandemic started? Is there an interrelation to remote leadership?	How would you describe the interactions with your leader/subordinate before Covid-19? What changed since Covid-19 started?	for Leaders to lead remote?  In your opinion how did “ <i>Remote Leadership</i> ” interrelate with the Leader-Follower relationship and its impact on the subordinates’ behaviors in the workplace over Covid-19.
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Table 4: Semi-structured interviews questionnaire

## 4.2. Research Method

After reviewing the literature and the most recent research we decided to design of our research using a qualitative approach. The use of qualitative analysis helps researchers approach a research question taking into consideration the multiple aspects of the human condition rather than a mere evaluation of a numerical set of data.

We used a qualitative empirical research method because our intent was to describe the way leaders and subordinates see and perceive the world they live in, through the analysis of what they say and do and the reasoning and sentiments behind the usage of certain words and the actions they take.

### 4.2.1. Data Collection

Data collection is a fundamental skill of any researcher. The ability of choosing the most suitable method to collect data is a skill that a qualitative researcher will gain over time, through proper training and the experience gathered from the various context.

**Case Study.** To compile the data for the “case study” part of our research, we have extensively reviewed the literature on remote leadership and its interrelation with the leadership-follower relations and its impact on the subordinate’s behavior.

**Semi-structured interviews.** To collect and digitally store the information, we obtained over the course of our interview process, notes and audio records. We previously asked consent to the interviewee for audio recording the meetings. Then we moved to the manual transcription of the sound recordings.

### 4.2.2. Data Analysis

To analyze the amount of qualitative data we have collected, and make sense of the information, next to the knowledge and experience, the level of emotional intelligence the researcher had helped facilitate building the research relationships and the trust needed to access the communities we have addressed and their members.

**Case Study.** We started analyzing remote leadership models and the subsequent observation on the subordinate's behavior in a remote environment identified before the pandemic; and then moved our focus on analyzing the research published over the course of the pandemic. This extensive analysis has provided us with a global and clear understanding of the status of organizations, leaders and followers operating remotely before and during COVID-19.

**Semi-structured interviews.** Once we stored our data we used the audio records, their transcription and our notes to analyze the results based on the four themes we identified in our questionnaire. We also cross-analyzed the answer of the respective leaders and followers in order to find differences or similarities to their perspectives on the themes.



## 5. Empirical Findings

In the next pages we are going to report our findings. We will be reporting both, the findings derived by the analysis of the case studies published by PWC, Deloitte, and McKinsey & Co; and the findings we derived from the 8 interviews we conducted in parallel to our analysis on the case studies. We investigated and will report in specific about the following aspects: digitalization levels of the organizations; the development of leaders to adapt to the challenges raised by remote working; the intricacy of the leader-follower relationships over the COVID-19 pandemic, its interrelations with the subordinates' behaviors, and eventual generational factors that might have influenced it.

### 5.1. Digitalization Levels

#### 5.1.1. Case Study

In the case study we have observed how COVID-19 accelerated the digital transformation of organization of any size in every industry. According to the 899 C-level executives and Senior Managers that McKinsey & Co. surveyed COVID-19 crisis accelerated the digitalization of customer interactions by several years.

As we observed companies and industries have responded to the newly developed consumers behavior and needs and drastically adapt their product offerings and operations. In fact, as we mentioned our findings suggest over COVID-19 "companies have probably refocused their offerings rather than made huge leaps in product development in the span of a few months." How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point and transformed business forever". (2020)  
Source : <https://www.mckinsey.com>

As result the rates for digitalization in the businesses have been extra-ordinary, but what is remarkable is the way companies have responded to a range of changes forced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The twelve potential changes that McKinsey and Co. identified in their survey are the following: remote working and/or collaboration; customer demand for online purchasing; advanced technologies in operations; advanced technologies in business decision making; customer needs/expectations; migration of assets to cloud; ownership of last mile delivery; nearshoring and/or insourcing practices; spending on data security; and redundancies into supply chain. According to the results analyzed by McKinsey & Co., of the twelve changes mentioned above only remote working and cloud migration have been considered by the respondents as more cost effective.

In our findings we also observed how organizations that, prior to the pandemic, had already embarked on a digital transformation journey have been less effected than the one that did not. Although removed by the pandemic, the barrier that prevented these latter organizations from digitation, cannot be found in lack of leadership (only 14% of all respondents said the lack of leadership alignment hindered the actual implementation of these changes). In fact, more than 50% of the respondents said that these changes were not implemented before the pandemic because they weren't a top business priority. Other common barriers cited by the respondents are the failure to prioritize, the customer resistance to changes, and organizational, and technological issues.

However, we also learned that these changes that were dictated by the crisis are being made with a long-term plan in mind. Remote work was the top priority, but also the need to work and interact with customers remotely required investments in data security and an accelerated

migration to the cloud. If we now consider the copious investments in technology, changes in operations, and time for people (leaders, followers, customers, stakeholders, shareholders, partners, etc.) to adapt to the “new normal”, going back to exactly what was before the pandemic would ultimately be counterproductive. Leaders and followers that successfully adapted to remote working and the related technological and non-technological changes over COVID-19 have made the success of their organizations. As we observed, the majority of the 899 executives expects that such technology-related changes, along with remote work and customer interactions, will continue in the future.

### **5.1.2. Semi-structured interviews**

In the following pages we will report the empirical findings of the interviews we conducted and report the digital transformation experts, leaders, and subordinates have experienced over the course of the pandemic. As mentioned, for data protection and privacy reasons, all interviewees full names, the name of the companies they work for, and the name of other individuals mentioned in the interviews have been anonymized.

First, we will report our findings in the expert interviews. As mentioned, both experts help organizations with their transformation projects. Over the course of the interviews the experts confirmed that the level of digitization in the organizations they consult for is and remains on a low-level, with the exceptions of cases that are on a mid-level.

For the reader comprehension, we will be now paraphrasing what Expert n. 1 said, and we report as follow “although COVID-19, brought organizations to work really in a remote mode ... but they are not really into the programs, and do not know about all the possibilities. So, I would say that they are maximum at medium, but rather on a low level ... They might be using five to ten percent of the potential of software they have already installed on their laptops. Usually, it is enough for them to be able to get their work done remote, so ... they are still on a low level.”

As we can observe above, for Expert n. 1 the organization under examination used the technological tools at their disposal with to sole purpose of getting their job done, if for both experts the level of digitation in the organizations was low to medium, the story Expert n. 2 shared painted a different scenario. “Three months after I started the business... COVID... the first lockdown started ... I was working with a client at that point of time, a small company ... with 15 people in total. Everything till that point took in person, at their office ... but with COVID? The process and the collaboration just stopped for a moment ... because ... they also had to organize their business. They improved their digital skills, the way they used digital tools to collaborate, and their process. But they also realized something was missing. They had once a week breakfast at their office and their people missed that ... because communication ... that non-organized communications ... the informal parts that stopped with remote working.”

It seems also that the company Expert n. 2 is referring to in the interview, although skeptical with remote working at first, now embraced it and took the best out of it, without renouncing to going back to the office when or if it is the case. In fact, Expert n.2 said that “they have never even once thought about working remote, but one of the managing partners of the firm said: “Yeah, I am doing this (remote working) now at least one day a week, because then I can really concentrate on my projects. So, they really changed their way of working.”

If the experts' judgment on the level of digitation of their clients had similar outcomes, we can clearly observe a very different perspective in the development of the digital skills and the knowledge of the digital tools at disposal of the workforce. Expert n. 1, had a mostly negative view on the adaptation to change of the client we examined, the workforce of which seemed interested in a superficial knowledge, or better saying enough knowledge to get the job done.

A different sentiment is instead portrayed by Expert n. 2, that has seen incredible steps ahead in the digitalization of the fifteen people company we examined. The reason could be found in the different size of the companies the experts set as examples, a very small organization in the case of Expert n. 2, and a very large one, with thousands of employees globally, in the case of Expert n. 1.

Moving to the interviews having as subjects the leaders and the subordinates, both interviewees in the ranks of Company n. 1 rated their organization on medium level to high level of digitation. However, both the leader and the follower admitted that they did not integrate new tools, they just used the tools already at their disposal, but this time they made the best out of it. In fact, Subordinate n.1 affirmed that “in terms of digitization... I wouldn't say that now we are much more equipped ... but what I can tell you is, that we rely much more on digital communication and digital coordination. In my opinion, these are the biggest things that changed.” So much so, that for Leader n.1, “we had more virtual meetings, but I was not nothing new. So, I think that in a good way... moving into a remote environment was not that hard for us.”

In Company n. 2, we found the most discrepancies in perception of the organization level of digitation. In fact, for Leader n. 2, Company n. 2's level of digitation is low to medium because they “just replaced the daily face-to-face communication with online communication, and that is the only big change after the first lockdown.” However, Subordinate n. 2 rated the organization on a very high level of digitation, and in fact stated, “high level we are a software company after all.” We can explain this difference in perception based on the role and education of the interviewees. The leader has a technical background and education, and is leading the technical team, the subordinate is a member of the admin team, and has an education in business administration.

Paraphrasing Leader n. 3, “I think we are rather on a high level. Our shareholders invest a lot in technology, and it is not cheap. So, we use top notch technology, also to be competitive”, we can deduct that technology is expensive, but it was a necessity for organizations not only to overcome the challenges raised by the pandemic, but also to adapt to the market needs and to keep competitiveness. Subordinate n. 3 is the youngest of our group of interviewees. The subordinate's also concurs with Leader n. 3 in the opinion that the organization is on high level of digitation.

For what we observed, over COVID-19 the main focus of digitation of the three organizations we analyzed was and still is on digitizing communication, project management, co-operation, collaboration, creating new processes, and developing the digital “etiquette” required for virtual collaboration. We will review all these topics in the following pages and discuss them again in our conclusion and in the recommendation chapters.

## **5.2. Remote Leadership**

### **5.2.1. Case Study**

In Kelley and Kelloway's work we observed how the authors identified four pre-existing contextual elements to leadership: perceived controls that have been associated with individual and organizational outcomes, such as performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, stress, and organizational climate in face-to-face environments; prior knowledge among members of virtual and proximal teams affects trust formation, subsequent performance, and member satisfaction, quality of communication because in digital communication the quality is minor than the face-to-face interactions; and quantity of the

communication because in virtual teams appears to improve working relationships among team members, increased job satisfaction, and increased perceptions of trust in leaders.

As mentioned, Kelley and Kelloway, based their remote leadership model on Bass' transformational leadership theory and suggest leaders to enable their subordinates and make them transcend their own self-interests for a higher collective vision and thereby, exceed performance expectations.

The authors remote leadership model based on Bass' transformational leadership theory that uses transformational leadership to regulate the Leader's perception of control; to enable the creation of strong personal relationship; and increase the quality and the quantity of communication. According to the authors using the model will bring to leaders three individual outcomes: in job satisfaction (Satisfaction with technology, use of multiple communication methods, and nature of task have all been positively related to the job satisfaction of virtual teams' members (Kayworth & Leidner, 2002; Martins et al., 2004; Morris, Marshall, & Rainer, 2002)), organizational commitment (The importance of subculture and satisfaction with control to organizational commitment in the proximal environment suggests that context and other aspects of the culture of the remote workplace may be more influential than the culture of the larger organization (Lok & Crawford, 1999)), and the leader trust in the subordinate (in remote relationships, both the reality and the perception are important. In the proposed model, however, it is the perception of leader trust in follower that is posited as an outcome of perceptions of transformational leadership."(Kelley & Kelloway, 2012))

We agree with Kelley and Kelloway to the conclusion that in a remote environment context is so crucial to filter the way subordinates perceive and interpret their leaders' behaviors. (Kelley & Kelloway, 2012)

Eikenberry and Wayne (2018), propose the "Three O Model of Leadership" for leaders to reach their maximum success. As we observed the three areas of the O model, are outcomes, to lead subordinates with the purpose of reaching a desired outcome; others, to lead with and through other people to reach those outcomes; and ourselves, because leaders cannot leave their behavior out of the scenario.

**Outcomes.** According to Eikenberry and Wayne Remote Leaders' focus on outcomes is even more important and can definitely be harder because of three factors that might influence the so desired success. These factors are isolation, lack of environmental cues, and less repetition of messages. (Eikenberry & Wayne, 2018)

**Others.** Leaders are concerned with a multitude of aspects that scream for their attention. Budgets, projects, process improvements, new product/service development, sales, customer service, and margins, are some of the items on list leaders have to deal with on a daily basis. (Eikenberry & Wayne, 2018)

**Ourselves.** According to Eikenberry and Wayne, the great paradox of leadership is that it is not about leaders at all, being fundamentally about outcomes and other people. However, the way leaders behave is crucial on the effectiveness of their subordinates in reaching the desired outcome. (Eikenberry & Wayne, 2018)

However, according to the authors, leaders desired success can be influenced by isolation, lack of environmental cues, and less repetition of messages.

In 2017 Eikenberry and Turmel conducted a survey of more than 225 with at least part of their team working remotely. The findings brought the authors to the conclusion that the challenges remote leaders are faced because of the distance between people and the use of technology to bridge those gaps. The survey focused on the issues that do emerge when leading at

distance, and the use technology to overcome those obstacles. Another interesting fact coming out from the analysis of the results showed that over 70 percent of leaders said they had a “hybrid” team. Hence, “remote teams” doesn’t mean everyone’s working elsewhere. However, the remaining 30 percent had a fully (or mostly) remote team which remains as per today the fastest growing segment of the workforce.

The authors asked in the survey about four specific challenges leaders face when leading at distance. How do we know people are really working? Are people getting enough social interaction? Are getting good feedback when we need to consider options? Can we be as effective a leader as when we’re co-located?

When asked “how do we know people are really working?” only 28 percent of the respondents considered this as a challenge. However, according to the authors this question is most frequent in organization when working remotely is new, or in organizations or industries where the level of trust is traditionally low. The remote leaders that responded to Eikenberry and Turmel’s survey, seemed to be much more concerned with the remaining three challenges, social interactions, feedback quality, and leadership efficacy, which are aspects intrinsic to the individual.

In fact, although too often leaders forget to take into consideration feelings, emotions, needs, and personal objectives of their subordinates, leaders primary focus should be people and the more leaders are able to understand the fundamentals of human behavior the more successful they will be.

### **5.2.2. Semi-structured interviews**

Over the course of the interviews, we investigated leaders’ behaviors to adapt to the crisis. When we asked about leaders, and how they have adapted to the new environment forced by the pandemic, in Expert n. 1’s opinion every leader wants to check if and when their team members are working. Expert n. 1 divided leaders into two main categories, “the mistrusters” and “the enlightened”.

According to Expert n. 1, the members of the latter group understood that they could trust their team members to get their job done even in a remote environment and started seeing the positive aspects of it. On the other side of spectrum, Expert n. 1 positioned “the mistrusters”. The members of this category, according to our expert “are those who never trusted people... some of them installed programs, to control what their staff is doing. How many hours have they worked, on which programs, how many emails they have sent, etc.”

In Leader n.1 and Leader n.2 interviews we can find somehow a similar reflection. Both leaders want (or maybe better say, need) to know what their people are doing and when their doing it. However, for both leaders was not a trust issue was rather an operational matter. “When would be the best time to contact them”, is the question that both leaders wanted the answer to, and if Leader n. 2 is making it work but still experiencing some complications, Leader n.1 seems to have found a recipe for success. In Company n. 1 they simply update their status on the messaging platform they use for internal communication (e.g., free, lunch, busy, calls, etc.).

Expert n. 2, had an interesting input on leaders and their behavior, “if if there was a leadership issue already beforehand, it was just an acceleration of this problem. And it got worse in a remote environment. But if there was a good leadership style and behavior. Then having a performing team, was not that big of an issue. Also, other consultants, when referring to their experience, said that if there are leadership issues .... and in most of the organizations, we can find these leadership issues ... it was just getting worse with the remote working.”

When we asked to our leaders, how they would describe their leadership style, Leader n. 1 emphasized on the extra-effort needed to keep their team together over the course of the pandemic. In fact, In the opinion of Leader n. 1, in a remote environment social cues are missing and recreating and imagining space for “social moments in a virtual environment is very exhausting” ... but ... “it is very important for the team to create the basis for team bonding. Creating space for team members small talks... tell them not only about work. I realize how important it is that people talk to each other about things that are not related to work. That helps a lot on improving how we can work together. And make people feel ownership, it doesn't matter from where they are working trust them and support them.”

Leader n. 1, made two interesting points, we already discussed over the course of the paper. Maintaining and nurturing team relationships with the help of informal communication, trusting and supporting the team members with their journey. What we observed is that the leadership style of Leader n. 1 resembles the traits of a distributed leader. In fact, Subordinate n. 1, that luckily reports directly into Leader n. 1, describes the leader trustworthy, relying on self-management principles, helpful and supportive, emphatic and present for the team, transparent and communicative.

“I rather try to lead, and not to manage”, was the first sentence Leader n. 2 used to answer the question “how would you describe yourself as a leader?”. For Leader n. 2 taking care of the team and learning how to support them to be the best at what they do is the priority.

Unfortunately, in the case of Company n. 2, we were not able to interview a direct subordinate of Leader n. 2. However, Subordinate n. 2 reports directly into the CXO of Company n. 2 and brought to our attention a clear case of non-functional leadership, as narrated by Expert n. 2. The C-level of this organization seem to have reduced the communication with the subordinates to a minimum and in some cases have interrupted the communication with the team for weeks at a time, leaving the team members in a state of extreme frustration.

Leader n. 3, when asked about the leadership style, said that “I was used to getting things done on my own, which is not always a good thing, but I know I need to improve that. I'm a people person, I like to be very transparent as well very friendly. I don't care from where you work when you work or with whom you work as long as you get the things done.”

Although the CXO of company was reluctant to the idea of remote working prior to COVID-19, now sees the potential of it. However, this was possible because the CXO saw that the team performance didn't change and that everyone committed to the organization's success.

### **5.3. Leader-Subordinate Relationship**

#### **5.3.1. Case Study**

As we observed above, for leaders the context is an important factor for building a meaningful relationship with their followers. In a remote working environment, there are a few elements that do change and impact how leaders can build a relationship with their subordinates.

However, in remote environments work relationship are more complicated to build because the opportunities and context for building those relationships changes drastically. Learning how to build and maintain them is always an important part of a leader responsibility.

We have observed how changes are not limited to teams' geographical dispersion but other dimensions of organizational complexity such as time zones, cultural norms, and different expectations, we also observed that also in a remote environment the level of technology

available to the workforce in organization operating remote changes drastically from the one needed when operating in a co-located environment. Another aspect that changes when leading at distance is awareness, the concept under which the leader's power and the power of their position is conveyed to the team only in physical presence. Also, because virtual communication often feels too cold, and leaders send and receive messages in mass quantities and multiple forms.

Another important aspect that changes in a remote environment and can influence the leader-follower relationship is "leadership control". As we have been observing over the course of this paper most leaders belong to the oldest generation, making them skeptical to working from home or hybrid organizations. However, remote teams are a reality, and it is impossible to know what every person is doing all the time.

When leading at distance the team members' "need" for social interaction, that was previously met in the workplace, is now missing. All these changes might result in leaders feeling isolated from their teams is a huge concern for leaders and could impact their effectiveness and job satisfaction.

In remote and hybrid environments, "need-based" theories that focus on the individual motivation and behavior, seemed to be a recurring note over the course of our paper. These theories should contain the key elements that will help leaders enable their subordinates' full potential. In fact, as we observed in the research McKinsey & Co. conducted in 2020, "organizations should seek to address the most critical, prominent needs of the broader workforce while taking stock of unique needs of different segments and individuals."

McKinsey & Co. suggest to leaders four key behaviors "to address employees' needs and help them thrive during the return, organizations should focus on four areas: safety and security, relationships, culture, and purpose." Emmett, J; Schrah, G; Schrimper, M; Wood, A. COVID-19 and employee experience: How leaders can size the moment. (29 June 2020) Source: mckinsey.com

**Credibility.** Have trusted leaders speak transparently and empathically with their subordinates about their situation; and use data to analyze related information and communicate findings to employees regularly.

**Feasibility.** Prioritize timely action instead of waiting for transformative solutions; push responsibility to edges to accelerate change.

**Sustainability.** Develop a plan to embed changes beyond the crisis; communicate to employees, specifics about open-ended changes being made; ensure that employees know that support from leaders has no end point.

**Individuality.** Find creative ways to use advanced analytics, behavioral science, and digital technology to put employees in charge of their own journeys; tailor interventions to individual contexts and evolving needs.

McKinsey & Co. invite leaders to demonstrate compassionate leadership and invest in relationships, to ensure their subordinates' safety and security. The actions suggested to ensure strong team relationships are to invest in the development of employee-to-employee relationships, and to create and maintain a culture that values inclusion, individuality, and social harmony. Moreover, leaders should create a network of teams and cultivate inclusion and psychological safety, to ensure a positive culture in their organization. The last set of recommendations is focused on four actions that will enable a strong sense of purpose in the subordinates. According to the authors, leaders should embed purpose in how they talk to

their subordinates; bring purpose to life; start a longer-term conversation about purpose; tailor their approach to the employees' needs and experiences.

### **5.3.2. Semi-structured interviews**

Expert n. 1, following the distribution between the mistrusters" and "the enlightened" leaders, when asked about the relationship these two types of leaders have with their team said that the relationship "has intensified". Expert n. 1 said, that "those who had a good relationship, they found ways to meet each other even for a coffee online. On the other side, those who did not have a good relationship to their leaders... or leaders that did not have a good relationship with their employees... they did not have much contact... they even avoided each other. If there was not a good relationship before... remote environments are a very good chance to avoid contact... people just have those meetings that are functional for their work."

Expert n. 2, input on the relationship between leaders and followers is related to the prior leadership in the organization, "if there was a leadership issue already beforehand, it was just an acceleration of this problem. And it got worse in a remote environment. But if there was a good lead leadership style and behavior."

Leader n. 1 raised a very important point when discussing about informal communication, and that when they realized it was missing said that they implemented daily standups with the team, and over the first ten minutes of those standups, it was just small talk. Talking about non-working related topics - how was the day going... how was the evening... tv shows... etc." "Our leader designed this to assure team bonding and communication was not missed over COVID-19". confirmed Subordinate n. 1 of Company n. 1.

The relationship between Leader n. 1 and Subordinate n. 1 seems to have reached a very high level of trust and commitment. Subordinate n. 1 described theirs as a bit of a unique relationship" ... "Because we both are always aligned 100% on everything. I know what I am expected to deliver, and my manager knows what I expect from a leader" ... "There's a lot of independence" ... "There's a lot of trust" ... "Also, because I'm very driven, and very motivated. But the relationship was already very smooth before the pandemic. And even after the pandemic. Nothing was affected at all on the contrary in went even better."

However, in interview n. 5, we discovered that transparency in communication can be biased by what a leader considers important. In fact, Leader n. 2 said that it is "not because I don't want to transfer it further. But because if I find some information not useful or interesting. I don't pass this information. But I don't know what information might be interesting for the team. So, what should I pass? So, I just don't pass information, that I don't find myself interested in or useful."

However, Leader n. 2 was recently promoted in a leadership position after most of the team left. The new appointed leader is now confronted with new responsibilities, and newly hired team and their individual needs. For Leader n. 2 "it would be much easier to build a relationship in person. To build a team spirit" ... "a team bonding, I think it is much more straightforward." But, "to build the team offline" .... "we are just together for formal meetings"... "For example, it is easier to get or give feedback when we are all sitting in the same room, rather than "raising a hand". However, Leader n. 2 thinks that "in online relationship, people should not only concentrate on the job to get done, but should remember that we are still humans." However, also Leader n. 2 "from time to time" forgets that the people sitting right there.

However, Subordinate n. 2 in Company n. 2 said that "the team is always a bit left alone. That is the problem, we didn't have a strong leadership and with the pandemic that became even worse. The leadership level in our organization was low, and the future appeared to be moving



into a remote environment that needs a lot more of communication, people and project management.” However, Subordinate n. 2 mentioned a new hiring in the leadership team and add on coming from within (Leader n. 2, we suppose) “are really helping to fill the gap in leadership” they had.

For Leader n. 3, initially the pandemic was a source of frustration and uncertainty. In fact, Leader n. 3 seems to have been part of what Deloitte defined as “Jugglers”. After an initial period of doubts and insecurity about the future, followed by lower levels of motivation and organizational commitment, Leader n. 3 was able to overcome this negative state, and is now fully committed to the success of Company n. 3.

Leader n. 3 has a profound trust in Subordinate n. 3. In fact, Leader n. 3 said that “I actually hired someone I can trust. Someone who can tell me “Remember to be in time with the deadline”, that if I am late for a meeting calls me, someone that takes the phone and tells me “hey, I need your help, please let’s sit together because we need to get this job done”. Because “sometimes also as a manager, you get hooked into meetings and calls ... and you lose focus. So, Subordinate n. 3 my partner, my co-founder and CEO.”

Subordinate n. 3, recently joined Company n. 3. However, was reporting in Leader n. 3 also in another organization prior to the pandemic. For Subordinate n. 3 communication with Leader n. 3 is optimal. Leader n. 3. is always present, helpful, and supportive. However, according to Subordinate n. 3, this level of reciprocated trust was possible only because the acquaintance was made before the pandemic, in a physical environment. In fact, according to Subordinate n. 3 they would not even be working together now if they would have not worked before the pandemic.

Moving forward we will move our attention to the subordinates’ behavior over COVID-19.

## **5.4. Subordinates’ behavior, motivators, and generational factors**

### **5.4.1. Case Study**

Although organizations have been responding well to the changes forced by the pandemic, there are still a broad range of needs to address. However, it is an organization-wide commitment to optimize work experience, effectiveness, and employee well-being to the new environment.

As we observed over the course of the paper, employee engagement, well-being, and effectiveness are driven by a set employee experience factor. McKinsey & Co. group these factors into four core themes: The first theme is having a stable, secure work experience, under which we can find factors such as organizational stability, and compensation and benefits. The second theme identified by Emmett et al. is trusting relationships, here the factors that influencing the subordinates’ behavior are the level of trust in leadership, the relationship the subordinates have with the company, and the levels of non-financial recognition/appreciation received by the subordinate.

The third theme is related to social cohesion and inclusion, the crucial factors are fairness, involvement, respect, and equality. The fourth and last of the core themes is the individual purpose and contribution, for this theme the only factor is the alignment with organizational purpose and values.

According to what we can observe in Figure 26, all workers have experienced some degree of disruption. What was interesting to observe is that remote-working mothers who reported

to have work efficiency and schedule flexibility, are three times more likely to have a positive state of well-being, than those who instead reported work inefficiency and schedule inflexibility.

Also, what we could observe in the McKinsey survey was how respondents with dependents appear to have a much higher “positive work effectiveness” than remote workers without dependents have. However, the research brought the authors to the conclusion that a diminished sense of community is a key driver of the negative impact on remote workers without dependents.

The different results we can observe in the gender of the respondents can be partially explained by the differences in “needs.” In fact, women top priority for remote working is balancing work and private life. Instead for remote-workers that are men, the need for having a work-life balance is far away from being a priority.

If there seems to be a difference in a subordinate behavior and needs, based on their gender and their dependencies, what we observed in differences based on the age of the subordinate change our initial assumption that older employees might have had harder time to adapt to the new work environment.

In fact, in their “European Workforce Survey 2021“, Deloitte surveyed more than 10,000 employees in seven countries across Europe. The results from Deloitte survey brought to the conclusion that the likelihood of experiencing change to a moderate/large extent diminished with age.

In fact, 46% of the respondents below age 30 experienced a significant change in their work priorities, when only 28% of the respondents age 60+ reported a similar experience. Similar results came when the respondents were asked if they experienced a moderate or large shift in the type of tasks they performed, 44% below age 30 answered yes, against the 26% of those age 50+. As we observed in Chapter 3, the list of empirical proves that debunk the assumption that older employees struggled to adapt to the new environment more than their younger colleagues is indeed long.

In fact, the results of specific changes forced by COVID-19 suggest that the differences between age groups disappear once factors such as the type of occupation or the size of the organization are considered.

A key observation emerging from the results of the survey is that the ability of employees to adapt to change is based on the level of trust and support subordinates received from their leaders and their colleagues, rather than on the age of the employee.

However, adaptability to job loss, seems to be the only significant generational difference observed in the results in the ability to adapt job loss. In fact, the respondents from the older age groups have harder times adapting to be temporarily jobless.

According to the results of European Workforce Survey 2020, what helped most of the respondents coping with the pandemic was the “human factor”. However, these “human factors” prevail over technology. Although technology-driven tools are important, it is the human factor that is the most crucial. What employees want is a personal relation that provides emotional support. Trust, help, and time are invaluable to the ability to adapt to a changing work environment.

As we observed, there are three major groups emerging from the survey: the surfers (concerned about a deterioration in the interpersonal relationships at work); the grounded (have major concerns about the future work environment); and the jugglers (concerned about their ability to survive in the future labor market). Looking at the age of the members of these

three groups we observed the curve skewing towards similar age groups. In fact, the grounded tend to be older, and the juggler prevalently part of the younger generations.

According to what Deloitte stated in their 2020 Global Human Capital Trends report organizations must provide both infrastructure and a culture that encourage employees to use emerging technologies without losing information or a sense of belonging.

#### **5.4.2. Semi-structured interviews**

In our interviews to understand the subordinate behavior over COVID-19, we asked our interviewees about their experiences.

Expert n.1 said that for women with dependents initially there was no life balance, “they worked around the clock.. between kids, the house to maintain, and their jobs there was no end”. However, that changed because people tried to optimize their time, “meetings were shorter, and more straightforward... “because everybody wanted to get through it.”

Although Expert n.1 agrees with Expert n. 2 saying that the behavior and the relationships existing before COVID-19 “had intensified” over the course of the pandemic. However, in terms of productivity, even the subordinates of those leaders previously identified as “mistrusters”, have been more productive. In fact, Expert n. 1, justifies it with the that in case of a non-functional leader, the subordinate is “happy about the distance”; “happy of not having to see the leader everyday walking through the office always angry”, and “some could argue that this might just make it better.”

For Expert n. 2, “people are now desperate to meet in person again. Because you people lost the bonding to the organization... they lost the organizational commitment.” In fact, in the expert opinion organizational commitment is “build on trust... and trusting relationships are built with face-to-face moments, but I do not mean that this needs to happen every day. But it needs to happen from time to time.”

For Leader n. 1, “there were moments where people were demotivated because the situation is hard.” And leaders “have to take mental health into consideration” ... because some of their team members “live alone, and it is very difficult to find motivation when being home alone” ... “And then for others, it was more the uncertainty for their future, and got people down on their motivation”. In fact, Subordinate n. 1 said, “started with hating home office and then ended up with loving it”.

Subordinate n. 1 provided us with four reasons why home office was so disruptive at the beginning of the pandemic. First, “being alone”; second, “not separating work from home”; third, “not communicating with people, just everything is digital.” Fourth, “lack of movement”. However, Subordinate n. 1, was able to adapt and “switched it all around”, because of the new discovered benefits of home working. Focus, “I was focusing much more in home office”. Time, “no more commuting. I have one extra hour per day, just from avoiding commuting. And I'm close to the office. So, imagine for other people that live further away”. The newly discovered time enabled Subordinate n. 1 to “incorporated the workouts, walking routines ... in the daily routine.”

According to Subordinate n. 1, what helped with the transition was loving “what I do, I love my work. So, I'm driven, and I do my best, or, literally, that's one of my biggest motivators.” But “that's from a personal side, from a company or team side. We did, some activities, once a week or twice a week. We incorporated virtual coffee breaks, just to interact with other people. And from a motivational perspective.... socializing, keeps you sane, and keeps in touch with

your colleagues". But in remote working, "focusing much more on something that I love to do. That's what motivated me".

As mentioned, Leader n.2 was recently promoted and became a member leadership team in the spring of 2021. Leader n. 2 experience while being a subordinate was the following: "we had to figure out everything on our own. How to be productive, and how to work remote... The organization didn't help a lot with this transition into a remote environment." In fact, in the leader's opinion "it was and still is, rather, people self-organizing themselves." However, from a motivational perspective, Leader n.2 said that in the team "the motivation is on the same level" that they had in Company n.2 before COVID-19. However, according to the leader "in the first four to six from the beginning of the pandemic productivity went down... actually, definitely went down. And somewhere in 2021 went up again."

For Leader n. 2, going back to productivity and motivational levels similar to the levels the subordinates had prior to the pandemic was possible because "people... figured out on their own... how they communicate, how to structure their work, how to replace all the aspects of the everyday office routine... with the new everyday online routine. But it possibly took us six to eight months. And now everything is more or less established."

Initially, Subordinate n. 2 was negatively affected by working from home. In fact, for the subordinate "what changed was already the commuting time, I mean, for me the time on the train is actually really valuable. I'm just getting things done, I was focused... And then you walk into fresh air... and then I was arriving at the office, and I was very productive." However, in "home office, especially with the kids, in the beginning, it was really difficult to get everything done." So much so, that Subordinate n.2 would have to put so many extra-hours that her work life balance was gone and "eventually, had to take a couple of days holiday just to take myself out of it."

However, the first element that helped Subordinate n. 2 to adapt and get the balance back over, "was when schools opened again, because then at least I had really peaceful mornings." In fact, according to the subordinate, "the problem with homeschooling is that when kids, have a problem they can't solve on their own, they will come to my office room, I get interrupted and I would need to help. And the cycle continues over the day for everything." The second element that helped "was moving from the kitchen table to a dedicated office room where I can close the door, and I have now my own home office setup: a nice desk, a comfortable armchair, a good screen, a keyboard and mouse." The third, and last, element that helped Subordinate n. 2, was changing the routine to the new circumstances, "normally I would get up at four, do sport, sort of the kids before school, take the train at seven and then go to the office. When I realized, I did not have to start with my day so early, I started enjoying the mornings in a different way... not with so much stress and now, I started to enjoy that."

Nevertheless, Subordinate n. 2 still does not feel fully productive in the new working environment. In fact, "in the evening when I am done, and look at what I did... I say "okay, I just didn't get so much done". However, for the subordinate it is not the private life and the children causing the lack in productivity. In fact, "in the office there is always more exchange of information. The leader was answering emails, was very good with answering messages on the chat channel we have. And if you really got stuck, you could call the leader, and the leader would actually pick up." But over the pandemic Subordinate n. 2 said that "I felt partly left to my own devices. I couldn't reach my leader, because it was not like in the office, where I just bump into him more often." Because, when the pandemic started suddenly, the leader "started not to answer emails. I don't even send email to the leader anymore because it's a waste of time. Then also the leader stopped answering to chat messages. And then when we tried to phone the leader, we couldn't reach the leader." For Subordinate n. 2 the organization should work on new ways to promote "formal and informal communication that helps with the integration of new team members, building trust and organizational commitment."

In Company n. 3, Leader n. 3 said that “the performance dropped a lot, but it was because of the clients, so it was not connected to the team.” However, “the team that at the time was of only 12 people showed a lot of commitment... they decided to reduce their salary rates because they knew the company was suffering”. According to Leader n. 3, this was possible thanks to a key element, transparency. In fact, “when COVID-19 started, the market froze, and we stopped making money. Our CXO talked to the team and explained the financial situation.” Leader n. 3, proudly stated that “transparency is our competitive advantage. It is what makes us a different company... everyone knows how much the company is making, and how much every individual is making. There is nothing to hide and everyone knows the runway of the organization.”

As we observed in our paper, after the first six months of the pandemic, the markets recovered from the initial shock and with this committed and motivated group of people, using the words of Leader n. 3, Company n. 3 “saw the world.” “The company went from 12 employees to 30 employees in less than nine months” ... “The team is performing very well. Also, because of the strategy changed in empowering everyone... where everyone is responsible for their work, and this empower people to be more committed to what they do”.

However, according to Leader n. 3 there are differences in the performance, motivation, and commitment level of the new team members. “I think that the last ten people that joined the organization, are struggling to integrate. be part of the team”. To overcome this potential integration issue Company n. 3 started, “monthly team building events starting from the month of June 2021, and what the leadership team is going to do is to create micro teams, composed by one of the employees that was here before the pandemic and the rest by new team members. So, the latter group can be supported with the integration phase, and the learn first-hand the values of the organization.” However, according to Leader n. 3, reaching the same level of commitment will be hard because “what they experienced together was possible also because we were only twelve people... we saw the up and downs, and helped build it where it is now. So, it is more difficult to repeat that again, also, because of the amount of people we are now”.

However, at the moment of the interview COVID-19 restrictions were lifted in Krakow, Poland, where Company n. 3 is based. Although, as mentioned by Leader n. 3, the organization remains a “remote first company, the team is getting together physically in the office more often.” Because as we observed, in their organization according to Leader n. 3 “we were able to build lot of trust in the team, and with new team, we have a lot of new people to integrate.” “Because now, the few times when we work in the same location, there is some form of communication that helps building relationship. For example, going to the coffee machine, waiting for someone to make their coffee, and in the meanwhile you have a chat. And then going for a break or having lunch together. Obviously, we cannot do that with people who are not in the office. But for that we have daily online standups, and virtual coffee breaks. And to get everyone together we have the monthly events, where everyone goes. So, we try to bring the team together online, but also offline to recreate those moments that are missing in office.”

As we observed Leader n. 3, considers the relationship with Subordinate n. 3 as a partnership. The leader describes the subordinate as “very committed, and excited.” But “obviously, she is very young and has very long way ahead, to learn and to grow. But I like that, and she's very open and direct. It is a good partnership. We are partners rather than manager and subordinate”.

For Subordinate n. 3 adapting to remote working “was not difficult at all”. Subordinate n. 3 was studying English-Polish Translations at the time of the pandemic. According to the follower what helped to adapt was being a student, “I have classes online and offline all the time, so I kind of got used to it”.

When asked to describe herself as a team member, Subordinate n. 3 response was the following, "I will describe myself as a workaholic... I work when I'm at office, I work when I'm at home... of course I'm having breaks. But Leader n. 3 reminds me a lot about taking breaks because sometimes I forget about them. But yeah, I like working. I like what I do. And I am also very well organized, I don't have problems with multitasking or with working with other members of the team."

Also adapting to the new organization was easy for Subordinate n. 3 In fact, over the seven weeks Subordinate n. 3 was in the organization, the experience seemed very positive, "since I started working here... I had a lot of trainings remotely, but it was not overwhelming for me".

This was possible because "everyone in the company is willing to answer my questions within 60 minutes, with the right data and the details I need". This collaboration makes Subordinate n. 3, feel "not stressed at all. And when we were having trainings, and I asked a lot of questions... (And you know I never even meet the trainers in real life - we were just having remote trainings) And they were so nice, everyone was smiling, and it was great".

Moving into the generational factors, Expert n. 1's opinion hits the same cords of the empirical findings reported in the previous case study section of our research. Expert n. 1, observation was that to understand adaptation "we cannot be divided into generations" ... "Because there were some baby boomers, who really adapted very quickly and were happy about all the possibilities". However, continues the expert "these leaders<sup>1</sup> were those who were open to new technologies before the pandemic started" ... Also, because according to Expert n.1, experience "also some Gen X and Gen Y had problems with adapting" ... and "it would be too easy to say Gen X or Gen Y adapted easier than Baby Boomers". In fact, according to the expert the level of adaptation really depends "on the openness and also on the kind of job".

However, the expert continues saying that "although Gen Z, Gen Y, and Gen X in general are more adaptable and more flexible", and "we cannot generalize because this would make us put labels on people." And Expert n. 1 continues with saying that "I noticed that many also in my generation (Baby Boomer), really saw the pandemic as a chance to, or at least saw the positive aspects of it... said that "we would have never learned so many new digital tools if the crisis would not happen".

Expert n.2 experience with multigenerational workforce was that some "baby boomers using digital tools now for years, they just adapted and found their own way of working over COVID" ... "But I also know some that never adapted. So, on average I would say Millennials and Generation X was easier of course" ... However, also Expert n. 2 agreed that it depends on what kind of organization and business environment they grew up." In fact, the expert is having a first-hand experience in one of the organizations in the client portfolio. In this organization Expert n. 2 took over the responsibility to help with their digitization journey and the expert "realized that older employees, working there for many years, have an outdated way of working, and they have to refresh and to adjust." Instead, what the expert observed in "people who recently joined this organization but have been working for startups or in any case a different type of company... they come already with a much more "Agile" way of thinking and working". However, "the organization is a public listed company, finance and budgeting and everything related are core topics of their organization. And when I look at what they want to do with their digital transformation I see a really long path to really transform the organization".

Expert n. 2, helps organizations with their change management initiatives. According to the expert, when working "for many years in one company, usually, people develop certain patterns. And whenever new people with different experiences join such a company, they bring their experiences in the organization... and the system is learning. However, it is a very

individual topic.” Because Expert n. 2 “have seen baby boomers that adapted very fast.” ... “So, it's not their age, but it is their motivation, and mindset.”

When we asked to leader and followers about multigenerational factors that might have influenced the behavior of the workforce, did not report any major influence based on this factor. According to Leader n. 1, in Company n. 1 this happens “because, is a very young organization. We are between 25- and 36-year-old, so it's quite young.”

We observed this age pattern repeating in the three organizations we have analyzed have all been founded in the recent past. In fact, workforce of the organization we interviewed is its majority composed by Millennials, that after all represents 35% of the global workforce. But in our research, they represent 62.5% of the total interviewees. In fact, the Generation Y group is represented by Expert n. 2, Leader n. 1, Leader n. 2, Leader n. 3, and Subordinate n. 1. We found a member of the Generation X group in Subordinate n. 2, and as mentioned, if Expert n. 1 is a Baby Boomer, and the other side of the spectrum we have a representative of Generation Z, in Subordinate n. 3.

In the pages the follow we will move to discuss an in-depth exploration of our results, going into detail about the meaning of your finding.

## 6. Discussion

As we observed, long before the pandemic, digital transformation, and the new values of the multigenerational workforce, forged the path for “hybrid” and “remote” working. The two new work environments that the COVID-19 pandemic forced upon organizations, their leaders, and their team members over a year ago. Now, the high rate of vaccination in Europe, and other Western countries, brought back a sense of “normality” that led to an official “re-opening”. However, new, and more aggressive variants of this infamous virus are developing, and many countries have already implemented new lockdowns.

However, whether the future will bring us away from new lockdowns, or back to them, organizations and their leaders have now some prior experiences, and already have the right technology in place to support their teams working from home. It will be nothing new, as now all leaders and their subordinates have been operating remotely, but working remote is not for everyone and as we observed some still have difficulties to adjust, no matter if leaders or subordinates.

In fact, it is for these people that was dedicated our intent to understand how remote leadership interrelated with the leader-subordinate relationship, and the subordinates’ behaviours in the workplace over Covid-19.

In the case study we have observed how COVID-19 accelerated the digital transformation of organization and accelerated the digitalization of the customer interactions by several years. However, only remote working and cloud migration have been considered by the respondents as the most cost effective between all the changes companies have responded to due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In our findings we also observed how organizations that, prior to the pandemic, had already embarked on a digital transformation journey have been less effected than the one that did not. However, these changes are being made long-term plan, and bearing in mind the investments organizations have made, the technology-related changes, along with remote work and customer interactions, will continue in the future.

Over our interviews, we observed different digitation scenarios. Expert n. 1’s opinion was that the organizations taken into exam had and still have a low level of digitation. The workforce in this organization used the technological tools at their disposal with the sole purpose of getting their job done. Expert n. 2, considered the clients supported on a low to medium level of digitation, but shared a different story of motivation. In fact, the people Expert n. 2 supported, developed themselves, and got the best out of COVID-19, a bit as the “enlightened” leaders, Expert n. 1 mentioned and that we will discuss later in this chapter.

If the experts’ judgment on the level of digitation of their clients had similar outcomes, we can clearly observe a very different perspective in the development of the digital skills and the knowledge of the digital tools at disposal of the workforce. Expert n. 1, had mostly a negative view on the adaptation to change of the client we examined. The workforce in the example portrayed by Expert n.1, seemed interested in a superficial knowledge, or better saying enough knowledge to get the job done. A different sentiment is instead expressed by Expert n. 2, that has seen incredible steps ahead in the digitalization of the fifteen people company we examined. The reason could be found in the different size of the companies the experts set as examples, a very small organization in the case of Expert n. 2, and a very large one, with thousands of employees globally, in the case of Expert n. 1.

Moving to the interviews having as subjects the leaders and the subordinates, both interviewees in the ranks of Company n. 1 rated their organization on medium level to high level of digitation. However, both the leader and the follower admitted that they did not



integrated new tools, they just used the tools already at their disposal, but this time they made the best out of it.

In Company n. 2, we found the most discrepancies in the perception of the organizational levels of digitation. In fact, for Leader n. 2, Company n. 2 level of digitation is low to medium because and Subordinate n. 2 rated the organization on a very high level of digitation. We can explain this difference in perception, based on the role and education of the interviewees. The leader has a technical background and education, and is leading the technical team, while the subordinate is a member of the admin team and has an education in business administration. For Company n. 3, Leader n. 3 rated the company on high level of digitation and mentioned high investments in technology. As we can clearly affirm that technology is a necessity for organization not only to overcome the challenges raised by the pandemic, but also to adapt to the market needs and to keep competitiveness. The subordinate's also concurs with Leader n. 3 in the opinion that the organization is on high level of digitation.

However, today every organization is faced with digitalization, a diverse and aging workforce, and COVID-19, but tomorrow there will be some other issue or global (and sometime local) crisis, that will be pushing organizations and their leaders to always react, develop, and optimize the different challenges they will be confronted with.

In fact, the first objective of our paper was to review the characteristics leaders should possess to lead and motivate their subordinates in a remote environment.

Following our first intent we had been reviewing our theoretical framework in relation to our purpose. We disagree with Burns when he affirms that leaders can either have transformational or transactional characteristics. In fact, our opinion is that leader should adapt their style to what Hersey and Blanchard defined as "Situational Leadership".

In fact, as we observed over the course of our empirical findings the subordinate's need for a different level of support from their leader changes with the role, and the seniority of the employee. This argument made us agree with Robbins and Judge's similitude of leader-follower to the relationship between parents and their children, to the degree that leaders should adapt their behavior to the level of maturity of their subordinates. In fact, we agree with Hersey and Blanchard when they affirmed that a leader's most effective behavior should be based on the follower levels of ability and motivation.

We find the four leaders' behaviors identified by Hersey and Blanchard, still applicable to some extent to the current challenges leaders are faced with. However, these behaviors should be adapted to the new context created by the new work environments, digitalization, and the multigenerational workforce. Similar to styles identified in the situational leadership theory, are House's four leadership behaviors. In our opinion, using the leadership styles suggested by House would have been helpful for leaders over the pandemic. In fact, what House called "directive leadership" would have been fundamental over the first few months of adaption. However, we argue that alone would have not been enough. In fact, subordinates also needed House's "achievement-oriented leadership", "participative leadership" and "supportive leadership", all at the same time, for all followers.

In House's "Charismatic Leadership theory" we observed other characteristics that we believe fundamental for leaders: self-confidence in subordinates, ideological vision, and leading by example. We also agree that these "leader's characteristics" should lead the followers to identify with their leader's mission, intensify organizational commitment, and inspire the subordinates' values, their behaviors and their self-esteem. However, we do not find these characteristics only in the "charismatic individuals" described by Weber, but also in other leaders that might not match the definition.

We can find an example of House's "participative leadership" (Path-Goal theory) in Company n. 3. We observed the similarities with the behavior of the CXO of Company n. 3 when he explained the financial situation of the organization to the workforce and asked to the team to find a solution together. As a result, the team felt empowered, and responsible for the future of the organization and decided to take their future in their hands, reduced their salaries and committed to the success of the organization.

However, this type of behavior can also be found in the most recent "distributed leadership theories" that propose to leaders to lead by empowering their subordinates. Leaders and their organization using distributed leadership principles are moving their organizational structure from hierarchy to heterarchy, as in the example of Company n.3, or in the ethical beliefs of Leader n. 1.

Although in distributed leadership leaders have less power, they are engaged in operational activities. We agree with Ensley et al. (2006), when they argue this could have a positive impact on develop employee cohesion and vision building. As we have seen in the example of Leader n. 1, that tries to maintain and nurture the team relationships, trusting and supporting the team members in their journey with the help of formal and informal communication. What we observed is that the leadership style of Leader n. 1 embrace most of the traits of a distributed leader. In fact, Subordinate n. 1, that reports directly into Leader n. 1, describes the leader as trustworthy, relying on self-management principles, helpful and supportive, emphatic and present for the team, transparent and communicative.

What we observed bring us to agree with Boxall and Macky (2009), and Bratton (2020) with the fact that to enable a high-performance team is generally necessary a mutual reciprocation in the leader-follower relationship. In fact, an organisation needs a leader able with his vision to generate an influence that brings follower to run the "extra-mile". Leaders giving personal attention to their teams, treating everyone with consideration and provides coaching advises have talent development as a clear priority. In this scenario, we can only assume that a "transformational leaders" should be able to reduce the insufficiency of talents they are confronted with.

Moving now to Avolio and Bass' FRLM, that distinguishes transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership styles, that are sorted according to a leader's engagement towards their team. We can clearly observe, in the behavior of the CXO of Company n. 2, the "laissez-faire" leadership style, The most passive and ineffective of the leadership behaviours, that has no influence in generating trust and motivation in the follower. If not the contrary, as we observed in Subordinate n. 2, and Leader n. 2 that reported their C-level executive to have reduced the communication with the team to a minimum over the course of the pandemic. This behavior brought the period of adaptation to be the longest we can report between the three company. However, this episode seems to agree with the opinion of Expert n. 1 when affirming that remote leadership is a good medium to hide relationships.

As mentioned, Kelley and Kelloway (2012), based their remote leadership model on Bass' transformational leadership theory and suggest it to leaders for enabling their subordinates, and make them transcend their own self-interests for a higher collective vision and ultimately, reach the "extra-mile" exceeding the leaders' expectations.

We agree with Kelley and Kelloway (2012) to the conclusion that in a remote environment context is so crucial to filter the way subordinates perceive and interpret their leaders' behaviors. The authors identified four pre-existing contextual elements (perceptions of control, prior knowledge of leader, quality, and quantity of the communication). These elements can be repeatedly found in our case study and in our interviews.

In fact, both Leader n. 1 and Leader n. 2, expressed their need for “knowing what their team members are doing”. However, from what we observed these latter leaders differ from the “mistrusting” leaders mentioned by Expert n. 1. In fact, the two leaders justified their “need” to be related to operational reasons rather than “lack of trust”, reasoning to which in these two cases we tend to agree.

Our findings confirm and made us agree with Kelley and Kelloway’s conclusion that in a remote environment context is omnipresent that it filters the way in which individuals perceive and interpret leader behaviors. So much to ask leaders to manage, consider, and adapt to the characteristics of the context in which the relationships are conducted.

However, we argue that, this transactional remote leadership model based would work only in combination to Eikenberry and Wayne (2018), “Three O Model of Leadership”. In our opinion, the combination of the two models could really help leaders and their teams reaching the maximum level of success. In fact, Kelley and Kelloway’s “perception of control” could be mediated by the perception of “ourselves” we find in Eikenberry and Wayne. The same goes for the “prior knowledge of the leader” that could be overcome by focusing on “others”; and the focus on the quality and quantity of communication to assure “outcomes”.

However, as in remote and hybrid environments context is such a crucial point, we observed how the factors that could obstacle to the success of a remote organization are present in Company n. 2. We observed how in Subordinate n. 2 the sense of isolation, the lack of environmental cues, and less repetition of messages, have influenced the behavior over the pandemic and are still influencing the performance.

Moreover, leading at distance brings more than just the challenges discussed till this point. To overcome these challenges our findings bring us to agree with Eikenberry and Turmel (2017), affirming that the use of technology can bridge these gaps. However, as well as the remote leaders interviewed by Eikenberry and Turmel, the remote leaders we observed in our empirical findings (in both the case study, and in the interviews sections), are more concerned with the social interactions, feedback quality, and their leadership efficacy.

In fact, when we observed what changes when leading at distance. Often leaders forget to take into consideration feelings, emotions, needs, and personal objectives of their subordinates. This is more common than we expected, as we could find a clear example, when we observe the empirical findings, we reported. In fact, in Company n. 2, Leader n. 2 sometimes forgets the human aspects of leading, and we already mentioned the dysfunctionality of the C-level executive leading the organization.

As we observed above, for leaders the context is an important factor for building a meaningful relationship with their followers. In a remote working environment, there are a few elements that do change and impact how leaders can build a relationship with their subordinates.

We have observed how changes are not limited to teams’ geographical dispersion but other dimensions of organizational complexity such as time zones, cultural norms, and different expectations, we also observed that also in a remote environment the level of technology available to the workforce in organization operating remote changes drastically from the one needed when operating in a co-located environment. Another aspect that changes when leading at distance is awareness, the concept under which the leader’s power and the power of their position is conveyed to the team only in physical presence. Also, because virtual communication often feels too cold, and leaders send and receive messages in mass quantities and multiple forms.

Another important aspect that changes in a remote environment and can influence the leader-follower relationship is “leadership control”. As we have been observing over the course of this

paper most leaders belong to the oldest generation and were always sceptical about working from home and hybrid organizations.

In remote and hybrid environments, “need-based” theories that focus on the individual motivation and behavior, seemed to be a recurring note over the course of our paper. These theories should contain the key elements that will help leaders enable their subordinates’ full potential.

We observed in Expert n. 1, the distribution between the “mistrusters” and the “enlightened” leaders, and when asked about the relationship these two types of leaders have with their team Expert n. 1 said that the relationship “has intensified”. Concept that we can find again in what was confirmed by Expert n. 2. In remote environments this intensification of the relation whether positive or negative happens, and we have a clear demonstration in the relationship between Leader n. 1 and Subordinate n. 1, where the level of reciprocal trust seems ideal, and Leader n. 3 and Subordinate n. 2, that defined their working relationship as a partnership.

In fact, people in different stages of their lives have different needs. We have seen the example mentioned by Expert n. 2 where subordinates very close to retirement refused to adapt to the new work environments, and other members of the same generation, such as Expert n. 1, thrive and improve their digital knowledge. The example of remote workers with dependencies in the case study and in the case of Leader n. 2, and Subordinate n. 2 have impacted their work-life balance and their adaptation to change. The doubts and insecurity about the future, we observed in Leader n. 3, so common of the “jugglers” defined by Deloitte. The need for direction of Subordinate n. 3, so common in people at the start of their career.

Although McColl-Kennedy et al. “model of leadership style and emotions as mediators of performance”, can be applied in the case of Company n. 1 and Company n. 3. In the case of Company n. 2, the interviewees level of optimism is very high, even in presence of a clear example of “frustration-performance leadership”, this also surface in the level of performance and adaptation of the members of the organization.

We tend to agree with McKinsey & Co. that to ensure employees’ safety and security, relationships, culture, and purpose, invite leaders to demonstrate compassionate leadership and invest in relationships, to invest in the development of employee-to-employee relationships, and to create and maintain a culture that values inclusion, individuality, and social harmony.

All workers we observed in the case study and that we interviewed have experienced some degree of disruption. However, if there seems to be a difference in a subordinate behavior and needs, based on their gender and their dependencies, what we observed in differences based on the age of the subordinate change our initial assumption that older employees might have had harder time to adapt to the new work environment.

In fact, the results of specific changes forced by COVID-19, suggest that the differences between age groups disappear once factors such as the type of occupation or the size of the organization are considered. A key observation emerging from the results of the survey is that the ability of employees to adapt to change is based on the level of trust and support subordinates received from their leaders and their colleagues, rather than on the age of the employee. Again, we observed a clear example in the relationship between Leader n.1 and Subordinate n.1 and Leader n. 3 and Subordinate n. 3. The high level of trust in their leaders have brought both subordinates to perform whilst adapting to the new situation.

And again, trust was fundamental in the example of “participative leadership” we observed in the behavior of CXO of Company n. 3.

It is in fact, the more complex set of topics we first reported and now discussed brought us to the conclusion that there is an interrelation between remote leadership, leader-subordinate relationship, and subordinate behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 7. Conclusion

Our conclusion on digitation is that the level of technology of an organization possess is not the only key element for the success of hybrid and remote organizations. In fact, is the level of proficiency of the user (leaders and subordinates) with the technology used that is one of the elements we trust to be behind operational success. Our findings bring us to conclude that the perception of digitation within an organization variates depending on the level of digital knowledge the individual, whether a leader or a subordinate, possess. In fact, as we observed in the case of Company n. 2, the interviewees rated their organization level of digitation both low and high. According to Expert n. 1, during the pandemic leaders should have conclude organizing an optimal online communication and knowledge management systems. It is in fact safe to conclude that during the pandemic all the participants to our interviews have gained new technical abilities.

However, it is a leaders' ability to shift from one path to the other of the leadership spectrum with the intent to create a natural, individual, and authentic connection with their teams, and generating a state of high self-esteem and balance will remarkably contribute to the creation of an environment that is based on trust and inclusion.

As discussed in the previous chapter, our conclusion is that to overcome the challenges of remote work leaders should adopt a transactional remote leadership style based on Kelley and Kelloway's theory. The leadership style should be mediated by Eikenberry and Wayne's "Three O Model of Leadership".

However, these two models alone are unfortunately not enough. Because context is a crucial element of hybrid and remote work environments. In fact, remote environments work relationship are more complicated to build because the opportunities and context for building those relationships changes drastically. Learning how to build and maintain them is always an important part of a leader responsibility, however the characteristics and motivation of the subordinate do play a role as important as the one the leader has.

Although, some might argue that generational characteristics can drastically influence one's abilities and motivation, our research brought us to conclude that pre-existing knowledge and motivational factors are intrinsic to the individual and the characteristics of a group do not apply to all the members. In fact, the level of digital knowledge of the individual impacted the assumptions on the age groups where age group differences could not be found because of the role, and the levels of prior knowledge and/or motivation.

When leading at distance the teams' needs for interactions that were previously met in the workplace are now missing and need to be replaced. All these changes might result in leaders feeling isolated from their teams is a huge concern for leaders and could impact their effectiveness and job satisfaction.

Observing the different needs reported in the case study and in the sample of people we interviewed. We are of the opinion that next to a transformational leadership, mediated by Eikenberry and Wayne's "Three O Model of Leadership" and the context, leaders should adapt "personalized motivation" as a method to help them and their organizations to meet the needs of their workforce.

What we observed in our empirical findings, bring us to conclude that leaders should adapt to the subordinates' maturity level and act accordingly to their individual needs. We believe these leaders are capable to inspire their followers and help them throughout their development. In conclusion we are of the opinion that leaders and their organization will be successful when they will start to acknowledge the complexity of the individuals in their teams, understand

everyone's behavior and characteristic and provide their subordinates with the trust and support they need to thrive.

Although organizations have been responding well to the changes there must be an organization-wide commitment to optimize work experience, effectiveness, and employee well-being to the new environment. We believe that flexibility and work efficiency are aspects of the employees' experience that organizations can address without investing significant resources. This investment should bring a high return on the quality of the subordinate work experience, effectiveness, and employee well-being in the hybrid or remote working environment. For leaders a simple and cost-free way to start would be using the three simple questions recommended by Spiro.

The central roles played by leaders and their followers, creates a gravitational movement that is dictated by the set of attributes that are characterising the follower-leader relationship in correlation to their environment.

This awareness brought us to be able to understand there is indeed a correlation between leaders' different styles and behaviors, and the type of leader-subordinate relationships that can be established. In fact, our observation brings us to conclude that once forced by COVID-19 in a remote or hybrid environment, in their new "remote role", managers and executives' styles and behaviors correlate to the level of perceived control, and trust they have in their subordinates. We observed that the level of mutual trust correlates to either the positive or the negative intensification of the leader-subordinate relationship. The level of mutual trust built in the leader-follower relationship also correlate to the positive or negative intensification of the subordinates' behaviors. In fact, their motivation, level of trust in the leader, and organizational commitment intensified when the level of trust were already at an optimal level prior to the pandemic.

In fact, we can observe positive cases of intensification of trust, in the examples of Leader n. 1, and Leader n. 3. In these two cases, we can conclude that when positively intensified, the existing levels of trust between leader and follower brought to an improved and stronger relationship. Based on our research, in the case of "positive intensification", we observed that there is a correlation with a positive intensification subordinate's behavior. Subordinate n. 1, and Subordinate n. 3, behaviors are to be admired by their organizations. Their leaders commitment to nurture the relationship, to trust, and to empower them created an intensification in both subordinates behaviors. Their self-motivational levels, trust in their leaders, commitment in their organizations, correlate to their increased performance.

In the case of Company n. 2 we observed a case of negative intensification. As mentioned the organization was having leadership issue prior to the pandemic. However, the dysfunctional "laissez-faire" behavior of the executive, intensified during the pandemic reaching ludacris levels, when Subordinate n. 2 tried to reach the leader for weeks without being able to get hold of the executive. In this case the leadership style the leader adopted during the pandemic negatively intensified the dysfunctionality of the relationship. In Company n. 2, in the absence of leadership the workforce was left on their own. It was so hard for the workforce to thrive in this environment, that this dysfunctional and almost non-existing leader-follower relationship. In fact, so much so, that the time for adaptation to optimal performance levels have been reached almost a year after the pandemic started, and only with the ingestion of a few new hirings, and the promotion of Leader n. 2 in the leadership team.

These and other elements we have presented in this paper are a prove that positive and negative characteristics a leader possessed prior to the pandemic correlate to the positive or negative intensification of the relationship, and the positive and negative intensification of the subordinates behavior. It is important to highlight that if in the leader-follower relationships and in the built and established prior to the pandemic in co-located environments remote

leadership played the role of an intensifier. In fact, we observed in our empirical findings, the trust level that was already established prior to the pandemic, intensified for better or for worse.

Although it is already demonstrated, the relationship between leadership styles and reaching the organizational objectives. From what we observed, it is safe to assume that to be an effective leader, one must adapt the style to the individual they are confronted with but cannot be considered the only factor responsible for the performance of the subordinate.

However, what worried us the most are the differences in the performance, motivation, and commitment levels of the new team members. This point was raised by Expert n. 2, and we agree confirm that new on-boarding processes need to be set up in a remote environment. In fact, these problems were not only raised by Expert n. 2, but also Leader n. 3 made a clear case of the differences between the members of the organization. Leader n. 1, had a similar experience with a member of the team that joined over the pandemic and left after a few months because, despite the leader and the team efforts, was not able to integrate. As we mentioned, is not only the leadership style that needs to adapt for the success and fulfilment of the subordinate.

In fact, we believe that the transformational remote leadership model, mediated by the “Three O’s” model and individual approaches tailored to the characteristics of the subordinates will bring their subordinates to high levels of trust in leadership, organizational commitment, and performance. Ultimately, we believe that the fulfilment of the subordinate’s will results in operational success for the leaders and the organization.

Based on our learnings, findings, and discoveries, in the next chapter we will provide the readers with our recommendation and a set of best practices to follow in a remote or hybrid environment.



## 8. Recommendations

Because of the different experiences observed in our empirical findings we highly recommend leaders and followers to build high level of mutual trust. However, although a fundamental element, mutual trust alone cannot overcome all the challenges leaders, subordinates and their organizations are faced with.

Below we report the list of behavioral recommendations resulting from our investigation of the behaviors of remote leaders; the leader-follower relationships developed during the pandemic in a remote environment. Finally, we uncovered the correlation between the leadership style and type of relationships a leader is able to build, and the interrelation to the subordinates' behavior in the workplace over the course of the pandemic.

Digitation	Leadership	Subordinate	Leader-follower relationship
Technology related investments to assure	Theories and Models	Theories and Models	Theories and Models
Internal Communication (formal and informal) video and chat: e.g., Slack; Google Meet; MS Teams; Zoom; etc.	Transactional remote leadership theory (Kelley & Kelloway)	Leadership, values, and subordinate self-concepts (Lord & Brown)	Impact of leadership style and emotions on subordinate performance (McColl-Kennedy et al.)
Project Management: e.g., Trello; Jira; Asana; etc.	The “Three O of Model Leadership” (Eikenberry & Wayne)	“Need-based” motivational theories (Spiro)	Action for the leader-follower relationship
Knowledge Sharing: e.g., Confluence; Google Drive; Microsoft OneDrive; Dropbox; etc.	Personalized Motivation methodology (Spiro)	Needs	Be credible Speak transparently and empathically with the subordinates
Additional investments in technological tools are needed for	Behaviors and characteristics	Secure work experience Job security, financial stability, physical and mental health, being rewarded.	Make it feasible Push responsibility to edges to accelerate change
Employee experience	High performing communication Continuous formal and informal communication with the team members with focus on quantity and quality.	Trusting relationships Working with trustworthy people, being recognized for the work accomplished.	Be sustainable Ensure that employees know that support from leaders has no end point
Onboarding	Leading by example Inspire	Social cohesion and inclusion	Think about the individual Tailor interventions

	organizational commitments can with their actions inspire others.	Being treated fairly, having supportive colleagues	to individual contexts and evolving needs.
<b>Customer communication</b>	<b>Trustworthy</b> Trust in the team members to get their job done.	<b>Individual purpose and contribution</b> Achieving goals, balance of work and private life, fulfilling career objectives.	<b>Contextual factors</b>
<b>Sales Operations</b>	<b>Awareness</b> Be self-aware; and aware of the subordinate characteristics and needs.	<b>Actions to fulfill the subordinate's needs</b>	<b>Manager trust in employee</b> Reciprocal trust is of crucial important.
<b>Product Development</b>	<b>Supportive</b> Coaching, counseling, and providing advice and feedback.	<b>Demonstrate compassionate leadership</b> Demonstrate awareness, vulnerability, and empathy	<b>Isolation</b> Isolation leads people acting as “a team of one”
<b>Other internal operations (Finance, HR, Admin, Backoffice, etc.)</b>	<b>Organizational commitment</b> Create a subculture and satisfaction with control to organizational commitment	<b>Invest in relationships</b> Relationships are critical to the employee engagement, well-being, and effectiveness	<b>Lack of environmental cues</b> important messages that are missing when working remote
	<b>Success Factors</b>	<b>Understand the subordinate</b>  Ask a few simple questions.	
	<b>Outcomes</b> Lead with the purpose of reaching a desired outcome.	Do they work far from home?	
	<b>Others</b> Reach those outcomes by leading others.	How long have they been working within the structure?	
	<b>Ourselves</b> Reach those outcomes by “LEADING” others.	What types of transport and infrastructure do they have access to?	
	<b>Factors influencing success</b>	What are their main responsibilities?	
	<b>Prior knowledge</b> Prior relationships	Are they trained to have the skills and	

	among members of virtual	abilities to fulfil these responsibilities?	
	<b>Quality of communication</b> quality levels of digital communication is minor than the face-to face interactions		
	<b>Quantity of communication</b> Increasing the quantity of communication in virtual teams		
	<b>Job satisfaction</b> lower levels of job satisfaction have been reported in virtual teams		
	<b>Organizational commitment</b> It is important to determine which factors affect the remote worker's satisfaction with level of control		

Table 5: Recommendations

## 9. Limitations

The only limitation we found in our research, or in the eventual application of the recommendations exposed above can be found in the small sample of interviews we took into analysis. However, in the interviews not only we were able to represent all the generations at the moment present in the workforce, but the results have been supporting the empirical findings we reported in our case study on how remote organizations are responding to the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, with the support of the thousands of remote workers that responded to the various studies cited in the paper we are confident that our results, conclusion, and recommendations will support leader, subordinates, and their organizations.

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# Appendix

## Transcript interview n. 1; Expert n. 1.

Interviewer = I

Expert n1 = E1

I: So, my thesis is about the way about remote leadership and its interrelation with the leader follower relationship and the subordinates' behavior over COVID-19.

E1: And who is coaching you for your master thesis?

I: Willy Kriz

E1: Willy Kriz? Oh Really? Okay, Good.

I: Yeah. So basically, what I'm doing is... I will be interviewing you as an expert, and I'll be interviewing leaders and followers from a few companies. And the idea is to create a set of recommendations for leaders and followers on how to, you know, to motivate and be motivated and how to interrelate with their subordinates when leading at distance.

E1: Yeah.

I: So, in your case, what I would like to understand is about your clients, the companies you consult with their change and transformation process. What level of digitation they achieved? Are they on a low level – mid level – or high level?

E1: I will say, either brought in through COVID, they were brought in to work really in remote mode and the home office and with this Zoom conferences and things like that, and so... but I think they just installed the programs, and started... but I noticed that they are not still, uh, still are not a "convenient" (note from the interviewer: Interviewee means "at ease") with all the possibilities they would have with all these digital tools. For example, I have been working with a company with 1000 employees, and they have everything on zoom. But nobody knew after a year, that there's, for example, the possibility of breakout groups you know, how to share the screen, and how to "shake the head".. "Raise the hand"... but they are not really in the programs, and then the possibilities, they would be in half. So, I would say that just maximum medium, a low level.

I: And that goes, as you said, the main example for communication, they use it but not fully also for cooperation, knowledge sharing?

E1: Maybe five to ten percent of the possibilities of those programs they have already installed. Usually, they just, they're already happy if it's possible to, to work remote, so that everybody has the possibility to work with an ERP system or, or that... they... everybody knows how to handle Microsoft Teams or Zoom or whatever they and everybody has his, his programs, but... they are.... they... the... it was too quickly. And so they were just dropped in and they did what was necessary work to just to go on anyway. But it's not the... they are still on a low level. Yeah.

I: So, it was just a, let's say a clash for them, like moving from one sort of very co-located environment where everyone was working together to jumping into this remote without getting middle ground on every previous experience?

E1: Yes.

I: Yeah. And the... according to what you've seen leaving the motivation of the team have changed with moving from complicated to remote?

E1: Pardon?

I: The motivation of the subordinates, right... in moving from a co-located environment to a remote environment. Do you think they've changed? their behavior changed?

E1: Yes. Because it was a total different way of looking at it... Being at home having kids who have to also have remotes cool and perhaps a partner and for... perhaps, also to cook for the family and everything in the in the apartment... it's.. I think it was... it changed. For example, I know some women, they were doing all this cool work with children. And when the kids were in bed, they started with their own work. So, they... they worked around the clock. It was the, the limits between working time other and there were there was no limit. There wasn't it was everything makes a working time, family time, all this. I think what changed was the kind of... how they were acting in meetings. really something that changed... Very, very much.... people usually were punctual. People were... the meetings were shorter, and more straightforward. And not so much small talk and discussions, because everybody wanted to get through it, and it stops again. So I think it was a total different kind of meetings.

I: And do you think that then about productivity? What was the impact on productivity?

E1: I think meetings became much more efficient and productive. Really... many people told me, it's much more. I think people were more productive. With meetings also, also, because they tried to get all through their work most efficiently.

I: For what you said. I can imagine the workforce will be distributed between millennials, Gen X, mostly right? So anywhere between 25 and 45?

E1: You think that these generations adapted easier? Or what?

I: No my question is about the workforce? So, the distribution of the workforce right now? We have four generations, right in the workforce.

E1: Yes.

I: we have from the baby boomers to the gen Zed with the you know, people between 20 and 24. So I would say that the majority, according to research is the majority of the workforce should be composed by millennials, that is around 35% of the global workforce. And then there are like, let's say, when baby boomers are more close to retirement, so there are more likely to be in a leading positions, let's say... followed by Gen X. What is your opinion?

E1: I... my observation was that cannot be divided into the generations, because there were some baby boomers, who really adapted very quickly and were happy about all the possibilities, these but these were those who also were open to new technologies before... have been open to new technologies before and there are also some gen X.. or... who said I hate this home office and I wanted that. So, I think it would be too easy just to say Gen X or Generation Y adapted easier than millennials you can say it like that. I think it depends on the openness also on the kind of job.

I: yeah, no, well, you know, there are this research about Gen Z, Gen Y and Zed and Gen X in general, that they are more adaptable and more but you know...

E1: Flexible!

I: Yes, I guess then it's about you know, generalizing and I guess then then in a particular industry or then category of work makes a lot of different things you mentioned.

E1: I think that is a little bit quicker to.. to learning the tools... I am not sure. But I don't think you can generalize that this generation adapted to home office and to remote working better than the generation. Before too, too much. Thinking in wardrobe

I: Yes, is like putting people into boxes. Yeah.

E1: Because I really I noticed that many also in my generation... (Baby Boomer) who really saw it also as a chance or saw the positive aspects said we never would have learned so much to digital tools if that COVID crisis would not have come. So, yeah.

I: COVID is actually... you know... it's an accelerator, right? I mean, accelerated everything... pushed companies that were in ready, right, to having to move into a completely full remote environment. And but now, this new full remote environment. So leaders were used to have their people in the office?

E1: Around.. checking, looking at the time they are working, when and if they're working.

I: and I can imagine that moving this leader follower relationship into a remote environment was a shock on both sides, right?

E1: Yes.

I: So, what is your experience with that?

I: different experiences, this one group of leaders who really, they always have been sceptic about home office, and if people really work. And seeing this now, they were astonished and saying... "Hey, I really trust my people"... they are still working. Also, if I'm not looking over the shoulders, if they are working, and it's not about time, nine to five, they are doing their job anyway, so I can trust them. That's one group. Another group, the mistrusters those who never trusted people, some of them installed programs, software, where you can see all your employees or your staff, how many hours have you have they been working... In which program how many emails have they sent ... controlling? There are controlling software, and I read an article that said the sales of controlling software's has risen in COVID crisis. So there is those this group who really still thinks only with control, and having all in in your mind, and seeing who is doing what, is the only possibility and also you have to do it remote. I don't think they will be very successful. But I heard that the sales for these controlling software's have risen very high.

I: But if this subgroup of mistrusters, right... as you call them... do you think that they were like this before Covid?

E1: This before? of course... it is just.. it's same of.. same of... of the old story, and they try to do it also remote? So I see if Employee 1 is really working and how often he has been in Facebook and how often he has been in Instagram and how much he has worked and see how many mails in which time he has answered the mails and all these.

I: Sure, yeah. Yeah, because then, you know, I wonder... so... these leaders were mistrusters before... and had that kind of relationship with their team. So, do you think that with moving into remote, this change somehow?



E1: For some I think it was worse. For some it was an enlightenment... Oh, I can't trust it. They also do.. they still work! And for some, I think it was a process... they... they learned to have their meetings... and some changed to more authoritative style... to say okay, this is the role now... you have to do like this. You have to do that... which is in a crisis it is always okay. But when it became an everyday work... to work remote, then I think they have to change it again. And some do not. Some, think, okay, if COVID will be over everything will be as it was before... and it will not. COVID will have changed for ever the environment... and experienced workers will not go back to the old times, I'm sure.

I: Now, we also made a survey in the company. And we've seen how everyone what once at least the hybrid environment... but who knows? So, then... let's say... from the point of view, we've discussed about the the leader right, so far, so when, from the point of view of the follower with these two types of leader, the enlightened ones and the mistrusters on the other side.

E1: Yes, exactly...

I: So, of course, I guess that elite that that was able to motivate the team found that way through digital ways to motivate the team over COVID. But then, besides the fact that people were impacted by the COVID, right, so do you think that, of course, the mistrusters ones for what I can understand... I can only assume that the mistrust level just raised because then the control level was too much to handle... and I guess this impacted negatively, then the subordinate..

E1: Yeah..

I: So, probably leading people leaving their company or start looking for a new job? So, do you have experiences with this? Have you seen something like this in the market?

E1: No, not yet. I think there was a learning process for some leaders and also for some colors. So it was a learning process. And so COVID is not still... still not over. But I think in the moment when work can be as you want to create it. And you need not have to think about covid and how office, I think there will be a new discussion in organizations and it won't be just that every Friday, you'll have home office, it will be more it will be I think, leaders will have to realize that people are not paid for attendance, but for impact for output. And this, and these leaders who do not understand that I think they were really will have problems getting good, qualified employees.

I: But then for these leaders will be... the recommendation that you will give to these leaders, if you would have to give three recommendations?

E1: Recommendations... would be... first, sit together with your team and try to define new rules for cooperation and collaboration. How will we work? It can be that we decide okay, everybody has a certain time and home office. But we also have some time together in the office with our office things where we have our meetings and all the networking and the social things which get lost if we are just always working remote. And I think also, the one to one will have to change because if you're all in if everybody is in the office, the boss walks around... and Oh I see you... how are you? and then we're talking a little bit with coffee. if everybody's working at home or just a part. We have to think about two things when do we have our one to one. Also if you are always working remote. I have a suggestion would be... have a one to one with every member of your team, at least every two weeks, every other week. The second is trying to find spaces where the whole team comes together. So, there's always not only part of the of the team will be at home, the other part will be here, try to fix, perhaps these are meetings somewhere in an open air or something, so, really out out of the office, but try to get

time for the whole team to work in... for new innovations... for strategy... for also team building... I think that should be at least twice a year... for one or two days... and there... the new things are created. And also, one thing, I'm just, I'm just doing some survey on HR learning. And I think also learning will have to change in the team. You have to install a system where 20 to 30% of the learning you do is with peers, where we are... so, we have spaces where we speak about mistakes... where we speak about our experience in projects... where we create something new, some new innovative ideas. So, I think leaders will have to create spaces for learning and innovation. And whether that's just remote just in digital workshops, it's there are many good possibilities also to look and to learn together in digital ways, but leaders will have to warn us... that learning will have to change.

I: and so, in your opinion, how moving into this remote leadership environment interrelate with the leader follower relationship and then the subordinate's behavior over Covid-19?

E1: How did it?

I: So, basically.... the idea is... like... the leadership moved into this remote environment... And my question... I would... I would like to understand is the interrelation between the leader follower relationship.... like for example... you made a very good example with the mistrusters... right?

E1: Yes.

I: So, in the case of the mistrusters... there is a leader follower relationship there is already probably nonfunctional. And then we move into an environment that just increases that non functionality of this relationship. And it comes the behavior... as the second part of my question... in your example the behavior of the employee I guess that could probably go down? So, when some people have been... you know... be more productive, in some cases, as you've seen, in some other cases, probably the productivity levels, when there is some sort of nonfunctional relationship might go down.

E1: I think it's the relationship. See, how can I say that... that... just such as... ahhh... just a minute...

E1: I think the behavior which had been before this COVID interruption, it has intensified... or the relationship has intensified. So, those who had a good relationship, they also met each other with Zoom and drink their coffee together... and spoke... "How are you?" and "how are you doing?" and things like that... And those who did not have a good relationship to their boss, or to their employees. They... they did not have much contact, or they even avoided... sort of ghosted. If... if there was not a good relationship before. Remote leadership.... is a very good chance to avoid contact... you just have those meetings where it's just functional about your work. And then... that's it. And so, people who were already far from each other... it became even more distant, the relationship, and I think those whose two had a good relationship it went on.

I: but then in some... some way... it could create a better behavior on the employee in both cases, right? Because if I don't feel that pressure, and I can avoid conduct, I won't have that sort of mis feelings with that person. So I feel better, right?

E1: Because I didn't, I didn't see that person. I'm happy about the distance. Yeah. And I'm happy not to see him every day walking through the office and always being angry and some could argue that it might just make it better. Yes.

I: While on the other side, maybe...

E1: I have to stop and now.. You still have some questions, I think.

I: So, what lessons you know, have you learned from, from all this? from leading remote from.. from.. you know... moving into this digital environment, virtual environment.. being projected in it.. without having the.. you know... the possibility of choosing it?

E1: So, if we are forced to have remotely with leadership leadership?

I: Yes.

E1: Yeah. I think the most important lesson is trust your people. But I was thinking about it, perhaps I write you some, some more.

I: Okay. That would my last question.

E1: Yes. Yeah. And what would be the lessons if you have to manage your team remote?

I: Yeah, in this as a leader you know... if you have to manage a team remote and what lessons... Yeah, what lessons...

E1: trust your people Another one would be organise a good knowledge management so that everybody really can look up everything. Yeah. Perhaps I find some more. I have to leave now. But I will. I will think about if there are any more lessons, then I will.

I: Thank you very much.

## **Transcript interview n. 2; Expert n. 2.**

**Interviewer = I**

**Expert n2 = E2**

I: So, I guess you've been working with many clients over this period on how things have changed over COVID. According to, you know... my research, and there are there were already three points that what case two points that were influencing very much the change in organization, one would be digitalization, and one would be the change in the reading generations. So the generational diversity that there is right now in the workforce going from, you know, still some few baby boomers that are close to retirement with some generations that are in their internship, and the majority of the workforce composed by Generation X and Generation Y. And any my research I tried to have a bit of everyone in the spectrum, so try to understand everyone position on it. And so, the first question I would like to ask you, is how well digitize the organization you help were before COVID? If you have to.. to judge them from a low level, medium level, high level? And maybe how this changed now?

E2: Yeah, well, maybe I also need to explain on what kind of organization was I... maybe I start with me as a one-person organization... because I have started my business on first of January 2020, just three months after I started the business... COVID... the first lockdown started... So, that was a little bit challenging. Because I was... for example, I was working with a client at that point of time, a small architectural and construction office. So, with 15 people in total. And... and I've realized... okay, because everything till that point took place face to face, in their office and with... with COVID, then the process or the collaboration just stopped for a moment, because of... for them, they also had to organize their business. So... because it was not... home office was no topics for them at that point of time. But with... with COVID, then they started to enable that the employees also can work from home. And I picked up the or the project we were working on, we then restarted in June... So, three... three months later... and when we had done the first workshop, again face to face. I also asked them a little bit,

how did it go, what was the thing you've learned, and the comment from this organization was that they... they improved also their digital skills and also their way of... of using... using digital tools to collaborate. But they also realized because they had once... once a week they usually had their office breakfast and the people miss that because the communication that I would say the non organized communications are more the informal part immediately stopped. And, and they now at that point of time, they said yeah, they want to try to, to make home office possible for the employees when it makes sense. For example, an architect when he has to do conceptual creative work. So one of the of the of the managing partners, he said, Yeah, I do this now at least once a day during the week, because then I can concentrate on my project. So they really they... they change their way of working.

I: They saw the positive aspects of it.

E2: Yeah, yeah.

I: But also they saw that basically, informal communication was completely lost. And what did they do too? Did they do anything to replace this informal communication?

E2: Yeah, they try to start some, you know, some challenges, you know, post your most awkward image of the week or what you share something with your colleagues what is on your desk or something like that. So they try to, to do some, some gamification some... some fun exercises, just to, to also enable more informal talks rather than just business focused formal meetings. So, that is one experience.

I: I mean... and so, for you, how easy for you was to... you know, change? because I guess you were used to go to the client side to talk to them trying to understand them better. And also, for you a lot of cues that are in the office, you see people you see how they are, if they're happy, they're not how they behave. that's missing, right. So, you have a lot of information missing for your job.

E2: Yes, on the one hand side, yes. But on the other hand side, I think it was also I'm also active in a in a kind of consultant network. And, and we've, we've had a plan in this network for... for 2020. We had a roadmap, we wanted to do some things. And then we met digitally, and we said, okay, now our plan is outdated, we need to adjust. And then we co created a new idea. And we... we did a kind of it was called "Digital Werkstatt". So... it's kind of a digital for room for experiences. And we made I created this offer once a month for self-employed consultants, but also for people working in organizations to, to just try new digital tools in a in a, in a safe environment and in a knot. You know, when I'm as a consultant in contact with a client, I want to be professional, and I wanted that things are working. But I also need to test it Yeah, and, and to do some testing phase you need to learn the tools... and you know when you are just on your own, you need to interact with with real people digitally. And we started that and so I would say I improved my personal digital skills very very much the last year because I was forced to an end also made a lot of fun.

I: And what... what digital means what digital new digital tools for communication, knowledge sharing, did you learn?

E2: at home for example, I'm working now with Miro on I saw the digital whiteboard, I'm I'm using Well, we started with slack before already in this network. So this was not through to COVID. I think also ms teams is I was used to work with it. But now I'm also trying to to use the marketplace what is possible to connect certain tools. We did some team retrospective with free I don't know there are so many tools.

I: Try to connect those two tools together to make it easier and make it also more functional automate some actions that you need to make right so from your calendar to the video chat

like immediate, like having already the link for the the link for the remote meeting and things like this is fantastic is like tools that are already there, you're using them but you're not fully using them because you can replace them by face to face communication. And then when this is over, then they're already there. And then you start discovering them and the beauty of it. And sometimes also I guess it will help a lot when we try to return to sort of normality to reduce the time that we spend on other things probably..

E2: Yeah, what I realized just on my personal agenda that you know, in in last year in in August, I started with another with a big client another project. I took over the project management to do a new website and a new customer experience platform and a new product database so a complete new everything you build for me with an international team with different external parties with... with the big client. me as a as an extra I'm a project manager. And, and I realized in the beginning, I was once a week, face to face at the clients office. And but I always had hybrid formats because other people's, for example, the developers or the design of the agency, which was selected, they were located in UK No, no in New York. And this in is from the Netherlands. So anyhow, it was a remote team. And I realised when then there was the, the order or the, the frame condition from the organization I was working for, that everyone has to go to the home office or should go to and work from home, if possible. And then we started to, I was leading this project, and I'm now closing this project in the next weeks. And we did it completely remote and digital. So and I've realized at that point of time, it's much better to have everyone fitted the connected rather than having some people together in a room. And some people are add connected remotely, because you always have two different levels of information and communication. Because when the official meeting stopped, the people in the room, they really discussed things, but the ones who have been remotely connected, are not involved in that relies to manage this group of of people with this project. For me, it was better to connect everyone digitally, rather to have this hybrid.

I: someone in the office of one, but then it means that also the other teams that were working with you were all working from their own location, no one was working from the same office.

E2: In the beginning, yes. So when I'm doing meetings with them right now, I we meet in a digital room. But of course, they are sitting in a in a big office space, and maybe two or three people are sitting in one location. But we are all in one digital room. And not physically in a room where we have, for example, three people at this location and five people from different locations are connected. Because I realized just to lead this, this project team with so many different people from different locations. As a project manager, it was just easier for me to steer the team and to lead the team. If we say okay, everything we do, we do in the same digital room.

I: But with distributed teams, everyone in different locations, different time zones, you said New York, you know people here, so from a communication perspective, did you use a synchronous communications methodology, like knowledge sharing where everyone would have access to it, and then they can do the job? Like, I don't know, you use Trello or some Kanban?

E2: Yeah, we use JIRA as the tools to do the sprint planning and and also the, the sprint, so the execution that the entire documentation we did on Confluence, so wiki use usually the the meetings were done via teams. And the storage of the files is SharePoint. So and and the direct communication via slack. And yes, so many different tools. So we can say that your now your preferred meaning of communication is digital, if you have to work maybe in such an environment, but maybe still depends on the case. Yeah. So in in this international environment in an international project where you have different people from different locations, I think definitely working completely digital helps because it reduced effort from my side to consolidate once the face to face stuff and you do the documentation always the same. Because I think it's so weird if you're sitting in a meeting and then everybody's in front of his

laptop And then you talk to each other, then you also can be in your private office environment. And you do not need to meet physically in one room with everybody sits in front of his laptop. Yeah. And yesterday afternoon I had with this there, they are now on the on the way to digital transformation. So they started the digital transformation programme, and I'm consulting them now right now. And, and we did a face to face workshop. So there was no remote participants. And the one thing what I will send thinking about is, you know, being efficient in doing all the documentation, because when you meet digitally, you also do the documentation on the fly with the tools you have. If you meet face to face, for example, we use the flip chart and so on. And afterwards you have to digitise the results, develop vantage of doing workshops digitally means you have done the documentation already with the end of the workshop if you do it. It I know as it comes out, and it has advantages and disadvantages, advantages but looking on personal efficiency, it's better to do it digitally.

I: It's somehow automating the process that, you know, optimising more than automating a process that, you know, even imagine in a face to face room, right? People can still write on digital means of communication, and then you can have everything stored in one place still, you know, so maybe we can bring to face to face meetings, you know, even digital tools. Who knows?

E2: They're, I would say it's a, it depends a little bit on the hardware they have available. I'm when I'm going for example, I, I do this now for summary years, I have my iPad with my pencil, and I do it already digital. But if you work with a group of people, you know, there's different styles and different different levels of working with digital tools. And and as a moderator, or facilitator, you always have to take the situation, because otherwise I would need to train them beforehand.

I: But don't you think No, no. Because of course, if you bring a new tool or something that they don't know, they will, they might need to be trained on it. But then you think that after COVID, after everyone had to work remote, more or less, unless you were doing, you know, a manual work or needed to be in the shoppers for so the questions means like, maybe everyone learned enough now that adapting to new digital tools might not need such a high level of education.

E2: Yeah, you were referring to the different generations and I see some differences.

I: Because I guess that in this reorganization, right, whether it's the 15 one, or the very big one that you mentioned before, the new one you're working with now, in the digital transformation progress bra project, they might have everyone in the spectrum, right, from baby boomers to Gen. Zed, what is your experience?

E2: I know, I know, baby boomers using digital tools now for four years because they just adopted their their own way of working before COVID. So but I also know some they they've never done it. So in everage I would say especially the young millennials or Generation Y you know, for for me or for this people. It's just so normal to to use the smartphone to use to use Yes, of course..

I: Generation X.. I wonder about Generation X.. What is your experience with Generation X? Is just the one right before Generation Y. So, everyone born in the 70s..

E2: Yeah, there is a big because they're different. From millennials, I'm a millennial. Yeah, I think they... it depends on... a little bit in what kind of organization and business environment they grew up. I see, you know, this, this company I'm supporting on one side, I have to cover the project management. And this is coming to an end right now. And now they asked me to be a consultant on the same company, on the digital transformation topics, because I'm expert in change, managing change. And I realized people working for many years within this company, they are socialized from my point of view, from outdated way of working, and they

have to, to refresh and to, to adjust. What people who recently joined this organization, but have been working for startup or other companies, they come already with a much more exhale way of thinking and working. But this is a... it's a publicly listed company. So did for example, finance and budgeting and everything is, is really a core topic of their... of their organization. And from my point of view, is, when I look now what they do with this digital transformation program, it's just how they want to manage this is for me outdated, because they do not do an agile planning, you know, with the different cycles of planning. They do it like they always did with the budget year and, and forecasting, and so on. So, it's a long path to really to transformation mode.

I: And so in your opinion, according to all your experience of the companies, you've been working with the people you've been seeing, and so as you said, millennials, maybe also some genetics, but also the boomers, so depending on maybe it's more depending on the industry and what they do, rather than on the generation, their level of digital knowledge. And then when it comes to adaptation, right, and embracing change, we've seen that, like, who was in the company for longer time had more difficulties to adapt to change, while the new let's say, the last maybe 10 years of you know, workforce, the implied workforce is more used to change more able to embrace change, or adapt to changes?

E2: There may be it's just because they have different experiences. And if you work for many years in one of one company, usually, you know, you... you develop certain patterns, and it's just the normal way of doing things how you do it, because everybody's doing it like that. And if whenever new people are joining such a company, and they have added work experience in smaller companies in I don't know in software industry or in in other areas, they have another view or for them something else is normal, and and then the system is learning. And in there I see some, but it is always a very from my point of view, very personal topic. And as I said, I have seen baby boomers, they adopt very fast so it's not their age, it's just their, their motivation, mindset, or what's a change for as an example

I: So um, if we talk about attitude, motivation, behaviour, right. Then European Union with the companies worked and also the people you've been working over this transition period before Corona after Corona. Have you seen the motivation of the people you work with changing? And do you think there is in relation with the remote environment or was moved and Corona?

E2: I think what, what changed is that specially by there. With, for example, I had a colleague, he was a technical project leader in my project. And I'm living in Germany, and we're a two kids, and the younger son was in first year at primary school. And for him and his wife is also SAP consultant. And they really had a big big challenge, they will use to, to work through to do so did this topic was not their issue. And also working remotely was not their issue, because they did it before. But the key challenge for them was to organise family and, and work at the same time. And they were motivated, of course, to to, to to do their job, but they also had to do to take care of the children. So there were this, especially, I realised that the project team members with kids at home, they they behave differently than, for example, younger people without family, you know, for them have, yeah, they miss to have parties, or they they miss to to go on vacation or travelling. But But working for them was not the big, the big issue.

I: I guess things are different, right? Based on what you where you are in the... in the state of your life...

E2: in what's what's your personal private situation you are in? And then I had I know what team were two people retired last week. So their last year of working within this organisation was, yeah, impacted by by this remote working and being the normal office. And they had a very difficult time to catch up with the younger generations. And also, you know, doing they the team leaders started to do this weekly stand up and in involving, but they had issues to, to open up continually.

I: The leader was younger than the team members that were closing close to retirement. And do you think that their problem is that the patient other adaptations are was also related to this remote leadership? Right? Because if the leader is working remote even if the imagine two scenarios, right, where this team leader was able to introduce these new tools or new ways of you know, agile methodologies in, you know, doing stand up meetings in the same room, and on the other side, maybe you have stuff to do? No, sorry, just the shallow sea. No, no, it's okay. It's just that I know that..

E2: it's automated, my light will go up. I cannot, I cannot open the shallows even with the phone. You know, we have an automated system.

I: Yeah, I just bought a flat. And I look forward to do.. something like this with my.. my wife is not that happy.

E2: My husband did that. Yeah, we have a better thing on the on the on the roof. Yeah. Now the sun is in that direction. And that means there is a sensor that tells to the jersey to go down or to open and to do something. And now it's going up again, but I haven't done it. So it's just an I can switch off the light. Perfect. So I'm back.

I: No, no, sorry. I just thought that, you know, I was thinking more of your time and I will be sorry, because there are a few few things I would like to talk to you about. And so, for me, it's more like now I would like to turn like remote leadership is leadership right? With the different context. So as you said before, there are a lot of cues and interpersonal relationships that are missing in a remote environment and it's up to the leader to try to recreate or fulfil that gap that is created by the context. Now of course, remote leadership is nothing that is new. It was there before Corona and will be there after Corona, probably in a more like x. It was, let's say accelerated by Corona. For example, organic Unlike the... the architects that you mentioned at the beginning, they've never thought about never considered about remote job now saw the potential and the opportunities in it. And same goes for many other organizations with the limits, of course of the work that you do. Now, from a leadership perspective, do you think that problems are related to performance in teams, or problems that are more in the motivations of the team? Do you see an interrelation into remote leadership and changing in the motivations were in the performance of the team members?

E2: I think if... if there was a leadership issue already beforehand, it was just an acceleration of this problem. And it got worse with the remote. But if there was a good lead leadership style and behavior, and then a performing team, I think it's not that big issue. So it depends really under situation. And this is also when I'm when I was talking to other consultant colleagues, they also referred to their experience with if there are leadership issues, and in most of the organizations, you can find these leadership issues, it was just getting worse with the remote situation. And, and a lot of wear, and tear that organization be behave differently. For example, the role of HR and how HR, for example, is helping leaders to, to digest the situation and to and to... to improve the situation with a coaching or with a with a with a small training or whatever. But usually, I experienced teams, they perform very well big because they started just to do this weekly, or even daily stand ups. And so they adopted very much to... to do to the HR way of working. And then it was perfectly fine. And some of the team leaders, because especially team members who... who have a long distance to the office, they now Where are rethinking I do I want to drive to the company, because I can also do my work from home. And I save some time for... for my prime. I have to commute one hour if I can start working 30 minutes before one hour before, you know, and get my job done before. Yeah, and spend more time with my family maybe. Yeah, and I know that that year, many companies in rural tack have now issues that the people do not want to come back to the office. So...



I: yeah, it is it is we did the survey my company. And yeah, I mean, only one person wants to go back to the office only wonders. Yeah. And yeah, so let's, before you You said something very interesting. And I wanted to keep this for the leadership part of this, this interview. And so you said pretty much depends on the relationship that was built before COVID. If the relationship was dysfunctional, it went in a wrong direction, might have gone very wrong direction. If there was trust before COVID, then the possibility for the relationship to remain remained stable. were much higher, let's say. So therefore, also. We can say that maybe when there is so if not, with a second I'm doing I'm going to have to make a statement and I don't want to do this. So after, after, after, no. So how would you How would you describe the leaders you work with?

E2: They were very in the beginning; you know it there was different phases. So In the very beginning, so middle of March, they were very busy to organize things, for example, that the people that the employees have equipment, they have a laptop and another, another fixed computer station and so on, so that that home office can happen, or they have to, to organize. Yeah, a conferencing tool and so on. So it's sort of a basic just to, to prepare the infrastructure before for remote working. So that was the first phase I realized with the duties of the leaders. And then when everybody was at home, so they realized, hmm, how do I connect now with the team? How do we, how do we do what we did before when we were all sitting together in one office. So as I mentioned, this small challenges that also the informal communication was done. So that was the second phase and the second challenge they face. And in that face, I also know one, one leader, he got a new employee two days before the first lockdown started. And, of course, he was so busy to get everything organized, he couldn't take care so much of this individual person. And this person decided after four weeks of not coming back, I quit my job. So... so left the company in this phase, because this was really a very special situation. And onboarding was, especially in the first two months, I would say, a very challenging time. After two, three months, I think the companies realized, okay, it needs a different kind of onboarding, if you want to.. to.. to get a new employee on board, probably there was no onboarding, right, more than a different kind of like there was no onboarding because the face-to-face onboarding wasn't there anymore.

I: So, it was left behind?

E2: Probably, yes... but if you start... So, the one... there were some companies, especially smaller ones, they stopped everything on hiring. So, they did not they did not have any new employees anymore, because they did not know how the business will go. And they did not want to... that... Yeah, the fixed costs are rising. And, and but bigger ones, it was, for example... in my website project, you know, this was planned long time before this, this people, this person was... signed the contract, but had three or four months in the previous company, and the starting date was July. And a then they just, went to office, pick the equipment, and then one time, oh, and then you know, the leader had to say, yeah, take the intranet and there you can have a file share. And there you get everything you need to know... good luck! and I think at that point of time, so this was what I meant with the first phase... the HR departments than start and said, okay, if we have new employees, we need to onboard them differently on a digital way. Because otherwise, we lose them. So that that was one observation from my side. And I know from, from one client in, I think it was done in summer, after summer holiday season, and so on. So, in autumn, before the next lockdown, end of October started, they wanted to bring back the people to the office. And then in this, let's call it a third phase. They had issues that the people that did not like to return, and also from the government were still the direction, if possible, to do home office. And they started to split the teams and to do shift. So, the one some team members were in the office, Monday, Wednesday, and the other Tuesday, Thursday and Friday was the general home office day so they started to manage that. And this was then again, challenging for the leaders because now they had a kind of sub teams because they had the team members on Tuesday. And then that was on. And most of the team leaders I, I was working at that point of time they were in the office because they

said, okay, they need to connect, and they need to be there. for them. Yeah, so that was the phase three then. And yeah, after that, it went everybody back to home office. And now as I said, yesterday, had the first face to face workshop now it's it the people are desperate to meet in person. And you hear that people, they lost the kind of the bonding to the organization's, so they lost the organizational commitment. Yeah, organizational commitment, basically. Because it's built on those trust relationship building, everything's that, you know, those skills that we discussed before, probably based on this face-to-face interrelation that we're going to have, that it doesn't mean that needs to happen every day. But it needs to happen right from time to time.

I: So and so in your opinion, remote leadership, as you've... you've experienced it, right, from a project lead perspective. It's possible, when everyone is distributed, everyone is digital, everyone is beautiful, when this is mixed, you might see some problems, right? might experience some issues. But my question is, so what lessons have you learned from leading a team remote?

E2: I need to adapt my communication style. So and I realized, you know, as I said, these small talks in between, for example, official meeting starting, and before you pick up a coffee and you meet someone, and you can just you use the time to check or to, to talk about a certain issue. And within the when... when you are remote, you need to organize everything, and you need to prepare yourself for everything. So... So this was one learning for me. And also to, to leverage the usage of the digital tools so and to to use them effectively, you know, because there's so many tools, and especially within this big organization I was working on, I'm still working, they have all these tools since many years. So... they are not new to them, but how they are using it is not always the best way of using it. And that was I did a lot of kind of training on the job, you know, learning by doing and forcing the team members to use certain tools for... for, for example, a team retrospective, with a with a kind of Whiteboard with... with sticky notes and so on. So I asked the team, please make a user and in use, I want to work with you on that because this organization was also not used to, to, to switch on the camera. So, whenever they need in when I'm not in the with my project team members in context, I know that they do not switch on the camera. And I told them if we have a meeting, I want to see you because how should we communicate when I don't? And talking to a black box

I: There is another... another piece missing is not only we are in two different locations, but I don't even see what are you doing or who you are?

E2: Yes. And that was also a learning from my side that you also as a leader or external project manager. You... You need to give them guidance and tell them "OKAY, that's the way I'm working. Please do it."

I: And so these are the lessons you learn and what recommend what are the top three recommendation you will give to leaders and also subordinates?

E2: trial and error, just do it... and... and don't be shy and if things not working. Yeah, try again. So don't... don't think that everything needs to be perfect. Because otherwise you will never learn and... and make new experiences. So that's one big recommendation. And I think another recommendation is also take time with your team members to reflect. So talk about the situation talk about their personal situations. How is it going so, so be very open and invite them to? Yeah, to digest things? Yeah, and maybe what would I also need to do better is I really as I said, I, my agenda was pam-pam-pam. So, I had a call beginning 830 in the morning till 3pm. And then I need to pick up my son because he's done with... with the with the kindergarten and I was just in one meeting with each click and in the next room, so there was no, I did not make any breaks. So, this was, are still one thing I need to learn the time management and to do a plan planning and or self-organize based on your personal needs,

so I think that's a recommendation you need to Well, at least I need to force myself also to do some breaks, too. Yeah.

I: work life balance to have to have a look at your work life balance. Not only yours, I guess also have your team and everyone Yeah. Good. So, this was my last question. I stopped recording.

### **Transcript interview n. 3; Leader n. 1.**

**Interviewer = I**

**Leader n. 1 = L1**

I: So, so from the level of digitalization of your organization, right, so before COVID, how would you evaluate that in terms of communication, knowledge sharing, and operation wise?

L1: So I think before COVID relies a lot on like, small talk happening in the office. Like, I know, some there was a project, and then you were talking with someone, and then someone was feeling I was like, hey, yeah, I heard that you're talking about this. I think that's, you know, that's something that was happening a lot in the site. So I think a lot of things you're not in the office you are missing it. But as everyone was there, and everyone was, was getting it. We also like we used to work with zoom, because have our companies in another location. So we would like to use a range of virtual meetings, but I was not nothing super new. So I think we were like in a... in a, in a good way. So it was not that hard for us.

I: And then from when, let's say remote happened, right, all of a sudden, what changed for you in terms of?

L1: Yeah, so I had, I had to, like put on rules. Like at the beginning, when we started with this.. for example, I implemented the daily standup, we will team was more like just talking about like, how was the day... how was the evening... to, to keep having like this small talk, because you, when you're in the office, you just go to the kitchen, and then you talk to grab a coffee just like... "Hey, I watched this series let's on Netflix, or something like this. And when you're at home, you just walk along the work. And that's one thing you miss a lot. And that doesn't help contribute to team bonding. So, when it started the first two, three months, we were having, like daily meetings... to talk about ehm... Yeah. So what's your day looking like, etcetera, etcetera, until we don't really use it... that now we have like, bi weekly meetings. So two, twice a week, not every day. But yeah, we started with this, then we had some rooms in slack. Like for example, if you're going for lunch, or break, just put the status in slack. So, everyone knows what are you up to, because you cannot see. I mean, if I'm on how you do something origin and then you see.

I: you know, there are a lot of discussion in the academy about the perceived control now as a as a manager. Right? So do you think that how that went? because knowing where they are and if they are available or not, I guess makes the difference?

L1: I think for me wasn't controlling the mind. I like some people were having lunch super early other super late, I didn't care. It was more like if someone needs something that you know that because if you're in the office, you can feel the person is there or not.

I: No, no, is that that's the if the perception of control, right, because as a manager, you know, if someone is in the office, what they're doing, whether they are fully on work, or they're on the coffee machine taking coffee, you can monitor this right, you have the visual and for what I understood basically, through these... initially this daily meetings, and then with these few

changes into the etiquette of slack, right. So you manage basically to understand more or less... and... and how did... when it comes to your team, right or to the organization in general?

L1: Yeah, I think it's a pretty young organization, right? Mostly, I will say Generation X and Generation Y. I like... I think my team is one of the youngest. We are like between 25 youngest and 36-year-old, so it's quite young. And we didn't have issues with this.

I: No, no, no, no, no, it's in... there is no issue actually in the in the age of the workforce. Right. I mean, it's not that the older they are, the more difficult these. It might be. But then it depends on individual. I had a very interesting interview with a baby boomer, that would say that this is not the case. So, but your team, right, how was it distributed before so for what then stood part of the team is in Prague back part of the things in Berlin? And but your team? Was it like people were able to work from home before or was like just from office?

L1: No, I think I mean, I was always like a big advocate for working from... from home... home office options and we didn't have the option before. So when it came to this point, I think like my team I have them that they really the big step on showing that they can work from home. We also implemented some stuff like for example with leaderboards to see like, okay, the people would arise that week and then you can track what they're doing and what are they working on? So yeah, I think I think for us, it was like, I have expected worse and it was pretty smooth.

I: And so the performance was the same basically remain the same, if not just went up.

L1: went really good. I mean, of course, there were like moments where people were demotivated because the situation is hard. So you need to take mental health into consideration. But in general, I think performance was good. So I'm very happy like how the team worked with us. And during the day... mental health..

I: Did you just mention is mostly related to the situation the... the, you know, this pandemic crisis, or working remote was also influencing this?

L1: Yeah, for some people. It was like, people that live alone. Like, I have one, one guy from our team, he lives alone. And he's the one that now that the office is open, he comes every day, because he put for him was hard, if you will, I mean, for example, for me, I live with my boyfriend and my cat. So, it is fine to be home but for some people, it was hard to be home alone. And then for others, it was more like the uncertainty of the future, you know, what's going to happen? So we were very lucky that our industry was not affected by the crisis that we will have could survive or anything like this, so that we could people can, but that takes away some... some... pressure. But still, I think we got other people that had like, a small depression. So I'll never depression per se, but you know, like, feeling down because you know, what's going to happen? But I tried all the time to be like about checking on them, how is going and trying to organize team events online.

I: Yeah. Just to be sure that, so this sort of communication, like a mix of formal communication scheduled and then informal communication. And did you use phone calls to or was just mainly digital?

L1: It was digital. Yeah. Like, I'm not a fan of phone calls. Either like that, when I see like, someone is calling me.. I am like, Oh, god, no. It was all digital, like, hey, do you have time for calls on slack. But we also, like set sometimes, like, for example we have, like once a week, when we call coffee break. And then everyone from the team, it's, it's voluntary, but it's like half an hour, we can just small topical thing like, today, for example, and we're talking about hairdressers, and how to cut our hair, and comb, etc. So it's like, just a small talk. And then we try to have like, once a month, something online that we all meet and talk about things. So

it's, yeah, it's trying to agree that spaces with everyone can fall, then you can meet with your team.

I: Yeah. Then what change in leading the team then, from before?

L1: So I think, for me, it was like, I had to make much of an effort. You know, because I know, like, when you're like, in a room full of people talking and talking with the team, you see their reactions, and people talk more in zoom calls. Like, when I had the whole team, sometimes I had to make the extra effort to be like, super happy, and bubbly, like, Yeah, wow. And you see their faces and they're like, sitting there sometimes. And people are not talking and so for me, has been like, an extra effort to keep the people motivated and to come up with ways of like, working better together. But I think it's been doing a really good, really good, I think, in general, because it allows me to like, okay, like try my leadership. So I've been always like, very caring for my team. So I always cared about them, but not as I'd have to care about them extra. So I need to check on with them very often, like Hey, how are you doing? How's it going? And etc..

I: And you did this like on overall the team or you feel that someone needed more someone needed less? I understand you said before that you had someone in the team that was living alone, so for this person was a bit tougher, right, this transition. So how did you adapt you know, the your team members' needs?

L1: So luckily, the office at the beginning it was closed but afterwards it was open so people could come to the office all the time they wanted so I think that when I try to be like in the office, not very often but I find to be missed to be with... with people from my team here. Talking with them and allowing always short exchange that I have like one on one with my team. So every week and then before starting I allow him like 5 or 10 minutes of small talk like how you believe but you do like always I think I did the same for everyone because every one was struggling in the different ways, but I was trying to... Yeah, like as important lives, how is it? How is this going to belong? And we are like kind of like a small family.

I: How big is your team? By the way?

L1: Now we are 10 people.

I: 10 people, good, good. And how... well... you basically are the head... right... of the department, then you have some team leaders in your team?

L1: I have one team lead, and then three people. And then the rest, directly report to me.

I: Now just also for the reason, you know, writing down things, okay. And so, when it comes to the adaptation to teleworking, right to these things, and... the extra work, so how do you feel about this? Is it? Is it okay, it's something that you feel comfortable with?

L1: Do mean extra-hours or?

I: no, no, I mean, you know, you mentioned and I believe that there is a lot of extra efforts that you have to put in everything you would do, and maybe because of the context and the looking person in the eyes, or you might feel it right, then it's missing.

L1: It is very exhausting, but I enjoyed it. Like, I, I always like to work with people. But I discovered during this, this, this pandemic, how much I like to lead the team like to work with a team... to be there... like to find ways of like, how can we work better as a team, so for me it is, like, it's been more work than it would have been... been in the office. But I have discovered besides that, I like all of management, like this more like I have an HR side.

I: So what lessons have you learned from this, you know, so from all these changes?

L1: So you... I think, you need to create a basis for team bonding. Like you really need to reinforce that people talk between them not only about work, because then it's like, it feels like you're a freelancer, you just go there and you do it annually. Like, I realize how important it is that people talk to each other about things I'm about related, I do learn that you get to know people's and hobbies or know like tastes like what... what things they like, but they don't like what they do it cetera, if that helps a lot on how to work together.

I: Anything else?

L1: Um, yeah, I know, I feel like if people feel ownership, it doesn't matter from where they are working.

I: How you make them feel the ownership?

L1: They need to figure out what it is like... they need is their own thing. So I think like, I try to delegate out of things. So my team and to be in both legs as possible. I mean, I'm involved but not like any more like a consultant than as like, telling them what to do. And if they feel like it's my it's my project. And I'm the one responsible for it. I think they feel the ownership.

I: So, okay, so what would you say these are the lessons you've learned? Right? This is what you and what you would you do differently from the very beginning?

L1: I implemented like, we know that the JIRA board in November like to work more like an agile approach. And I think I should have done that from the beginning. Because I believe in November, like it was clear that there was like out of like, okay, because they want and how long is this task? etc. So, I think I would have like the project management maybe since the beginning. Because you're going to talk with people so you need to be very clear what you have to do. So you have to write someone..

I: and you have implemented then even before COVID at this point?

L1: Yeah, I mean, yeah, I would have implemented it even before. Yes. And also like to have like more calls. I mean, I don't like to call people and more like, just... just send the message to content. It's just so much faster. Yeah. It faster than a Zoom call.

I: And did you have any fluctuation in your team over this year?

L1: People leaving you mean? Yes, we had one last year, this year two... So one last year one this year. Now, it's another one a third one. But it was like, people were not happy with the position. So, it was not. There was one who she said that she felt like, like a freelancer because she started in September. And then she could not meet the other people, but and then.. she felt belonging to the team, but they want people to call center later on her and fell out of the team. So, it was also on her. Yeah.

I: I mean, it's always you know, if you're not happy, we're not there, we don't have to stay. And there are many reasons why people leave. I always call it related or, yeah. Okie dookie, then. Sorry, I have a bunch of questions, just to be sure. So, let me see. So, just a second. So and, and how do you see how do you see tough there, right. Now, we said, no sorry... you said that you would have implemented this project management system with JIRA before the even before they even then they start. So, this is a good way you found to work, right and implementation that you would have done sooner or later anyways, is there anything else before we pass to something else?

L1: No. That would be good.

I: Okay. And so then, besides bringing this with you, right after the get pandemic ends? And so, from what you learned, right, what do you would you keep with you, when everything is normal again?

L1: I think.. everything as it is now I think I would keep it. I mean, I really... I would like to keep the home office, voluntary. So at least one day, a week, we should be all in the office. So we can see each other and exchange. But I will get the home office. And then maybe I will keep like a couple of events. Like one thing, I'll wait until we can meet all invited in the office person. So I think I would keep this for the other reason thing, I am going to give everything because it's helping the team work more structured. And I don't think we're going to go back to normal, as it was before to come to the office.

I: So somehow, somehow... COVID.. all and all, accelerated some processes, right in the organization?

L1: But I think it's like if something is going to happen, at some point, you don't need to be the office to your job... has shown this. And for me, it wasn't what I do. Now that my managers are saying this as well, that we were saying, we're going to go back to this normal.

I: So now the big question, let's see, if we let's break it big try to break it into two parts. So in your opinion, remote leadership, right, so remote, remote leadership is nothing but leadership, right, that you do, what changes is the context, right? Because of course, as you said, leaving remote... leaving distance is different. Because you don't know you cannot perceive... there are a lot of things that are missing. So how do you think according to your experience, from what you've seen how moving into this remote readership is correlated to the relationship you had with your team?

L1: I think like, so before it was remote, it wasn't it was very close relationship we had. because we were sitting in the office, we were seeing each other. So it's, it's easier, when it started remote it is like you have to make an effort to be close... to ensure there's team bonding.

I: But let's say if you have to look at the... trust, right... because you as a manager need to get the trust from your team members. So as you say, You already said that there is this extra effort, right, but from the other side. It took longer? or is it it's just just the extra effort? or also takes longer. It's a more complicated process, building this relationship. Think about the new... the new people you've had hired over the past year, and the people you hire before. If you have to compare them.

L1: Yeah... I think it's it takes longer to understand how they work and what they need. It also like to explain how to explain it. Two or three times more, because it's more complicated. So yes, everything takes longer reading. But not the trust factor, it's been always there. So I'm... I tend to trust people a lot... unless they show the opposite. So for me, it wasn't difficult to trust my team, it's more that to onboard someone on my end, at distance, it's a different thing.

I: building trust on the other side, right? You might want to trust them, but they have to trust you as a manager.

L1: so yes, exactly. you have to show that you know what you're doing that you're there, because if you're at home, it can feel a bit alone, like you're left out. So you need to make sure that you are going with them together. So yeah, that's something I think that I've both not been that good at this one. But I know for the future, so I something I should have done better. For example, the onboarding, because I'm so used by more people in the office, which is easier. It's... yeah..

I: no, I... I my from experience this year, had many onboardings and had different experience between you know, the... when we were able to meet in the office, even if it was for half, like half a day and or we could... and... follow up question to the last thing. So then how do you see then the difference in their behavior when it comes to this?

L1: Yeah, I think if they're in the office, they feel more confident. They are at home, they're more like, oh, who should I ask? You know, it's because it's very tangible, like, other people, you see their names in Slack, or you never saw their faces... So, you don't know who they are and how they are like... and its okay, yes, like this.. oh can I ask this? I think you can feel very insecure when you're starting a company online. So I think like the confident it's a topic you need to work on. Well, that's a manager like to give them confidence.

I: And if there are like, three top recommendations that you would do to other leaders that are leading in remote environments?

L1: So I would say like, like, ensure like spaces for team bonding and small talk, that's for sure. What else... like set priorities very clear. Like, like organize the week on Monday with... set the priority, so they know what to do even if they are not there, so that it's very clear for them. And what else? Yeah, and make sure that... that often the conversations are happening in slack or someplace where everyone can read it. And then if not, just if something is taking too long, just jump on a call. Don't be typing for one hour when it could be solved in a call.

I: Well. Thank you. That was it.

#### **Transcript interview n. 4; Subordinate n. 1.**

**Interviewer = I**

**Subordinate n. 1 = S1**

I: What is the relation between the... moving into a remote leadership? So, and basically.... how basically delete the follower relationship. So the relationship between the manager and the employee in the employee... the team member was affected by it. And if this affected the behavior at work.. so, and it could be positively affected, or to be negatively affected, and there are like. So... my idea is... that out of this, what I want to get is just the list of recommendations for leaders and team members to understand how to behave and adapt in a remote environment. So, what is the best way for me as a leader to act? Do I have to trust my team members? Or do I have to micromanage them in a remote environment? What is the basic way? Things like this? So, I have some questions, but it's going to be a semi structured interview. So nothing set in stone. So let's see where this goes. And the first question is break the ice will be. You've been in the company before COVID, right?

S1: I've been there for five years. Yeah.

I: So you've seen a lot of developments in terms of sort... of digitalization... of communication and operations and whatsoever. So, before COVID, how digitized was the company?

S1: Good question... before COVID. A lot of things changed. In terms of digitization... we I wouldn't say I wouldn't say we are now much more equipped with new tools in terms of digitization. But what I can tell you is we rely much more on digital communication from one point or digital coordination. In my opinion, that's the biggest thing that was... that changed. And starting off.. from the most basic thing where we don't meet in person, so everything is on zoom. Started relying much more on. Yeah, so I, the way I would summarize it is it became



much more kind of like, almost like a digitization on steroids. We started relying much more on shared documents, whether it's Google Docs, whether it's our internal system for opening tickets called JIRA, for example. So in terms of coordination terms, in terms of setting up meetings, the best way I would describe it, just from the top of my mind is it literally became on steroids. But nothing. Like Of course, zoom was a newly introduced tool that we all had to rely on, slack became much more part of our daily lives, daily lives. And... yeah, it was a hard learning curve, I would say, especially in terms of, so the good thing and the bad thing, everything has a good thing and a bad thing. But... but the I start with the with the bad things, or with the negative. So when you're working alone at home, and you're relying on Slack, for example, you get so much interruptions, zoom calls, as you know, they're exhausting. So if you have several meetings during the day, they're totally exhausting. But on the other hand, the positive thing is with us relying on such tools, it became much quicker to open conversations between people like hey, I'm going to call you we started meeting. Something has changed in terms of digitization, I would say we became a bit more consolidated. So I'll give you an example. Let's say before I would use Google Sheets, someone else would use something else. So the tools that we are using became a bit more consolidated. And we have a much more organized way of using those. So when do we need to use that tool versus the other tool? How do we use it? How do we collaborate? So collaboration became a bit smoother.

I: Yeah. So if I have to reassume this, so let's say tools were there, multiple of them. People were using it in different ways. And what happened was this hard learning have been trying to somehow make it work the same way for everyone sort of standardize or having some etiquette on the way you would Use this against that. In order to make the life of everyone easier and smoother.

S1: you summarize it in a very good way. Exactly. So the tools, were there most of them, we just learned how to use them in an efficient way, consolidated way. Absolutely. good summary.

I: Perfect. Thank you. And yeah, we talked about communication, cooperation, knowledge sharing, I guess all these tools somehow are about that project managing. And so, before COVID, what was your preferred mean of communication?

S1: My personal preferred me... means I will go to the person directly up face to face. Of course, unless they're in a meeting or they look busy, that personally, definitely my best way of communication is go to the person. Hey, do you have a second? Let's solve this?

I: And today?

S1: It still is, but I don't do it.

I: How you... Well, there is another way you're doing it, right?

S1: yeah, so right now, I, so I digitized it, as you mentioned, so it's on slack. That's the only way. But we kind of also learned because initially, everyone was just stalking everyone else at random times, like I'm busy. And then we had 10 messages, we kind of adapted a new way. Like, for example, if you put next to your name, you're focusing or like an icon of focus or something that means like, Don't interrupt me, or if you have the Do Not Disturb mode on. But yeah, that became the the only way where I could reach out to the person like, hey, do you have a second? Shall I talk about what? Like I didn't like about it, for example? Yeah, definitely. or? Yeah. The one thing that like the disadvantage of this is it definitely takes more time and effort. So there is more overhead, like, first, I have to send you a message on slack. And then you're like, maybe like, let's say two or three minutes later, you reply. Do you have a second? Yes. My personal personal preference is just quick call video call. Because if I chat, especially if it's something that needs to be discussed. My preference is just make a quick call. But there

is an overhead like I have to message you then I have to send you the zoom link or whatever, you are free to talk and then are you free? No. Let's do a meeting. Okay. Open my office. It came with an overhead.

I: Yeah, definitely something that might take a second through. And okay, so when it comes to the team and the organization, the people you work with, right, what is the the age model or less?

S1: Our team in specific? I think it ranges between 24 to two my age 37. So 24 to 36. Actually, that age group, basically. Yeah, if I can roughly say. Yeah, I guess the organization is not that older, right. I mean, probably... who is the oldest? the X? That is something I know ... actually, there is one person who is older. Yeah, so let's say 24 to 39, something like that. Very opposite. Yeah. And then the organization itself might be probably 24 when the oldest person in our company is, I'm not sure, but I'm just guessing is the X of exactly like the eye of the white hair does, because it's exactly right. I think I think it would be X the older, I would assume so yeah.

I: So okay. Um, now this is just related to the generations because I'm trying to also, because right now in the workforce, in general, there are at least four generations, right with the baby boomers that are trying to get to retirement, and between Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Zed. So, you know, Gen Zed that the one from 1997 coming in, so are the interns, probably no, this guy's.. so good. And before the Pandemic? how was the team distributed, you were all in the office, you were working from home.

S1: Before the pandemic, it comes from two folds. We don't even know what home office means. And in terms of HR in terms of the company regulations, we were allowed If I remember correctly, one home office per month, that was before the pandemic, if I'm not mistaken. So we had a flexibility. Of course, it was a very limited flexibility. But back then we didn't even imagine like, why would I do home office? So before the regulation, I think you are allowed to one home office per month? If I'm not mistaken. Yeah. And of course, besides that, we don't think very few people used it. And everyone. Literally, everyone was just coming to the office. Maybe if someone had an exception, yeah, they would take that home office per day. But the general...

I: you have to do something like the handy man was supposed to come to your place?

S1: And now?

I: now is the exact opposite. Now, when someone goes to the office, like, Oh, it's weird. I can tell you, I can tell you two sides of the two sides of the story from one side, of course, due to the pandemic, Corona, social distancing, everyone was doing home office, we were forced, not by the company... by the situation. So we had to, that's from one side from the other side. I can tell you two stories where some people hated their home office. And now, although maybe it's not the safest time to go to the office, but some people are just going maybe not everyday but trying to go a lot. Whereas other people found their place in their home office, whether it's through concentration, being able to focus on work more, whether it's not having to commute. So yeah, now I can see a slight split between people who, people who go to the office, because they found that they love this. Whether it's the interaction, or they really hated the home office, or whatever, and others who are found home office will be more comfortable.

I: And what's your story?

S1: My story, started with hating home office and then ended up with loving home office, when I was hating it first I like yeah, being alone, not separating a work from home. And that's number two. Number three is not communicating with people, just everything is digital. Number four, lack of movement. But I switched that all around. Because I can tell you the first benefit that I've discovered, I was focusing much more in home office like absolutely much more on

different tasks. And in terms of Yeah, I saw the benefits. So in terms of focusing number one in terms of number two, commuting, I reduce, I have one extra hour per day, more or less, just from avoiding commuting. And that's in Berlin. So maybe some, I mean, I'm in the almost in the I mean, I'm close to the office. So for other people to be further away. And in terms of other things like movement or stuff, I just incorporated the workouts, walking routines... in terms of communication, and just communicating with everyone on slack. So I made that work. I made everything work. And for me now it's we're home office is definitely working. But the only thing that I definitely miss is the interaction with the colleagues. The live interaction, and the meetings, especially if you're meeting for something important. And my way forward is to do a combination. So a hybrid model where maybe I'll do two days office and the rest home office or whatever formula I find it best for me.

I: Sounds fair enough. Yeah. And what... what made you realize... you had to change your approach to what you were doing right? Because you hated it. Right? And then you had more than adapted you. You made it work and you made you know, lemonade out of lemons.

S1: Yeah, absolutely. And I tell you, to be honest with you, it's the forced situation of being in the home office. Like I was like, Okay, I'm in home office, why do I hate it? why don't.. why do I not like it? So it took a bit of kind of homework or an exercise to do like why do I hate it? And then I said, Okay, what are the positive things I'm... I'm increasing my time by one hour per day, there's no commute. I'm focusing much more How can I tackle the other things that I don't like? because initially I didn't have the option to go to the office.

I: but motivation wise, right motivation wise... because then be... so, what motivated. You saw how you know this change. And at the beginning also, I guess was difficult to work and difficult to get things done and to adapt and frustration might have risen. Not just because of work, but also the situation not being able to go out anymore. You know everyone closed in between walls... so motivation wise, did... did the motivation come from within? The team was motivating each other? Did your manager helped you with this? So with this transition, right, so how do you see this?

S1: Okay, in terms of motivation, what motivates me to do my best to work? You mean? Or?

I: You know, the motivation? there are some factors right in life that do motivate you right at work. Some factors, why your work is definitely one of the factor.

S1: Yeah, just to answer you from my side, what motivated me is definitely something that I love what I do. So I'm an online marketing manager, I love what I do, I love my work. That's from personal side. So I'm always driven to, you know, do my best, or, literally, that's one of the one of my biggest motivators. I, of course, we're not robots at the end, we're all affected. But for me, I'm one of those people who, when I work, and I improve, I'm feeling productive. When I'm feeling productive, and I'm working on something that I love. That is an automatic, automatic motivator, that's from a personal side, from a more company or team side. We did, we used to do some activities, let's say either once a week or twice a week. So we incorporated the coffee breaks, and also just to interact with other people. And that's not from a motivation perspective, but just... just from socializing, keeping sane, keeping in touch with your colleagues. So that also kind of kept us in check with each other. But yeah, if you're talking about personal motivation, it's just the liking what you're achieving at work. And going back to the home office situation, I felt, I found that I was focusing much more on home office. So imagine you're focusing much more on something that you love to do. That's what motivated me.

I: Good, good. So basically, it was just really a small initial period of, let's say, consciously confusion, because the chaos was for every word. And then soon adapting. And also the performance then, I guess, wind up, right, your personal performance.

S1: 100%. And it's exactly like you said, at the end, we're not robot robots. We all were affected, at least initially. And different degrees. So yeah, it was just about adjusting and finding your... your spot.

I: Yeah, good. Good. And so how would you describe your manager before the pandemic? And now, let's say...

S1: describe her in terms of what specifically?

I: You know, here is your like, her style, she is communicative.. if she trusts you. She cooperates with what you do from a decision-making perspective, you know, she's more there for you. lets you take your own decisions, or here's the decision do the job.

S1: Yeah, in general. So the market... my manager, our marketing manager, is a person who puts a lot of trust in her employees. There's a lot of she relies a lot on self-management. What that means is she interests them for years to do their work, there is no micromanagement at all. That's from one side. So that's, that's, that's great. And from the other side, we didn't at least Personally, I didn't feel at all, like all whereas my manager, she disappeared because of America. On the contrary, she did a lot of effort to keep the team together. And I can tell you that for example, the marketing... marketing team, I believe is one of the best teams that were, you know, doing activities among themselves, whether it's, you know, quiz nights, or, Hey, good morning, let's have a coffee break on zoom. So I didn't Of course, the only thing that changes seeing her less, but from the other side, the... the trust and the self-management. As she put into her employees and, and the transparency between us the communication, it felt very smooth and very, yeah, it helped us do our job much better focus much better and supported, of course.

I: So do you think that she changed even better? I mean, change doesn't have to be negative. Developed like, now, is she a better leader now... than she was before?

S1: I would say yes, because she was forced to do all this orchestra via digital. So obviously, she became better at doing it because it's much harder to do it on digital. So, of course, if you're facing a challenge, and there's a more difficult task to do, and you have to do it, and she did it in a great way, I would say definitely, there was an improvement in that area

I: Just because before you said something like, she didn't make you feel that she wasn't there or, you know, actually, is extra work. So it's also, you know, the changed for her in terms of, she had to, you know, be a better leader for you to avoid this. Or to fill the gap, let's say...

S1: I wouldn't say a better leader, you don't have to be a better leader, you just have to be more understanding, you have to put extra effort. So it's not like someone leader before the pandemic was... was worse because yeah, yeah. I would say just the she definitely developed much better skills at being supportive of being. Yeah...

I: but then at the end is like, when you think about development in general. That's the point right is getting better? Not because you were bad? Not because you were bad before, simply because it's just the sort of the continuous improvement.

S1: Yes. That sounds 100%. Of course, there was a lot of development. Absolutely. Yes.

I: Good. And so we have been talking about all these efforts about this interaction. So how would you describe your interaction with your manager? Like, yeah, where do they happen? How often they happen?

S1: Yeah, so my manager and I have a very, I would say, it's a bit of a unique relationship. Because we both are, even before the pandemic, we were always aligned 100% on everything. I know what she expects. She know what, what I expect from her. She knows, I know what to expect from her. There's a lot of independence and the employee manager relationship. That was early on. There's a lot of trust, there's a lot of because I'm a person who's very driven, very motivated. So there wasn't much follow ups or need for a Hey, where's that? Where, where's that? So that relationship was already very smooth before the pandemic. And even after the pandemic. Nothing was affected at all on the country. But of course, we did still need to have a weekly catch up just to catch up on, you know, the status of work and sort of things. But yeah, I would say the, because... because we both developed this work relationship where Yeah, it's complete independence. She has fully trusted me. And I know when I need to escalate things to her or whatnot, or what does she expected when all that that worked out? Very good between us. That's great.

I: So in terms of, let's say, timeframe, right, so you have weekly bi weekly meeting?

S1: Yes. So we have on a personal level, we have one meeting per week, one on one? That's... that's 13 minutes. Usually. That's just on my level. And was that also before the pandemic like this? Yes. Yeah. So that didn't change. And like, I guess, then you have team meetings, right? Yeah. So I think Yeah, with team meetings. Maybe my memory fails me, but I think we now have a bit more catch up meetings than before as a team. But there are two sides, two sides for this first, because our marketing team grew a lot. Now we're 10 people important. So there is a need to do more meetings. And second of all, as... as you mentioned, because of the pandemic, we weren't meeting each other as often. So there's a need for... for by the way, I saw I just have to tell you, I have another meeting at 330. So if we don't

I: have the last question, I have the last question. Okay. Okay, it's fine. I wanted to do a follow up question to this. And then I have the last question.

S1: That's absolutely.

I: But if you were saying, if we you have another meeting, eventually, if we don't finish, maybe we can do another five minutes another time.

S1: Exactly. Yeah, absolutely.

I: So Good, good. And this is about form of communication, right. And now you told me you are the person who goes and call, whenever you know, there is a need, right? Grab the phone and call. So um, formal communication, right, that calling is now the only let's say, type of informal communication you can have. How often does this happen for you? The to call and how often it happens that maybe your manager calls you as a call or as a slack message.

S1: Okay. So between me and my manager alone, ah, to be honest, besides our one on one, it's extremely rare that we have to call to talk about something. It happens, I would say, just to put that frequency to it, maybe once a week, even less, maybe once every couple of weeks where like, hey, I need to call my manager to talk about something. We're pretty good. So in terms of me and my manager, it's, it's again, because we have this. Yeah, like, everything is like everything is caught up in our one on one meeting. Everything Is Working together. More than two years, I think. I think something like two and a half years probably. Good, good.

I: No, yeah, I must tell you, I will share with you the outcome. But the idea is that we only have two minutes. Okay, so let's do the last question next time, because it's the biggest can we do this? If you have to kick

S1: so I tell you when we can do it from when we can set the meeting? Yes, please. How about Tuesday? 4pm? Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Cool. Yeah. And then yeah, of course, we'd have more time to talk about if you have any questions.

I: Yeah, that would be great. Thank you very much. So Tuesday, the eighth. I just moved this one to choose the DA is at 4pm. Right. Yes. Perfect. Then thank you very much for your time today. I was Taiwan. Have a nice meeting. Enjoy your weekend. Thanks very much. Bye bye bye.

## **SECOND PART OF INTERVIEW N4 COMPANY 1 SUBORDINATE 1**

S1: So you wanted to continue where we left off last time?

I: Yeah, that would be great. Thank you. Yes, absolutely. So I have just a few questions. And so I think we discussed how easy was for you to adapt to the working right. You said about the initial problems you had, and then the adaptation, about the motivation, but the work you love and all these things, right. Yeah. And now, just to give you a bit more of a so what would be the top three recommendations you would give to managers to lead remote?

S1: Right, good question. got three recommendations? Definitely. Okay. Number one, not in terms of priority, okay. But number one, have trust in your heart trust in your team. So no need for micromanagement or for you know, consistent calls consistent follow ups, just have trust in that. The second point, at the same time, do... do an, a bit of an extra effort for Team A online team events, you know, just for a communication between the team. And number three, do you mean during crew during remote... remote working like locked? corona times are

I: not totally recovered all the time. So if you think about it, right, as you said, even over our previous interview, at the beginning, you didn't really believe in remote work right? Now, you see the positive aspects of it that doesn't want work back in the office, but you will work remote, right? That only that your manager will need to lead you remotely anyways. So yeah, it's it's more like even a hybrid environment. Right? Yeah.

S1: Like I told you, the first point is have trust. Second point, continue with events or, like, do x a tiny bit of extra work to keep the team together? Three is? I would say, I don't know, this is a specific point. But try to avoid over meetings and over updates. Because, like, be structured, be more structured in your in the work of the team. Use, like, the I like not, for example, you know, too many meetings or, you know, use this use a uniform way to share things, whether it's Google Sheets, or Yes, yeah, so having a definitely a good structure for work is needed for remote working.

I: Good, good. And if you would give three recommendations to employees, team members.

S1: For team members, if you have any problems, issues directly speak, communicate about them, to your alignment to your manager. Because, you know, with the remote working, it's hard to tell if someone's having whether it's a work-related issue or a personal issue, whatever it is, so keep that channel in mind. Number two, I definitely tried to set boundaries between home and home office. So, watch out for that, you know, like just Yeah, not to get too carried away between not separating your home and your home office. Number three set rules for other people. Like maybe you in the morning, you need two hours of complete focus switch off Slack, for example. So kind of set to set rules manage your own time. Yeah, yeah. To avoid interruptions to avoid.

I: Thank you. Sorry, thank you. Great, of course, and then the last question, and then I'll let you go. So, in your opinion, how did moving into this remote leadership environment is interrelated with the manager team member relationship? And ultimately, how this influenced

the team member behavior at work? Sorry, can you repeat the question? Okay, let's let's break it into parts right. So, the first part will be in your opinion, right moving into this remote leadership environment. How is what is the interrelationship between moving into this remote leadership environment And the leader follower relationship. So the relationship you had with your manager?

S1: So how did it change? You mean or how did it evolve? Yeah. To be honest, the only thing I can think of is definitely more trust from both sides from both sides. I think that's the main thing that kind of changed. I felt more trust. And yeah, in my work in my or even speaking with other people, I think that's true. I would say definitely trust us your main thing that changed, of course.

I: So let's say you're moving into a remote leadership environment, increase the level of trust that your manager had you at least you felt there was more trust them for even more trust than before?

S1: Yes. At least from a personal experience. I don't know if others could have faith at face. Less trust, for example. But what I face is Yeah, definitely more trust. Yeah.

I: So you felt even a better relationship with your man?

S1: Yeah. 100%, much more. Much, much better.

I: This definitely influenced your behavior at work?

S1: Exactly. It kind of had a positive impact for me to do my tasks more clearly and more focused.

I: Okay. That's it. Thank you very much. So, as I said, of course, I thought, you know, because, you know, the second part of the question was about how this influence your behaviour. Right? Right. Yeah. So, you already said it, right. It was back to the positive impact on you know, how I felt and how I operated them. Then we discuss also how your performance went through this time. So, you know, I have the basis. Thank you very much. I have everything I need.

S1: of course, anytime and if you need anything, just let me know.

I: That will be great. Thank you very much.

S1: Good luck. Thank you. Enjoy your day.

## **Transcript interview n. 5; Leader n. 2.**

**Interviewer = I**

**Leader n. 2 = L2**

I: Yeah, I can hear you, I can hear you. So, let me give you... first of all, thank you very much for doing this.

L2: You are welcome! what is your thesis actually about?

I: Let me explain you this. So what I'm researching is how moving into a remote leadership environment interrelates - let's say what relation there is between moving into a remote

leadership environment and the leader follower relationship. Can you hear me? Shall we stop this... the video? Just because?

L2: Yeah. Yes, yes. I think it will be better without video. Okay.

I: Perfect. Okay. So and how basically this What relation there is with the moving into this remote environment and the leader follower relationship, and ultimately how this impact the subordinate behavior, so it's not even the subordinate behavior, but the behavior of the leader or the team member in general.

L2: Okay.

I: And the idea is that I want to create a series of best practices and a list of recommendation for companies working in remote environments... on what to do and how to do it.

L2: Like, yeah, this is very interesting topic.

I: Now, is it clear? Do you who have any question before we start?

L2: I think it's more or less clear and if something is not clear I will ask you.

I: Okay, that's fine. So from a digitalization perspective, right. How much do you think, your company is digitized from a communication knowledge sharing, process perspective?

L2: Aha, so you want to understand the level of digitalization we have now, with the level of the digitalization before Corona, right.

I: Yes, did everything changed? If not, we can just classify it from low to high. So low, medium, high level, let's say.

L2: Okay. I mean, from my perspective, it's low to medium because from my perspective, what's changed it is only... or you just know the... you just want to hear the value. So, for me if...

I: No, no, let me know what do you think changed? Of course, that's fine.

L2: So, okay. So, I think we just we just added the ... to talk to each other or meeting,

I: Sorry, I lost you... I lost you for a few seconds... before... when you started... exactly when you started.

L2: Ahh, ok then I will repeat this again. So I think you just replaced the communication, as we had... as we had in the... in the in the company. By the... Kind of online, online communication, so using video calls and video conferences and so on. And I think it's this is bid only on... big huge change really.. after the lockdown...

I: Yeah. And what is your preferred medium of communication, it is digital communication or the... what was before the lockdown?

L2: So, what do I prefer more? Okay. So, I think... uhm... good question, I think... I would say I prefer more the personal communication or impersonal communication, because of two things. So the one thing which I really appreciate, or really liking the, the offline communication that I want to talk to somebody, I can just stand up, and I see if this somebody is kind of busy talking with somebody else, or even kind of working on something really deep listening music evoking deep voices just went up against you new coffee, or to smoke a cigarette, and then



kind of in between, or the of this, of this, of this how do call it? the state or the being progressive, and productive. the flow.. yeah.. out of the flow. So this is this is what I'm actually really, really missing in the online communication.

I: But this is more like, controlling, right? I mean, not controlling in terms that you have to control people. But it's a sense of knowing what people are doing. Right?

L2: No, I mean, it's more the sense of when I should... or when I... when it's a good time, kind of to go to the person and talk to the them... and if it is a good time to talk to them..

I: Fair enough. So, you didn't know what they're up to? You didn't know if they are... if it's a good time to talk to them. Okay.

L2: Yeah. Exactly.

I: And, and what is your favorite medium of communication?  
medium of communication is slack and Google meet. So, I thought, Google meat and zoom is actually also not bad.

L2: So, video communication, replacing face to face and select as a communication. Yeah. For communication.

I: Yeah, yeah. Cool. Cool. What is the average age of the people in the company?

L2: So, from a feeling. I think shortly 30 to 35. hmmm. I think 30 at the moment, yeah, yeah.

I: There are, you know, there are like... fourth generation No, right now at work, from baby boomers to generations Z.

L2: At X, we have all of them. Yeah.

I: So how was the company distributed? Before the pandemic, your team, for example, was everyone was working at the same place or the people were working in different locations?

L2: So before lockdown, everybody was working from the office. Yeah. Yeah, I guess I guess. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, we had some outsourcing I guess in Vienna, but I think everybody from the core team was working from, from the office,

I: and how things have changed now?

L2: Now, everybody's working from home or at least in the team. In my team, everybody's working from home in the company is kind of not that extremely. And yeah. Everybody's kind of working from home and only rare... rarely.. or from time to time.

I: And how do you see this going on with your organization?

L2: It is a good question. So, you know what, let me log in or use another browser rushing Google Chrome works a little bit better. So, I will come back in one second.

I: Okay, I'll wait for you.

L2: So, one, two three? Let me see. Okay. So, first, what are the question?

I: So we said the how the workforce was distributed before the pandemic, right. And then we said that before the pandemic, most of the team was working... was working from the same

location from the office, and then we're locked down and then everyone moved to remote. Now my question was, how do you see this moving forward?

L2: Mm hmm. So I think, I think the people they just get used of working from home. And I think they... hmm... or at least my... my team members, they actually like they, they, I think... they really like to work from home. I think they really like and have to just to be focused on the stuff they're doing. They like not to be disturbed by the noise. The versus for example, by other calls by people running around. They want to be disturbed by by. Yeah, exactly. So just the office life.

I: Do you think that? Sorry? Continue, please.

L2: So I think if it if you would have, I would, I would say the better. Or I would say the office where we have more kind of dedicated or small places to work or small offices, instead of hearing the organizers. I think the people who would rather go back and considering the existing work in office environment, I think it's more comfortable for them to just work from home. But what changed? working from home? So, you know, you were all working in the same location, right? Then all of a sudden, everyone start working from... from home. So what changed for you? First, I think I think I know what changed. So before, before the Watertown rehab, he shared this. Yeah, I didn't know this, this part of the culture or this, this standard is just to be normality that everybody every day goes to the... his work there and then can be useful. So it was kind of a standard. And some people, few people started to work from home. Earlier, I mean, nothing, nothing the sensors, but generally speaking, but I think the most... of the people, they just get the use of the working from the office. And then after the lockdown, we were forced to go home to be at home, to continue to work from home. So, we figured out how we can handle ourselves how we can structure or how we can structure our life, essentially in such a way that we can work productive. I think the recent the recent year, we just learned how to work from home. I know I wouldn't say how to work from home. But yeah, how to work from home how to keep it I think we started to feel though, they understood that it's not that bad that he can actually work productive,

I: but actually from home, so do you think there was a there was a period of adjustment right over this year? But now, do you feel that the team or everyone reached the same productivity level of before? Or do you feel that there is still space for improvement?

L2: Yeah, to be honest, for me, at the moment, it's really difficult to compare, because actually, the team changed. I cannot say that the kind of have the same level of production productivity or better or worse. But if I take Employee C into consideration, and I would think about his productivity levels, and now.. and also considering the evolution of soft Employee C as a professional writer this year... I think he or at least he did not lose any productivity. So I would say so he either increased his productivity or the productivity is at the same level.

I: But what... So, you said... "we had to figure out... basically on our own, how to be productive, and how to work remote... And... so, do you feel that the organization also from a cultural perspective, didn't help with this transition into a remote environment?

L2: I think it's kind of, I think, that people just realise how to work.. how they.. on their own... they all they can work from home... and not about how. So, I don't think the company helped a lot. So it was and still is, rather, people self... organised themselves.

I: And did the motivation of the team changed... So you said the team changed.. so, motivation wise, do you think that Corona pushed the motivation to go down? Or kept it together more? How do you see from a motivation perspective?

L2: Ok... So, I think... I think the motivation is at least the same. So, yeah, I think it is at least the same.

I: Okay. So didn't change from a motivation perspective. And the performance, we said that... did the performance... you think that the performance when the pandemic started when the beat down and then went up again or?

L2: yeah... definitely. So I think... the first... first... I don't know... So first, let's say four to six months, I think the productivity went down... Yeah, actually... definitely went down. And then went up again, after... after this... after the new year, for example. So I hear so somewhere after the new year...

I: but do you think it was because there was not enough communication? Not enough directions and... what was the problem?

L2: Yeah, I think it was, the people... figured out how they, how they communicate, how do... they structure they work, how they... kind of replace... all the... kind of everyday... everyday office routine... with the everyday online... with the everyday online routine. So, I think it does... it took, I don't know, six, six to eight miles. And then now is everything... kind of more or less established.

I: And would you... How would you describe yourself as a manager? As a leader?

L2: Hmm... How would I describe? I would say, I rather try to lead, and not to manage, take care of my colleagues and team. I do my best to support them. And I also learn how I can do better how can I support them? On the best way?

I: Yeah, yeah. And from a communication perspective, do you prefer to be transparent and say everything? Or do you leave some stuff for yourself?

L2: Ok.. so... I think I mean, from the communication perspective, I think I leave some stuff. But not because I don't want to transfer it further. But because this is my kind of personal thing, that we may share some... some information, but I don't think it's ever useful or interesting. I don't pass this information. So I just don't know what information is interesting. So what should I pass? So I just don't pass information? I don't find myself interesting or useful. So I think I keep some information on myself. Yeah. And this is also thing to learn what to pass and what to keep.

I: And how would you describe your relationship with your colleagues? before? And after? COVID? Do you think you're able now to build a strong relation? As you were before? or?

L2: Yeah, I mean, the thing is, is a little bit different, because during the pandemic, pandemic, I change the... my position, my role. Difficult to say...

I: I mean, you have to actually, you know, what is the beauty of it, that you have two points of views, right? You can think now you can answer it twice, basically. And one would be as a how you felt as a team member, right? As he says, you know, no one now as a leader, because now you have to build a different type of relation is a similar type of relationship. But he says still different. Right? And, yeah, so please..

L2: Yeah, I think... I think I know what you mean. So I think, I think... that to build the relations, relationships, it's much easier to do it in person, I think so to build or, for example, in detail to start the start to build a team. This is... it's... it's much easier and much, I would say straightforward. To build the team. offline. We just stick together with each other you talk. Yeah, exactly. You talk. For example, when you talk, it's easier to get the feedback when you

just sit in the same room rather than you have to kind of raise your hand or the video conference. And then you have to wait and so on. So I think I think the, to build the relationships offline. It's, it's much easier and much, much, much. So the offline relationship is much richer, I would say rather than the online functional or formal communication, but now that you're moving into a more remote leadership environment, right, where you will need to build this relationship with online basically, virtually. Although it's difficult, how do you think what do you think you need to do... to do... to make it happen?

Okay, so I think I think I think the beauty of the online relations, I think it's important to keep in mind the not only concentrate on the, on the work, work stuff when you when you talk to people, but so just to not forget that the people, they are still people and not just your colleagues. This is, I was like, probably for me a little bit. From time to time, I just forget that the people sitting right there. It's not just the image from my computer, but it's actually the person behind the computer.

I: But then, you know, you mentioned a lot right before those aspects of being in the office. Right, they're missing. And somehow, we have to replace them. Right. And so, as you said, so just to get through. Moreover, conclusion on this point, in terms of, so do you think that what needs to be done if you have to say some actions, right, so because now it's about creating this communication that is missing? Right?

L2: Yes. So we need to create moments that are, besides the working moments, where we can discuss things that are not work related. Yes, exactly. So I agree.

I: So how would you do that? So for example, would you add more meetings that are just with the purpose of having a coffee together? And talk about things? Or would you do more like company type of events, where everyone can discuss with everyone? And we're talking about virtual thing about virtual things?

L2: Okay. I think, I think, yeah, so I would not say we have two new meetings. I think one thing which could help is just to create for when... when we meet people, it then just start, these are maybe entries can have some personal fixes. Just talk about something unrelated, unrelated to the topic. Let's talk about sort of how you how you feeling at home, so I think he's going and so on. So again, the small, small dog, small dog, small dog, and this is the one sheep. Second thing is, from time to time, the meetings, they are going to info. I would say, not baby for that time, they kind of died not following the direction. So for example, the talking about why I think sometimes we just move into another thought. Sometimes, I mean, all very awkward meeting, it's fine. to kind of say, okay, Hey, guys, let's keep the agenda, let's follow the agenda. But I think, in the remote team, in the remote company, it's fine to have kind of maybe open ended meetings, or especially very first few meetings, this is nice to have an open ended meeting where you just don't have limited time to talk, we just not we don't force ourselves to finish the meeting at specific time, but rather, they kind of also let us flow and with each other, even sometimes a little bit longer than it should it's necessarily it's necessary to kind of talk about topic, but just to just to fulfil this, this this this requirement of us the human beings to basically to talk to somebody else.

I: So we already talked about what changed in leading a team remote, right? We talked about the communication, the understanding what people are doing so when and where you can talk to them and... And the productivity was, so for you... How was.. how easy was to adapt to remote work?

L2: Okay, so for me, it was a pretty hard... so it was pretty hard. Actually... why? Because it was pretty hard for me to switch the context, switch the mindset from being the home and play this my role I play at home to be at home and play my role, my role kind of being at work, kind of from being there and happened to be colic, and whatever. So it was, it was a little bit hard. I tried to use some tricks they use the different rooms they use different How to say the things

you put on the cloud for other clients. So the stuff, do you really actually care? I don't care. Yeah, but I mean, it still is to be a little bit difficult.

I: And how long it took you to do you feel that you now are able to work remote?

L2: I feel that at the moment I'm able to work. Yeah, I think it took about 10 months maybe.

I: And what changed?

L2: What changed? I yeah, I also I just learned how to, I just learned how to... how to kind of put myself in different roles being in the same parliament. just learned how to kind of switch my brain from one man, one mod from one feeling to another,

I: reprogram yourself, basically, yourself and start again is Simoni the father or semen, the colleague or team manager, whatever. Yeah. Yes. Cool. And are there any other lessons that you've learned?

L2: lessons learned? Let me think... I mean, I learned how to... how to use the video conferences, I learned how to how to keep the.. how to use video conferences about myself, or the lessons learned. It's hard to say...

I: it's fine, let's okay. And what would be what would be the three top recommendation that you will give to a leader like you. That is working in a remote environment.

L2: Okay, so I think the first communication... the first thing is... is to talk and pass information in the really precise way. So that people the other side of the screen, they think about how you communicate and make sure that the people on the other side of the screen understand what you're talking about. And not just sitting and being frustrated. This is the one thing second thing. Second thing would be to keep so what today What to say? Yeah, I think it was talking about to keep the Not only the work related communication, but also focus on small, small, small talks.. kind of building, creating relationship like this. And the third one would be, yeah, actually to, to focus on having team meetings. So it has to involve more people in the team from the team into meeting so that you're the people kind of, yeah, because the thing is, when you work in the office, you want it or you don't want it, but you're also leasing and to kind of get some information from their house or get people talking to each other and receive calls to them. You kind of know, what is the... what's... what's, what's going on what's going on, in your area, but also other areas. And now we can kind of that much one to one calls and so on. I think the people they get nice this information for kind of not, not direct information flow. So I think is it's necessarily is necessary to keep people not related, even if the people is not really related in speed people just in a call innovation, or for tea right. Meetings where talk about some maybe topic when you talk about some topics, which are maybe related just to two team members, but it's not that bad that other team members just recent period.

I: Yeah. Yeah. Cool. Now, the last question. So, in your opinion, there is basically my topic right is what I explained at the very beginning. So my question is your opinion how moving into this remote leadership remote environment is, is interrelate, so is connected to the leader follower relationship? So this relationship, and how this influenced the team members behavior?

L2: Can you rephrase it a little?

I: Yes, of course. So, in your opinion moving into a remote working environment? Right? How is it connected to this relationship that a leader and a team member build? And how this this relationship and moving into remote environment influenced the behavior of the team members?

L2: Okay, so I think, I think the most important thing, which is changed or had to be changed is to, to, to switch from controlling people to check into the people doing the correct thing to trust people, right? proceed from the kind of bottle control of the team. Control, team members have worked out not working, to change it from death into trust, and kind of just to do you pass the important to save the job, you pass all the necessary information, and then you kind of trust and to kind of let people know that you trust them, so that they don't need you to control yourself. Yeah, but they need you to trust them. And they can start by their own.

I: and of course, if you do if you follow this logic from a behavioral perspective, the team members should be empowered, feel like happy and at least you should understand what's going on in his or her life, right?

L2: Yes, yes. So this is the thing. But from another perspective, I think we have to also the responsibility here to... to not let people be responsible to just do too many things simultaneously. Sometimes the people they kind of feel crazy when they're responsible for more than two things, or more than five things. We have to also keep kind of keep this in mind.

I: Yeah. Yeah. So I have a balance not overworking people. And it's good to give people responsibilities, but not too many or too many at the same time.

L2: And yeah, exactly... because Yeah, because not everybody is kind of... able to handle the priorities. Not everybody is able to... handle the, for example, the... the time management properly and so on.

I: might need some time to adapt.

L2: Yes. Definitely.

I: Yeah. Good. Good. So, perfect. I'm good.

L2: Thank you very much. It was great.

I: Thank you.

## **Transcript interview n. 6; Subordinate n. 2.**

**Interviewer = I**

**Subordinate n. 2 = S2**

I: So basically, what I'm doing is trying to understand when we moved into a remote environment, and so remote leadership came in... the leader follower relationship changed. Or let's say I'm trying to figure out... the correlation, like, between moving into this remote environment, this leader follower relationship, and the impact on the behavior of the team members.

S2: Okay, but wait a second in which like, because like I only got this one leader relationship with the CXO right? So I don't know if that is very helpful.

I: No, no, no, it's, it's, it's fine. Because you have actually both right, you have the team member relationship with my role. And then you have the leader relationship with the rest of the team somehow, you know? So you have actually.... So what I'm trying this is what I'm trying to figure out. Right. So when we moved into this remote leadership, remote environment, the relationship had to adapt to this remote environment, right. So something changed in this

relationship. And the behavior of people also changed. And so I'm trying to figure out the correlation between these events.

S2: Okay...

I: between remote leadership coming in these... remote follower - leader... let's say relationship and the subordinate's behavior. But I have a set of questions we're going to go through.

S2: I mean, I mean, I can ask you in between...

I: Yeah, no, of course we can. We can talk about it. It's, it's, if it's not clear, I think some questions will make it more clear. And then at the end, these are the end this is the question at the end that we've tried to answer it, you know, it's just to prepare you to what happens at the end in your opinion, from digitalization level, the organization before Corona was low level, mid-level or high level when it comes to communication or knowledge sharing processes and so on.

S2: High Level. We are a software company after all.

I: High level good. Would you share what like what type of digital means.... What type of digital means you use for communication knowledge sharing, process managing, etc.

S2: We are using slack. Okay, we have in Slack, we can also call each other's phones. So short messaging and, and quick calls, then we were using Google meet, or zoom for video calls, but we also be basically paperless. So, we have in the whole bookkeeping process everything digitalized. So yeah. So that for me, and I mean, our product is a technology

I: And what is your preferred means of communication, for example?

S2: And for quick, quick things, I like slack. If there's something that I don't want to disappear, I use email because then it sort of stays in the inbox or for longer, longer messages. And, and yeah, if there's if there's a meeting then I like to use Google meet

I: So, and do you prefer digital or face to face interactions?

S2: Well, it depends... I mean, I find face to face, there is, it's easier to make a connection, it's easier to, to feel the other person kind of, to, to know where they stand. And but digital is fine for the everyday kind of interaction, you know. So if you have a mixture, that would be great, like it is difficult subjects are more complex subjects are long meetings. I mean, digital works great also for like short meetings, like 15 minutes, 30 Max, one hour, if it is longer than one hour, then it just is very tiring. And also, what's also difficult is to have a discussion, because when people start talking, like at the same time, then, you know, things get lost.

I: And so, we talk to this later, I think it's better. So these are like some, you know, questions like I know the answers, but I have to ask them, so from an age perspective in your organization, if you have to consider the like, for generations, right, like now in the workforce, boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, a generations that what is the average age in your organization? And do you think that all generation are represented?

S2: So, yeah, I think Well, I think we're not having like very young people. So our what is the youngest ruler? Our? Yeah. Oh, Employee J was the youngest. Right. He was 23 years. Yeah.

I: 23.. yeah He's actually generations that.

S2: So. Yeah. So from Employee J to Employee P, we probably have everyone pretty much everything. I think the majority is around 30 high in that area. I think 30 ish, I guess. So that would be probably. I mean, so maybe Employee M and Employee P do.. pull pulls it up? Yeah, they do. Both of them. They're like raising the bar. Me too. I mean, I'm also like, 40. Almost 46 I'm not.. I am 46 already.

I: I'm 36... Yeah. And yeah, I guess it does. It does. Yesterday, I was 23. Two days ago. You know, Good. So average age with the team?

S2: I don't have the exact year... yeah. I mean, yeah, that's fine. You know, it's okay. It's for me, it's more like a generation wise interest rather than... What generation would that be? Like, hmm...

I: All generations right now, there are four generations there are no more than four generations at the moment. Right. But

S2: what generation is that around? Around 30 now

I: It is millennials Generation Y. So, millennials go from 1980 to 1997. Before that Generation X that goes through the seventies till this event, And then there are the baby boomers,

S2: And after 97 what is there?

I: After 97 generations Zed They're called Facebook generation.

S2: Okay, so yeah. And then you have mostly, we have mostly millennials, probably...

I: Millennials are the majority of the workforce. Yeah. Because it's a big, because you have to think this way. Baby Boomers are close to retirement, right. Yeah, then there is everyone in Generation X. And these are the kids of people that, you know, it was, divorce started to be a thing that was legal. So the first couples also women could work. So, the first couples that had both parents working, they had to take care of themselves. So, they're different from millennials in these aspects, right, they had to take care of themselves they had, but then the more the economic boom raised, the more people were able in the 80s. And the like, in the 90s. To have one person maybe working full time, the other parent taking care of the kid. Not in most cases, but it was less common than in previous generation. So, it's all about some aspects of the way you grow. That makes you different. Also, Millennials are the first generation that grew up with digital technology. Generation X was already in their 20s you were already in your 20s you know, so it's different. I was 10 years old, you know, compute... You know, and then I talked with my professor is 10 years older than me, I was like, I was with my colleagues I was driving to, to see it. You know, I want to be there. Fantastic. Lovely. You know? So are these things... it's like, and now the new a new generation, but we, as millennials, we had the books still, you know, we had to learn through books. We had to search encyclopedia, as we saw the, the we were like, migrated to a new reality. And we adapted because we were kids is like and the new generation doesn't even know what was before. Have you ever seen a kid try to scroll down the book. It happens. It happens to me sometimes. Once I was reading a book, and it was like, I was like, I tried to open it to open not to scroll down to open it to read better. Anyways, so yeah, this is degeneration. So and in your organization, how was the workforce distributed? was mainly people coming to the office? There was someone maybe working remote. How was it?

S2: Yeah, so everyone was actually while in the lockdown. Everyone was home office. And then when it was kind of

I: Well, before... before... the lockdown?



S2: Oh before... No, everyone came to the office. I mean, I did have partly office and home office. But most people, I mean, most people did most of the time in office.

But I mean, it was possible, let's say, to do a home office to do some of it was allowed, let's say it wasn't a rule. Nothing written but people would do it. when needed?

Yeah, but I've never there was nothing written people could do it, but people didn't really do it. I mean, Employee A did it a bit and Employee E maybe also did it a bit mainly people were in office. Yeah. team was always in the office

I: Yeah. And then what changed with the lockdown and?

S2:: and then we went all into home office and then we realized it works just as well. I mean, we had to and and yeah, it worked. I mean we had to make Good work.

I: And we had to make it work. And it worked after this. are two different things?

S2: Yeah, I mean, we had to make it work. And there's like things where you think like, Okay, this is a bit difficult,

I: what you need to adapt, right is a change. So what changed? For you?

S2: So for me, for me, what changed was already the, I mean, I'm a special case, though, you know, because I go with a train and the train time for me is actually really valuable. And just getting things done focused, very focused time, you know, you know, you only got three stops you like, I'm gonna get this email out. There is very focused. And then also when you arrive at the office, you walk, you know, you walk into somebody's fresh air and some exercise and they arrive in the office, you have the emails done and you know, you start working was very productive. And in the home office, especially with new the kids as well. And in the beginning, was really difficult to get everything done. I mean, I was sitting from morning after seven till nights at six o'clock and still doing homework and this and that, and never seem to end somehow. So.

I: So basically, work life balance was gone. Yeah.

S2: That was definitely at least like in the beginning, definitely completely out the window. Hold on. Eventually, I took a couple of days holiday just to Yeah, yeah, just to kind of take myself out of it.

I: And what changed? What help you change?

S2: You mean to adapt better to get my balance back over? And yeah, to realize what are the problems? I mean, no, wait, the first thing that helped is that when school goes open again, because then at least I have the mornings really in peace. Because I mean, the problem with homeschooling is also that the kids, they can work on their own, so I was in my room and they were out there. But then, you know, then there's a problem and they don't know what to do. So they come in the United States interruption, that is a problem, you know, so you get and then you go out to them, then they're hungry and then you know, so it's like, you don't find your balance you just are always either or, like making anything between this and that. And then in the evening when you're done when you didn't get that much done, then I mean, on a normal day, you can even say okay, I just didn't get so much done because office it was disturbing. I mean, you know, he needed a test and he needed that and and then you don't feel so bad because at least it was office related. But I mean now everything is disturbing.

I: You've done other stuff. Not Yeah.

S2: Is it now really because of my private life? Is it now because of the other things that what happened now I'm just not that productive. So you feel less productive? Right? Yeah. less productive definitely. At least for me definitely less productive, less focused. And... and but before that there's actually another step to adaption because I didn't even have... I didn't have a desk I didn't have a screen. So at the beginning I was working at the kitchen table with a laptop so that also definitely helped and I said okay, I have a dedicated work area at least I can close the door I have the screen you know I have my setup I have the keypad and everything you build yourself Santa Santorum of work so that that also felt good and... and then came a time where I said like okay, at least if I am at home and I have to like I'm working so long then I might as well get up late because you know normally I get up at four I do my sports and up at the train at seven you know sort of the kids before train at seven then come so so now I was working so I didn't want to get up at four do all this so then I started sleeping in more and take the mornings Not so with not so much stress and I start to enjoy that. So that then helped me again to like say okay, I don't have to stress so much in the morning that I like that kind of to you know... I can see the point you know, because from one side if you were keeping you know your sort of routine, waking up in the morning like and then at seven you were done because the kids didn't need to be dressed or whatever. The train wasn't there to be taken. And you were stuck working and then the kids would be like okay, we need this and then interruption-interruption-interruption-interruption is you... You are entering a stress level on adjust already. difficult situation, right? And then the realization that you didn't need to stress yourself and it would have taken just easier. Make things, you know, enjoyable for you seeing like the positive aspects of being at home and spending time. Yeah, actually kind of also realising that, especially I was in the lockdown, you know, you have so much time with each other as a family, right? You know, me and the kids. Like, you don't probably never get that again. You know, that kind of bonding as well. It's

I: an experience to tell your grandkids, isn't it? you're complaining to me? I'm not going out on Friday. We've been inside the year. Yeah. mentioned you. for a kid must be terrible.. I mean, must be terrible. Right? For it was terrible for everyone. But for kids in particular?

S2: Like, so. So they're like, yes, and no. So one thing I like in winter was hard, because then you know, no, I mean, in winter, the good thing was the scheme that the ski ski slopes were open, that was our savior go to on the weekend, we'd be out and about, and, you know, you didn't have the feeling of this lockdown during the week, because there was not much you could do. It was a lot of being at home. And, and what also came then is that normally before the before Corona, I had a very strict digital policy at home for the kids like, now we're not watching TV every day, or we're not, you know, you're not on the phone, like, it would be a thing here and there to have my phone or play on it or, you know, like this. And then with me working out, just say, okay, you can watch TV, just to just, you know, let me and it's also with me working basically the whole day on and off, you know, so being in my room, then in the end, like really awesome Evening Standard was just like, yeah, okay, people don't really like,

I: you know, as long as it's, it's not like, you know, school day and they done their homework, they can read the book, they can play watch TV, whatever it is a few hours. Good. TV, it's okay. And then I would read books and stuff was nice. Hey, so in your opinion, the motivation of the team members changed over the pandemic?

S2: And so yeah, I mean, I think on our it's, like since was now is a different problem. Employee A left in the middle of the pandemic. Yes, the middle of the pandemic, he left in the middle of the world, the company now is a different company for from what was before. But I don't know if it played the role, you know, because we had this big break in the company, and I'm not sure if the pandemic really played a big role in there. So we had like other big issues that definitely hit on the motivation of the team, you know what I mean?

I: But do you think that the fact that then the team, there was nobody there, there was nobody there to lead the team, right, though, so the team wasn't there to be led? You know, the team was a bit left alone, and was given?

S2: To be honest. Who is ever needing the team other than? like, No, I'm joking. No, but I mean, between you and me, you know, the team is always a bit left alone. That is the problem. We have to like, we don't have a strong leadership. You don't. So when the pandemic came that just was even more like more so it was like worse. No, it was just it was disappears completely. before the pandemic The leadership level in our organization was low, too. I'm not here, I'm here, I'm this appearance. You know, I'm here now, I'm not here you can see me, you cannot see me. See me... you cannot see. The future appeared to be moving into a remote environment that needs communication needs a lot more of communication, a lot more of process, managing a lot more of project managing lot more of people managing and not even people managing is more like talking to people, you know? Because if you think about it, I've been saying the James wasn't happy for a year before this happened. And I was saying let's give this guy something else to do. And yes, Employee M sometimes was saying, asking Employee J, how are you doing? In front of 25 people? And what do you think that an introvert guy from APAC would say in front of others? I am well, thank you, A gentlemen.

I: So basically not having a strong leadership, of course, moving into this remote leadership environment that required the radius, strong leadership, per se. Didn't really help. So it changed. is it changing? Are you working on changing something?

I: And yeah, you know what, I think that now that Employee B started really is helping to fill that gap. Like, he really is present. He really is therefore, I mean...

sorry, sorry, sorry. Sorry, I lost you for a few seconds. So the last sentence was he is really present for the team, I guess you wanted to say... is...it is really present, he's ready to take decisions. You know, and he is so to give input when needed. And he is also like, going with it as a good example, ahead. You know, like, like, for example, Employee M always said he wants that project management. You know, he always said it. But I never saw him doing a proper project management. Like, what exactly does he want? How does he want it highlight? Yeah. So you know, like, he says, this is how it should be, but you've got you can't? Or like, we should be respectful with resources. Like, where? If you don't know how, how do I do it? Do it. But don't ask me for money. I've done it for a long time. And then I asked for some money. And then because, you know, we missed hundreds of applications a few times because of credit card problems. And then no one's to... to J to blame for something like this. Your fault, or someone else's fault is like, if we didn't have a system for it, and one man they spend 6000, then I don't know. What can we do?

I: And so motivation changed. This, I guess that if the morale wasn't super, right, this complete disappearance of the leadership, but his appearance from the leadership perspective, the team was left alone on its own, to figure out what to do how to do it.

S2: Yeah. And I think for me, I mean, I, you know, I can't really speak for the team, you know, I can only speak from my perspective. So, um, so yes, I felt I felt party left to my own devices. It's not like I couldn't reach him, but it's also not like, you know, in like in the office, you just run bump into him more often. And then there is more exchange just like that, and that would fall away now. And he's anyway, so what happened on my side is that, at least like before the pandemic, he said, Hey, if you have a problem called Did you call him because I said, Why didn't you answer you know, so he was still answering emails. Not all, but at least he did. He was still he was very good with the slack messages. And if you really, really stuck, you could call him and he would actually pick up and then enter pandemic, all of a sudden, I don't know how that happened. But he was like, starting to not answer his emails as well. I don't even email I don't use with Employee M at all, because it's a waste of time. slack all of a sudden, also, sometimes, sometimes not. And then when you try to phone him, you couldn't, like often you couldn't get ahold of him at all. So I mean, how do you even like, how can you work with

this? If at the end of the day, you cannot make decisions? Because that's the problem, right? You need to reach him out, not for telling him what happened. Rather, for telling him? Can I do this? You know, giving him a solution? Can I do it? Yes or no? or do something else? And that's a bottleneck, right? And I believe it's also I can see two problems here. As an outsider, honestly, right, I can see two problems. One is complete lack of communication. If you think about it, what... what... what you weren't able to, you're not you, but you weren't able to, we weren't able to recreate and we are still not yet able to recreate is an exchange of informal communication. Next to the formal communication. When you have a formal communication, meaning, the few meetings, we have all we need to talk, let's schedule a meeting for Friday after the interview because we need to talk about things. Okay. Fair enough. Let's talk about these things later. However, we don't have the in front of the coffee fridge situation waiting for someone to make a coffee, talking about things are about that thing. Have you done anything about that? Now? Wait a second. Employee M2, do you know anything about that, and this cannot happen in this just starts with a, let's have a coffee together, right? And for detecting was, let's have lunch together. And let's go up to the roof to have our coffee together. Right? Because we will enjoy those 15 minutes, we start early, blah, blah, blah. And now those informal ways of integrating with each other to build, also trust and build a lot of team bonding. And that's what it is, you know, I need to be your friend, but I need to know you're a good person somehow. You know, because if I hear from you a few stupid xxx, you say, because one day you will think that way. I didn't know you knew the know me, right? So we don't really trust well. It's just based on an unconscious bias or unconscious bias that you have. And we need to recreate Well, do you think that the next organization we should recreate, um, formal ways of communication that help these integration of new team members building trust and WhatsApp? For one part of the problem? you know, I think like the informal way this kind of coffee talk check, it somehow doesn't really work online, it doesn't because you don't have that chatty possibility. It's like, either this person or the other person. And if you try to make a joke in between, you can't, like, you went there to today in this meeting, but I wanted, I miss was talking and I wanted to make a joke. And then I realized, you know, like, Okay, my, I was on mute. So the moment was gone. And then, you know, like, it's, you don't get the informal shit together. But what I was thinking and so what you need and what... what you said what this informal stuff builds is like trust and connection and kind of, you know, the other person because you've seen them in different situations, you know, with jokes and humans and you get to know the people, right? And you also get feedback, you know, how do they react to me when I say something when I bring myself in? How do they react to me? So, and then this you sort of build a relationship that then can hold when you have difficult things to do at work, you know, that relationship holds the... the load that's put on people when they work. together. But what I experienced now also at this CNC workshop that, you know, I went and now is that this trust was built with feedback and the feedback you could do very formal with people in on a, in a virtual setting as well, where you have like a group, and the group could change... and also have a group of five. And they give feedback to each other. So, you know, like, for example, Employee A, when I see how, with how much enthusiasm and how much well, enthusiasm is a two sky one. So now when I just see how lively you're working at the project on the company's culture, that, that makes me like, happy in a way... and also hopeful because, you know, it just feels like, there's somebody cares, you know? So, so to give that kind of feedback, that's one thing. I mean, I can also say, obviously, there also needs to be balanced feedback, you know, also what, what, what angers me or what frustrates me, in working with you. So you give like positive and negative feedback, when we close to you do I feel?

I: Well, do you know there are different theories about that, for example, there is the sandwich theory, right? That you give positive, negative, and then positive feedback to reinforce the statement. So you basically put the negative feedback between two positive feedbacks, but then when we give negative... negative feedback, it needs to be not like, what have you done?

S2: Yeah, it needs to be... say these things. How do I feel emotionally in relation to you? What pushes me away from you? And what pulls me towards you? And just that kind of feedback? Nothing, no explanations? Yeah, that's just where I stand. This is what pushes you, this is what pulls me towards you. Okay, when everyone can say those kinds of things, you know, and the more you do it, the more aware also the people become about their own.

I: But I understand this like from a team perspective, and like team bonding, I see this completely. But I question this. Not a question... is like, I wonder, really, how could this work in terms of leader follower relation terms of because the leader should have mind the development of the follower, right. So?

S2: We didn't have this before, like the what you said before the dev team went to lunch, the dev team went to the terrorists. I mean, there was no leader in I mean, yeah, true. Employee A was part of it.. Yeah, he was the one that was making decision. He was he was treated as a, they were working more like as a, as a commune. You know, it was like, he was just the leader of the community. He was making decisions because no one else wants to make. It's not the like, he was accepted. He wasn't pushing anyone. You know, he people were working with, okay. And they have the team meetings in dialect. So, you know, it changed. It's not changing. And then, I mean, I understand them believing, but that's another story for another time.

I: Anyways, and so you know, this, from what you've seen what you perceived, the performance of the team did the change?

S2: So I really can't speak for the dev team. I mean, I think obviously, the performance changed because all those people went away and new people came and you know, people were missing and I'm sure there's a lot of, you know, that didn't work well. I mean, from my side, it was kind of because Employee M2 came so until Employee M2 came last year, like in September it was like up here and then Employee M2 came and then it was kind of really helping me a lot. And... and then I just took over marketing so... so... with the new people as a coming in, you know, I wouldn't say that the performance changed. Yeah, I mean, on the on the business sector performance wasn't great. For sure not. But I don't know if that was a lockdown problem, or it was purely, like, you know, we still don't know how to sell the product and also like a kind of a demotivation. Because now we're like trying for over a year. And it's somehow not really happening. You know, like that kind of I don't know if that was so low. I mean, the lockdown probably didn't help you know what I mean? But yeah, but when you have sales lifecycle, the last sale six to 12 months minimum, right? If that is the thing, no, six to 12 months minimum. That's what like Employee A2 says, and Employee B says is also, they like say, six to 12 months Max, there's no way our product is more complex than some things What? What Microsoft sells or to, you know, FinTech,

I: then what is the problems with selling?

S2: No, maybe, through the help of somehow we're not selling it right. With the help of these new partnerships. Someone else selling it. Yeah, who knows...

I: And so let's go back to leadership, we already discussed, you know, how your relationship with Employee M changed over COVID? And did something change now? Or is still the same type of situation? Let's say? He sometimes is there most of the time, it's not? And are you finding more present...

S2: Something that changed... to definitely has changed? Again, a bit? And But yeah, I mean, if I look back, I didn't really I didn't really, actually, now that you say that, I didn't really make the connection that it is COVID why it has changed so dramatically. But it definitely could be because before I actually... I would see him a couple of times, right? And he would call me

because he was on the road, they needed stuff from me. And then he wouldn't go anywhere. And he was home. I knew, he was home? You know, it was how is that that he was? I mean, most of the times still, when he's on the call is walking somewhere in the mountains. So it was potentially didn't have as much to do like in terms of moving and stuff, but if filled himself with meetings, so didn't have time for anything else, then meeting other people. So completely forgot to the head, the team to lead. Because I felt the same. You remember, he didn't answer me for more than a month and swimming for more than a month? No, no, no nothing. even when I was asking, he was running, you know, when I could catch him, like over the leadership meetings and stuff. And then Employee B was asking why it takes so long to make a decision. I cannot talk with the guy... disappeared... was ghosting me... A CXO that ghost is one of his team members is like Who am I working for? You know? Yeah. Hey, so.

I: So we saw that there was some sort of correlation between moving into this remote environment and these leadership that just collapsed, right, these few pillars that had, you know, because of course, if you think about it not being available for your team. It also sort of changes a bit the relationship you had before the Pandemic, even if before you knew that he wasn't that available, he was somehow available. With the pandemic he started completely disappearing?

S2: Yes. We were a bit lost all of us because of the bottleneck that was created. for example I cannot decide whether we hire someone or not. I cannot sign a contract. You can not do it either. You cannot say maybe on other stuff from from a financial perspective or whatever, if that's okay with him or not. So at the end if you see it with this... to know that communication in and out within? It's okay. Yeah. And we talked about this.

I: How would you describe the team?

S2: I see when.... when you say the team are always going to language team nowadays development team or business team? No. And you know that's the problem we have, I think we should start thinking about us as a whole team as a whole and not two teams. And then between two teams are the teams that do other stuff.

I: Actually, there is a very interesting project that I am working on is working on where they are having two leaders in a department, one department to leaders, shared responsibilities might work with marketing and sales. Might. Anyways, let's get started. But back to the How would you describe, then how would you describe the two things?

S2: Um, so... So... in terms of what I mean?

I: Is people you know, like, they are, you know, workers, they are efficient, they, you know, motivated, they're motivated, they happy to work that sense first day, a lot. They don't know what, whatever comes to your mind?

S2: I think, well, I don't have such insight into the dev team, I think. I think all in all of it, we're all quite, like me included, quite happy to work at sense for us. I think we are quite a nice bunch of people, you know, who like, think we're so diverse, you know, and in, in that diversity, if you if you can appreciate, you know, you can appreciate each character and each different live that comes to the team. So. So, you know, it's, it's hard to be an outsider in the team, because, you know, everybody is an outsider, everybody comes from somewhere, everybody's, you know, like, it's not like we don't we're not so this homogenic Vorarlberger.. Now, if somebody comes from Russia, oh, my God, you know, it's like, there's so many more. So I'm not fitting in that I think we're quite open in and also taking new people in and, you know, I think that's, that's quite good. I think we, there is a level of frustration in the company, which I have, I find it doesn't fit to the startup spirit. I'm really lacking in the beginning, in the beginning when I came to Salesforce, that that that lack of startup spirit, I felt in the dev team,

okay, it was definitely this. The like, I would say at the core of it was Employee F and me, he just didn't want to didn't accept Employee M. I think that was the problem. They didn't accept him. And they were not interested in doing anything. Like, as a whole team, you know, they were happy to go with the dev team. They were happy to hang out with all the people from def but they didn't really want to, you know, do some... some other activity that would bring us together as a team. Hold on a second. No, I don't even answer unless you ever get some. Okay.

I: Okay, let's go for the last two questions. Because we discussed I think we discussed how did the remote leadership change the follower leadership relationship and the behavior of this? Maybe we can discuss more about how this impacted the behaviors of people. Like in terms of the word they do believe that with this remote environment people left in motivation or behavior wise. You know, if you think about law, thinking about what changed how many people have Right, I guess, this disappearance of anyone, right, and then the leaving, and then no one taking care of them.. do you believe that influenced their behavior, and ultimately their decision to leave?

S2: Because this was, I'm not sure, actually. So if any, if if we didn't have lockdown and any would have left, I think it would have played out exactly the same... I'm not sure if another leader I mean, a little bit later years, but like after Employee A left, a new leader wouldn't have been accepted because it was it was, you know, flow an issue where the oldest there like a long they were already basically everyone was anti Employee M Yeah, like, so if a new leader comes in that Employee M approved. I mean, he would have been, well, probably some sort of a blessing than... than the rest of the team. If he had like that, but then he would have been it. So what was needed then was somebody who is really good in leadership, like, like, on kind of Employee B level but like even better, and he was, he would also be really good in technical skills would have to have be accepted immediately. We shouldn't be this person should have the wow factor like, wow. Yeah, exactly. So, he would have really to be something where they say, okay, we accept you, because you should have now how to talk with each and everyone because maybe, you know, talking with Employee A2 would just raise the fire in the team or some. Yeah, I mean, I think that was also like, for example, Employee P had no chance, no chance to but also fall off man didn't, doesn't have this idea of buying in. Right, is the same when we had that conversation with Employee B. And we said, All Employee B wants to say is that we have to sell this, we have to get the buy in from Employee M. Right. So we have to make it in a way where we are doing it this way. And Employee P. Once I told him the exact same thing about buy in from the team, at the very beginning, I was like, Look, I understand that you're having some troubles with the team would be great. You know, if you try to you know, buy in, you know, by the mean, I don't have to do this, my God just have to tell them that I'm the CXO, and they have to accept the method. Like very well done. Yeah. Communication wise. leaders. Yeah, he didn't. So like, I mean, yes, he's also not he doesn't have amazing people skills, let's put it like that. But he had, just from the situation, he didn't have a chance to, no one wanted him at the end of the day, you know, like, not from the old team, not. So.

I: So what lessons have you learned? Is there something you would do differently?  
For the home office now for personal view, or leadership? kind of work,  
whatever comes to your mind?

S2: Yeah, so yeah, so what I... what I would do differently is to be more organized or like what I'm doing also now, it's like, you need definitely a higher level of planning in order to stay focused with you know, with all my interruptions. So if I have, you know, if I have a weekly plan, kind of what are the big things that need to be done this week, and then really stick to that and working off that helps me and then also So, and I try not with the, with the kids being at school to really get a lot of the time to be very focused on in the in the mornings. And then when the interruption comes in the afternoon, it's not that bad anymore, you know.

I: So you distribute your time differently?

S2: You know... the important parts, like the important things that need to be done to them first because then later you might not get to the rest. And then from from the kind of the, how to pull the team together, like we were the breakfast, you know, we, we tried. So we realised first we didn't have anything, then we realized, hey, would be nice to see each other at least once, then we first just had like, okay, let's all come together. But that doesn't work in a virtual setting, because nobody had to say anything, then it was kind of on Michael. And when he realized, oh, he has to do some leadership in that meeting, then he was gone. Didn't shop anymore, no breakfast not that important, he's got so much more important things to do. And then I realized, okay, it has to be more structured, there need to be kind of a plan or there needs to be kind of a program, you can't just come in and hope it will happen spontaneously, it doesn't, you need to have an agenda almost for that meeting, to work.

I: So, what will be the top three recommendation you would do to leaders and followers or whoever, in working in a remote setting like ours?

S2: The top three recommendation to leaders. So I would, I would, I would suggest that you. You help people organize more, because it definitely is more difficult in a home setting to be focused and organized. So to do that more is actually helpful then it's not like on I'm getting controlled, it's actually helpful. And the other thing is to do structured like I said before, you know, structured meetings, where you have an exchange that helps to build trust really needs to be structured, I don't think you can do it with just let's... let's make a virtual coffee and you're all taking coffee and this needs to make sense needs to have cause the problem most is like we already having so much online meetings so to be on a meeting that you do absolutely nothing just feels like a waste of time, then you'd rather be offline. You know, there'd be another online meeting where you don't get Yeah, yeah, yeah, so do actual structured thing where you where you have an outcome, but that still build builds trust and it's still so it has to be designed. You can't just leave it to accident somehow.

I: Maybe you should try to have a beer thing maybe next week or something like you know, an afternoon like it doesn't have to be Friday you know? Could be a Friday we say Friday afternoon 3pm Let's meet in the middle there let's have bunch of beer together...

S2: That would be nice.

I: Good and the third one sorry.

S2: This third one. Yeah, I mean, what I would what I would think is a really good thing, but I don't know how it is to to give is the possibility of proper coaching. Because I mean, there was a point also, I mean, but that was probably because of lockdown and not just remote. You know, I went on lockdown, there was a time when I was slithering along a depression, so I wasn't completely depressed, but I could feel I was, couldn't really enjoy getting up or I couldn't look forward to the day and I felt overwhelmed, and I felt like shit that actually feels like starting to get depressed. So I mean, if you had like a coach that we could work with them for, I mean, I had one actually. So I mean, it helped me to just, you know, see, have a look on and now you know, how do you how can you take ownership of certain things and feel more empowered and not be so you know,

I: it become like a very more... more and more important things mostly over COVID right because it really accentuated the number of people that already had some you know, state of depression of some sort and the lockdown just really put them down and I mean, there are cases see Nevers company where people left the organization when they're really they didn't,



they cannot work. You know, they... they felt like so bad. Okay, so I stopped here recording. Thank you very much.

### **Transcript interview n. 7; Leader n. 3.**

**Interviewer = I**

**Leader n. 3 = L3**

I: First of all, thank you very much for your time today. I know you're busy. So, the first question I would like to ask you, in your opinion, the company you work for... what level of digitalization has?

L3: What type of level?

I: Yeah. So if you would distributed between low level, medium level, or high level?

L3:I think we are the high level the... the stakeholders invest a lot in technologies or we don't go cheap. So, we are top notch like, I keep demand for everything. And if you what So what could you please share the digital equipment, you have communication, for cooperation, knowledge sharing, we use, for instance? Okay, so everyone has like book and iPhones, we are 30 employees. Everyone... we use, you know, obviously, our our CRM ATS, which is one of the most famous one, which is pretty expensive. We have the budget for marketing as well. So we do we use a lot of collateral as as marketing tools that are also paid by employees... I mean, per employees and what else, we use Trello premium version, we have kind of big two, we spend good money on operation..

I: So, you use Trello, for setting up operations. And...

L3: for task based management, then we have the bullhorn referred to as the ATS, then we have "fish eye", which is an email marketing product from bullhorn.

I: But if you think more like internal, this is more like external communication, right? But if you think about more like internal communication, like Slack, do you use?

L3: We have Google... we use Google Chat... We have the Google SUITE. We are Google user. So, everything's on Google.

I: Okay, so everything over the communication. So, for cooperation, you said you use Trello, and also for project management. And for knowledge sharing, I guess you use to Google Docs, and also all the ideas that you were mentioning, I guess...

L3: yes.

I: where all the information for each and every project are written in and everything is followed. Yes. And before the pandemic, right. The Workforce was distributed, everyone was working from the office, or someone was able to work from home, how was it?

L3: No, our CEO was very polite people work from home since ever, so it was very tough to get the day working from home. Unless you were not sick. He didn't, he believed that if your work do the work. So then actually, at the beginning of the pandemic, he says, "Okay, guys, it's going to be just a couple of weeks, like classic of, you know, typical influence, or, you know, a flu, and then everyone's going to get the bug." And then they start to realize that the things will see us, and the people will still be committed to work. And we brought some good results, despite everything. So now we're ready to basically we are remote first. People have the

possibility to come into the office. But yeah, I figured that 80% of the time, that didn't work remote permanently. The other one does plenty, but 10% want to come at the office and the other 10% like want to do it. Like, I like to wake up in the morning decide whether I go to the office or not.

I: But you don't have any fixed date anything like so. Okay,

L3: well, let's say if I have a meeting, I might come live, because it wouldn't make sense since we're in the same city. Right? So I'll say Tuesday, and Monday is the day where I almost come always at the office, but I'm very flexible.

I: Okay, great. Thank you. And so how, so things have changed from your CXO to be reluctant to now be more open to the potential of remote work. And I've seen that performance and I've done well. But at the beginning, there was a period of adaptation, or the performance always was the same

L3: where the performance dropped a lot but it was because of the... the clients freeze all our jobs, so it was not connected to the team. But the team shown a lot of commitment because they decided to reduce the salary rate because you know, the company was suffering. Of course it these... these farms into a less day of work per day. So they were working like four days a week instead of five were less Our scenario was a kind of an agreement imbalance. And yes, I think that's a lot to make more spreads in the team. The I think our competitive advantage is that the transparency that we have within the company, so everyone knows how much the company is making, how individually is making in terms of permission or bonuses. There is nothing to hide the everyone knows also the cost. So it's like no one can say, Oh, we didn't have. So transparency is very fundamental. And that's, I think, what makes us a good team. But coming back to your question, there was a drop for six months, but because most of the clients not because of the pain.

I: And then when, let's say, because that's true, because there was a drop in the markets, right? European level, companies didn't hire anymore for a long time. So the market was frozen for six months. And then when the market opened again, from a performance perspective, if you see how the team performed afterwards, there was no difference basically, in what they did after working remote and what they did. At the office,

L3: the company saw the world, the company went from 12 employees to 30 employees in the last nine months. So the team is performing very well also, because of the strategy change in the make everyone with either today, bye, find the folder and they only know task. So there is this kind of hierarchy where everyone is responsible for data war, and these kinds of apps to empower people to be more committed and committed to doing the work. And how

I: was the... How did this happen in a remote environment? How was the leadership able to help?

L3: Yeah, so the leadership had the with the calls every day, the phone calls, and you know, next to them for everything's try to build up, you know, some team building stuff from gaining the line to yoga lessons online, you know, that sounds typical things that people have done it. But you know, it wasn't a way to not make pressure to the people. It was in a genuine way to build a decent Indian workforce, like as a team.

I: And you're keeping doing it?

L3: We came in believe that. But obviously now it's a bit less because people start to you know, the workload has increased. So that is kind of less time. Yes, yeah.

I: So having we briefly talked about this about motivation, because you mentioned that we empowered people, we gave them more responsibilities, and then also their motivation through transparency, because you know, this impact a lot. So have you seen the motivation of people change over COVID? simply said to banana, and, you know, because I believe that the when there were no lions, although they were super positive, you said, you know, they decrease their salaries, they were four days a week instead of five, and so on. The motivation must have been a bit.

L3: Yeah, it dropped... because, you know, many people wanted to where they didn't want to leave, but they many were looking for a job in a way, right. But then they realized, actually, the worst situation is not sustained. So changing a job for another job is not secure. It doesn't make much sense, right? So yes, myself as well, I was looking for a job or going crazy for looking for a job. But then I realized it actually wouldn't make much sense. And the finger for three months, everyone was a bit on this situation. So then, of course, from September last year, the guy went up, we got some big clients. And you know, this RC is cheaper as a bit of cash flow. So then, now, I think that one is very motivated. And now we are actually in the position that we are growing so fast that we need to kind of put the foundation for something more stable for next year.

I: That's great. And do you think that the fact that read leadership was performed remotely impacted somehow this motivation behavior, because I'm still to work a lot in team bonding. Right? So with the new team members because you grew a lot, so there were people that never met anyone, so they just, you know, started remote and not knowing anyone, and you've done a lot of... of events, right to try to onboard them and make them feel part of their control. So how do you feel that their performance is related to remote leadership?

L3: Well, at the moment, I see that, you know, the last 10 people who join us, they, I think they came at the office only the past day. And I see they kind of struggle to be part of the all the team. And that's why now we are going to do a monthly kind of team building event where everyone can meet up for a beer for a pizza or something. We're starting from the photo shooting the next month, like this next month, yes. Like, a summer timeframe? Yes, I see. Because they are not very communicating on the chart. So what did the leadership does, is that, okay, now we can create micro teams, as well, where there is one of the oldest tuition like the body. So you know, they try to get done with him. And he said that the activities live will be only the one who tried to strengthen because he has this was, because they came when everything was done about the building, we saw the build, the team building was already, let's say, done without people. So now, it's more difficult to actually do that, again, also, because of the amount of people and also

I: there was already the trust building the team, and then the new team where you have a lot of new people in there to integrate. And then of course, you need to Yeah, that's well done very well. So it's right to say that, too. Because when you work in the same location, there are some like, there is some form of communication that helps building relationship. For example, going to the coffee machine waiting for someone in the meanwhile you have a chat with someone else. And then or going for a break or having lunch together. So all those types of communication that happened in an organization and help build that part of the trust and the relationship that there is now in a remote environment is missing. And you realize that, because you've seen that there is, let's say, a team one and team two, not in them of performance, but in terms of aggregation, right? And now to outcome that you try to bring them together, form online, but also offline to recreate those moments that are missing in office. incorrect to say that,

L3: yes, it's correct to say that we went out one is the official we have also a chat room, which is contained. So everyone, we kind of every day order something altogether. So we always spend time together. Obviously, we should not at the office cannot join that. We have a monthly

meeting, and I made the monthly meeting where everyone goes, plus we have kind of stand up calls every day with the different teams. So... So yeah, let's say, let's say we will try our best to keep everyone in the loop what is happening for sure. But you know, those who are not coming in the office who I see the struggle of b2b is

I: how would you describe yourself as a manager?

L3: That's a very good question. How I see myself as a manager, I think I'm kind of very friendly. I'd like to chase people on delivery things also because I come from the approach that I can do things for myself, and not always is a good thing what I'm doing I know that from time to improve that. And, and yes, but I'm a people person, I like to be very transparent as well very friendly. I would like to, again, manage it like micromanaging without we get you know, marketing, we work on a project place. So, we need to get you know, stuff done doesn't matter when or how basically he just need to get done. It's different from the operational that is like consistency, right? So... so my approach is I don't care from where you work when you work or with whom you work as long as you get the things done.

I: By the time needs to get done. Sometimes you need to get started like whenever it happens, it happens.

L3: I actually hired the someone in the team that I asked them look, if you see that I'm not you know on time with the timeline, the tasks you are entitled to take me from the caller and say hey Deanna now we sit together we need to get this job done. Because obviously sometimes also as a manager, you get hooked into meetings in Louder calls in brother. So you're probably switch. And yes, she's also my co founder and CEO.

I: And it's something changed from the start of the pandemic, in your leadership style.

L3: I try to always avoid the leadership, to be honest. And now I'm actually realized that I feel more ready to be pandemic, I, I was kind of afraid of my own kind of safe career path that I didn't even focus on the management, but leadership, this probably made the perfect that so. But now I feel more secure. And I see the company's going in the right direction. So I want to be part of these, building this foundation for the future. And I need I know, I need to do the switch on being more management the leader than actually as equity, or especially.

I: And cool. And do you think there was a relation with being in a remote environment?

L3: Because of the Yeah, I think a finger bit, yes, because you're more flexible. And I think the flexibility nowadays is very important for anything, you know, and you don't need to speak to these eight hours. Because in the end, when you're remote, you even work more sometimes. But you're also flexible, and you can work less someday. And it gives you good management skills of your own time. And even the pressure and I think this is also a very important key role for a manager or for a leader to be to give flexibility and to be flexible as well.

I: And how would you describe your team members?

L3: I mean, she she's got she's pretty young, she's the she was an intern with the previous company with me last year, I hired her. And then I asked her to join us now she started in May. She's very committed, excited, obviously, she's, you know, she's, she has a very long way to learn and to grow. But I like that she's very frayed things. And you know, and like this person, you know, it's like, it's a good partnership. We are partners rather than manager and and ugly.

I: Nice. Nice. Good. And, and do you think that your relationship because you started last year right with her in another company? Meaning that wasn't full pandemic? Now the first time you

hired her? So guess what before was just before, just before the pandemic started, right. So at my wedding, good?

L3:: Yeah. Yeah, no, it wasn't. So he I hired her in September 2019.

I : So when the pandemic started, no, so we have the example. And you were managing her remote right? So something changed in your relationship?

L3:: No, no, no, no, well, no, because again, she was he knew what she has to do. And she was doing that then the company unfortunately, had some problems. So the company was liquidated. So we had these three months where no one was basically working but she was started at the students table. So for our didn't change much but we our relationship was fine. Anyway.

I: Good, nice. Um So when it comes to your leader, how would you describe your interaction with CXO over COVID-19 before COVID-19 and over COVID-19

L3: So before I get into this information, density, right, because this is also my own impression. Now so there was there was a there was always the relationship of you know, really sorry, how do we kind of brands because you wouldn't I lost you for a few seconds. I'm back. Can you hear me?

I: Yeah. So it was always a relation of relationship of respect. So respect, professional respect, we also kind of friends because we long we will we are each other's teams quite a while but you know, when the there is a lot of business, it's better to keep kind of almost seven years. Yes, almost seven years. I always thought that he was very cold, especially that he didn't care nothing about like he didn't have a human on time, and I must say that Dr. COVID. Now she came to know, much more human with emotions and, and which I would appreciate that. And so yeah, that's the biggest change I saw.

I: But this transparency you talked about, right? It came in from the very beginning, or was the change that was demanded by COVID? In terms of let me put it this way. Your CEO, six months, you know, first month, no clients coming in nothing to do, you have to say, Okay, guys need to be live to be transparent, we're making no money. You know, so things are going this way. Or it was more like we already been transparent from the beginning. And then they say that the employees or, okay, we make no money. So let's reduce our salary or was more like, no money, we have to find a solution.

L3: No transparency was from the beginning. So everyone knew from day one, how much the company was spending and how much the company was adding, the moment they come by the company came by the pandemic came was the guys I don't want, I don't wanna fire anyone. I know when, you know, let's work out something suitable for everyone. Right? So the employees said, okay, we can... can we work less? So if we have less than if we want to work less? So and then, you know, that was the agreement? So everyone was involved? Like, it was not it was a common decision.

I: Yeah, sounds fair enough. So there was a problem it was discussed, and the decision was found democratically everyone was involved, actually, actually, very better way of doing things. Good, very, very well, very well done. And so when you are going to be working remote from because you understand you want to work hybrid, and also you have ideas of sometimes working from other countries a bit longer, four months or so. So what changed now, when you lead your team remote from when you were leading hair, in the same office, or when you

L3: when we have more meetings, we write, you know, we call each other more than we have. Now, for instance, in the summer, we go working from Italy, for a couple of months, we

established to have a meeting, meeting every Monday and the meeting every Friday, just even 15 minutes for a lot of work was done and be done. And we are, you know, we try to write less in the job since we're far away. And we figured something important, which of culture

I: and how easy was for you to adapt to remote working.

L3: But I was lucky because I've been in my past, I worked for IBM for a couple of years. So I was used to work remotely. So for me Actually, was the perfect thing. I don't like to be forced to get to come into the office. Because again, a walk professionally mature enough that you know, I know what I need to do, right? You don't need to stay on top of me.

I: So we've been working remote for a long time. Now you have a lot of experience. That's great. So, the next question will be what lessons have you learned from working remote?

L3: Well, personally, or like, professionally, you know, and also from others people, whatever chrome ups comes, if you have both go for it. So what I learned is that there are still people who are not able to work remotely because they really need to be at the office, they really need to be followed by someone. So there is not this entrepreneur is not for everyone working remotely. There are people who still distract themselves very very easily. So you know, the progress is the productivity would be dropping, I believe that he you know, it's very tough for them to to get a career based remotely senior people or machine or more people who have more experience of work, they might be more you know, strong on work remotely. So

I: good. And what would you do differently? What I will do differently if you wouldn't know from the beginning what means work remotely? You know, what would you do differently?

L3: Maybe implemented the four or four days or four days a week working day because this is something that the thing that the direction that we are going as well. Because again, for me, it was my dream to work remotely is very long time. And I was likey. Flexible, I believe the flexibility of companies need to be flexible now that is now also because now remote PHY is not anymore. Another value is not a benefit anymore, because many companies do that. So you need to get beyond that. And you know, maybe the working four days a week working with mortgage solution.

I: And I think that this will be one of the answers to my next question. Because I take the answer to the last question for the flexibility. So what would you do differently, I would say is give people more flexibility? And how would you do it one of the top three recommendation that you would give to leaders that wants to lead remote? Number one, I would say we already discovered it is moving to a four days a week work environment, because you realised maybe that the performance is the same. Why is that?

L3: Yeah, because people on Friday, unless you don't add something important, people are not very committed, then Friday, doesn't mind. You can ask for like your meetings, yes, you can check your email. But I don't see people doing proper execution on the work on Friday. And I base that on my own time, of course, right. But on the other hand, I'm the guy that can work even 10 hours during the week. But on Friday, I wake up I check my mess. But at midday, I'm already kind of gone to work. Right? So. So I couldn't like I see other people doing that as well. Yeah, the three calls that we're going to do and the teeth so you know, you're going to do that anyway, if you say again, what, four days a week, it's not that, Oh, I'm not going to do calls anymore on Friday. But you know, I feel uplifted, you know that four days a week that you can need to give the maximum and you can still make your 40 hours. Again, with the flexibility of adding even more flowers lunch break, because in the end, I just say eight hours of caring to my desktop without doing nothing. So I either need to come up with my brakes type.

I: Your company's a very young company, right? You have people still studying at university. So they're probably generation set, right? The Facebook generation, and you have people how old is this? He is Gen X or... or a boomer? Do you know 46? for seniors a boomer, I think is an extra 4060 should be an accident. Okay, and so, what is the average in your company in terms of age?

L3: I think that he that he is the average because you know, the oldest is me, the director and the CXO. And then there is another person, same my same age and then I wanted to break it. So the youngest is 21. And is your intern? No, actually she is 24.

I: Good. Um, and let me see if I forgot something. So in your opinion, from a company perspective, how easy was to adapt to remote working

L3: to the remote working how it was? While it wasn't easy. In the beginning, it was the people who made it easy, because again, the CEO was very afraid in a way but the people who had there were very professional people that you know, everyone, I think also the director of war had an attitude to... to kind of stay on the top of the people to be keeping them motivated. Try to not see like, many, many calls during the pandemic started, How is the situation there? How is this patient to that? And we will try to avoid that topic at all. Not because you want to ignore it, but just because we know how it can affect your psychology on a day baby. So I think that that also made a bit the difference.

I: And how long did it take for that for the team to adapt to the situation?

L3: Three months I think, yeah, three months, three months? Three months, four months from much like August it was feel everything's very shaky. Also because of the business so the other section okay for remote work many people were already you know, ready to work remote. So it was more to the management, afraid of the work remote. So I would say from an employee standpoint, the everything was, as usual. It was maybe the management a bit more stressed out.

I: Again, oh, could we repeat, please the top three recommendations for leaders that wants to lead remote. Number one was the 4 working days, try to move to that. Number two,

L3: the other two will be try to lead the not the manager and try to you know, put yourself make sure people that you are also doing stuff don't just micromanagement people actually difficult to be the leader, don't be the manager, show them that you're also working like the first line,

I: what can you can you? Can you tell me, what is a leader for you?

L3: For me, a leader is the one that actually it's it's also doing stuff that is also taking the task of others. Like if I'm a marketing manager, if I need to run an email campaign, I can I can run it and I get I go around to shows that I could do things, right. Same story for our CEOs. So sometimes also doing the interviews with the with the candidates, obviously, maybe higher level candidates, but still, He does it because he wants nothing. He's not because you want to show that but he's like part of being the leader. Right? He has to be natural. So yeah, he also wants to be involved in what people are doing. Excellent. Excellent. Good. And the third 1/3 one, I think transparency, yeah, post currency, especially in our startup environment, or in a small reality, there is no point to hide team, whether people knows everything from the beginning. So that everyone is on the same page. I mean, unlikely do we are also equality on the salary? Like not many have, like we had some standards, but there is no one that goes above... above doesn't matter the position, because then we have the commission that probably made the difference. But yes, overall race was fake. It was by being more.

I: Fair enough. That's great. So let's go to the last question. So as I said at the beginning, what we are trying here to discover is how moving into a remote leadership environment is... interrelates with the leader follower relationship, and ultimately how this is impacting the subordinates behavior over COVID in the workplace over COVID-19. So in your opinion, let's take the first part of the question. Moving into a remote leadership environment interrelates with the remote leadership relationship.

L3: No, I did not have any problem with my team member that I hired before COVID, I had time to build the relationship with her. She knew exactly what I wanted from her and what I was expecting, and she was delivering even over COVID, and I will trust, she will deliver over COVID. On the other side, we have my CXO, for example, saying no. When it comes to employees working remote, I don't trust they will work. Okay, let's but this is the only thing we can do. Let's see. Now, we've had the team that they knew was already committed. And restate through the six months you had, of course, stop me from saying something that doesn't represent what you said, please. And so based on the relations that was based this 12 people, you were right, he said, Guys, I cannot pay you. Or I don't want to fire anyone, we have to find a solution. Let's find a solution together, you found a solution that lasted for six months. Right? And then you went back on top when the market Went, went up again. Fair enough, like every other company now. over those six months, right, the commitment, I guess that was from the team members, and the fact that they would produce more, more or less the same level of quality, plus all the commitment from the leadership.

I: I guess, this director to be on top of each and every person in the team was very helpful, right?

L3: Yes, yes.

I: So now, this is my question. New people come in 18 new people come in and now We are having some problems in establishing trust, and a relationship with them of them the last time that they started, because they started recently, one day in the office, they don't know. So you're trying to put them in a relationship, kind of small things. So your question is, do you see a relationship between being... being a leader at the office and being a leader? remote? In the difficulties?

L3: Yes, because, again, people get to experience the pandemic altogether. So we know this, you guys didn't suffer with yarders, targeted ads, even emotional touch, right is somebody that you will remember for life. And this created the sort of, kind of more empowerment more commitment more like this is a family, right? The new one acquired now join us and they don't, you know, they didn't experience any of these and they work remotely, it's more difficult for them to become, you know, a strong part of the same family. And so the problem with the small team to make sure that the productivity is like, on the level that we expect. And second of all, it tries to have this leader be kind of the link between the rest of the day. So, but again, if you didn't have then the team activities, it still would be difficult. I see the, for instance, the new joiner don't really participate on the conversation on on the chart, right? Even the stupid one, right? Because maybe there are some of them who don't even open the Google Chart at all.

I: Okay, fair enough. So, there is a relation between leading remote and living at the lion leading at the same place in terms of building a relationship? And in your opinion, did this impact the behavior of the subordinate? Because, for example, with the new people, right, because for the old people's writing, even your intern or your subordinate, you have a relationship built before the trust didn't was there, you knew it kept going. So delivery was there. So no problem. You incremented communication, as you said, there was more communicate. So you found a way to make it work. But you knew each other from before now



with the new people. And having this lead this team leaders trying to link them, their performance, their behavior, is what you expect to be is the same.

L3: In terms of performance, I think that they are pretty stable. What I see is that, you know, the, the old guys, the old team, the ultimate member, they don't feel as subordinated by anyone they feel like job club or something like everyone is kind of peer. Yes, you have this title because you do have slightly different things. For me. The new one is that the day field jobs do not embrace at the moment.

I: So there is a certain sort of more integration in the team.

L3: Yes. Yes, yeah.

I: Some work on doing to make like this team on the pricing.

L3: Yes, yes.

I: So also, it's more like they are not as committed, they're not as, as part of the company of the organization, as the others are because of the trust and transparency and all they've... they've experienced and seen.

L3: Yes, yes.

I: I see. Fair enough. That's, that's good.

L3: Good, good. Good.

I: Thank you very much.

### **Transcript interview n. 8; Subordinate n. 3**

**Interviewer = I**

**Subordinate n. 3 = S3**

I: To understand my research topic, when we moved into a remote environment, how did the leader follower relationship change? So how did the relationship between and how this eventually impacted the behavior of the team member? So, you know, there are cases, and the idea is just I have some questions, we will go through it. And, you know, just give me your opinion on things. And if there is something you want to ask me, you want to clarify just pre? Okay, I'm just suddenly there. I know, I know, it's fun, because my, my idea is to actually, my idea is to have both understanding, right? Because I will not just ask to a leader, how did your team behavior changed? And why? It's just that effective. You want to know, also, the team perspective, you want to know how the team sees it, and sometimes is similar? Sometimes it's different. Okay. So, first of all, from your, in your opinion, what level of digitalization your organization has, if you have to think about low level, medium level, high level,

S3: high level,

I: great. And when it comes to digital means of community internal communication, of project management of cooperation, knowledge sharing, so what does your organization use? Same high level? Can you name some of the products you using?

S 3: Yeah, we use Google meetings, we actually... do you mean remote ones or also the ones that we have within our company.

I: You can tell me what is happening or what was happening before and maybe what?

S3: We chat, we use Google charts, we use Google meetings, we call each other we even messaged each other via Facebook, sometimes for LinkedIn. It depends, but I have a really good relationship with my coworkers and, and with my boss as well. So we don't find it difficult during remote times.

I: Good. And so what is your preferred medium of communication? I believe it is either Google meetings like my camera and microphone. Just meeting ourselves life. Okay, but and if you had to choose one, what would it be?

S3: Oh, well, it depends on the situation, of course. Tough question. I don't know. I don't really see the difference. I mean, when you are alive, you can kind of shell things but also you can do it when you when you kind of figure it out when you are on a camera, I can share your screen, right? So it is hard for me to decide whether I prefer this or that.

I: And if you let's put it this way, if you like your manager, you know him from before the pandemic, right. So with him, there is no difference, right? You don't feel the difference between remote or between? face to face. Am I correct?

S3: Yes. you are.

I: Okay. And with someone new in the company, right? One of these new people that also you are new right in the company?

S3: Yeah.

I: So how do you feel as being new in the company? Do you feel? Is it difficult? is better to meet these people face to face or it's better to all these people? digital is okay to

S3: digital is very much okay, I had all the trainings digitally. So it didn't really bother me. I understood all of the things that I wanted. So perfect.

I: Yeah, that's great. So what is the average age of the employees in your organisation?

S3: I don't actually know. I think it is like 26-277 I don't know. I'm guessing

I: it's fine. That's That's okay. And how do you know how Well, maybe you're working there. So how did you work before the pandemic? were you working from? From the office? Or were you able to work remote?

S3: Before the pandemic, I was working in a company, and we were basically working from the office? Yeah, yeah. Okay. Unfortunately, this company collapse.

I: And so let's say if you have to look at the experience, right, and put it together. So before dividend, make your workflow from the office, yes, over the pandemic, unfortunately, company collapse, but also, you had some work remote right at the beginning, you start working remote, and what changed for you when you started working remote.

S3: Now, it made me more responsible, because when I get home, I know that I need to sit at four to work and two things and not bother with any other stuff. I actually like working remotely,

and it makes me feel good. What else? I also felt that this thing like this type of working, and by doing this, I kind of earned my trust on my books, you know? So it is also for me, it is very good. Because you can show that you're actually doing a work while you're at home or you're I don't know, abroad or in a different place.

I: Was it difficult to adapt? Was it difficult to adapt?

S3: No, it wasn't, it wasn't for me. But maybe because I'm also a student. And you also have classes you have, you know, so I kind of got used to it. So when I started working here, and they had a lot of trainings remotely, it wasn't too overwhelming for me.

i: Because are already used by having classes online and offline. What are you studying?

S3: I was studying English Polish translations.

I: Yes. Cool. Cool.

S3: Thank you.

I: And so how would you like to work now?

S3: I think like half, half, half and half now. I like to be here. I like to see my colleagues, but also, because I am, My hometown is standing Proko it is basically in the news globally. And I don't know if you know, I live over three hours from here. So I know I want to visit my family sometimes. And it would be great for me to also work remotely sometimes. So it is how it reads.

I: And you would you use it just to work from your hometown. Or would you use this also to travel? Yeah, also to travel but I wasn't struggling. Now. If I if I plant Yes. Nice. Good. Good. about motivation. Right. When? How did it change from working in the office and working remote?

S3: I believe I got more motivated; I think Yeah. Because as far as what I said before, I just wanted to end the trust you know, so my motivation got higher because of that.

I: And also your performance but higher because you wanted to gain more trust. Yeah.

S3: Yeah, I think it depends on the task. But yes, I mean, I I'm always doing my best so.

I: And before the pandemic started, have you thought about working remote? And before the pandemic? No, I didn't think so. I wasn't thinking about that. I believe it was an option, right? Was it?

S3: some for some companies for some company wasn't. I wasn't thinking about that. I was leaving the Cracow and I wanted to work in back home. And yeah, so that was the

I: prior no for me. Would you work for a company that doesn't give you a remote? Yes, I think so. If because I'm thinking the same crackers. So what if you had another option right? If you have option a company gives Do you have a remote possibility? option B? company gives you no remote possibility? Yeah. And did you see your team members? performance change it change in performance over the pandemic?

S3: No. And to be honest, I didn't have, like I'm working here, from one and a half months from now and a half months. And I haven't noticed. So far anything that could have changed. But what I know is that I can message My boss anytime and like, wait, in 30 minutes or so I get

the reply, even though we are working remotely, so the spine is really fine for me to change. No, he's... his behavior. And I am kind of basically to say that when he works from home, he's when I can relax, maybe, because when we talk is when I open minded, you know, but I think this is what I have a feeling, I don't know.

I: So you have the feeling that when he is at home is more open minded and more relaxed, and he listens more to you. But it depends on the day.

S3: And then it is because I also see him on me via camera all the time, like we are sitting in the office. And now I can see him from I don't know, eight hours. Maybe that's why. But yeah. So how would you describe Adriana was a leader? Well, I want to describe him as a very helpful leader. I can ask him any question, really. And he always answers me. He doesn't get mad at me Even I may, even if I make mistakes, he just says that it is good that you learn from them. He gives me a lot of tasks. But this is very good. Maybe not so much, you know, but he always makes sure that I have something to do. And this is very good for me because I like having something to do. So if I'm also helpful for him, and I believe we are friends is really nice.

I: So how would you describe yourself as a team member?

S3: I will describe myself as a kind of a workaholic. But I don't know if But yeah, I just think having something to do. When I work I when I'm at work, I work when I'm working from home, I also work It is not like, Of course I'm having breaks. And Leader n. 3 reminds me a lot about taking breaks because sometimes I forget about them. But yeah, I like working. I like what I do. And I am also very well organized that way. And yes, I don't have problems with multitasking or what working with other members of the teams.

I: Thank you. Can we say that? There is a part of you, that has a feeling as you said before, that that we are no is a better leader when is working remote?

S3: No, I didn't say that. I just said that. He looks more relaxed, but it doesn't mean. Yeah, but I also told you that actually I see him I don't know, for 30 minutes for a call to discuss some things, you know, and that's it. So maybe while calling me he looks like that. But you know, after that maybe he gets more stress? I don't know. Just it is a difference when you see someone for

I: but your perception, your perception, your perception gives you more tranquility, let's say more, you have that feeling your perception is that he is more calm. You have those 30 minutes with meeting. And maybe you are not in the same room of the crazy Italian guy all the time. But if it doesn't, then no, no, no, no, she's most of the times. I know, I know, the guy I worked with for many years. Yeah. Great guy. And by the way, thank you very much for today You saved me. So how would you describe the indirect interactions with Adriana? over the curse of COVID right or when you work remote, let's say but to say there are more interactions, less interactions.

S3: I think it is the same because whenever I have a question, I ask it that whether it is remote or it is live.

I: So you basically, let's say that if you are in the same room, you will ask a question, if you're not, you write to him or you send him a message or you call him. So, yes, you immediately substitute like this verbal communication, verbal interaction that you can have in an office with... with a virtual digital communication. And that is working for poverty.

S3: Yeah, when we need anything, we arrange a meeting in our life or remote it is it is a problem for us as well.

I: yeah, yeah, yeah. So. And do you feel there is more trust? Since COVID-19? started?

S3: Yes, I believe so. Because I know that our boss was kind of against working remotely, but our team like shows him that we can do it, even though if we work from home, that this is a stereotype that people do not work from home, you know, and we show that that that we can work, we can earn money, and he can trust us. So it is more trust during the epidemic? Yeah, definitely.

I: So, before you said something, that something that changed for you, when working remote was being more motivated to show that you can make the job anyways, that you can perform even perform better than before. And this was also possible because you got the thrust, you know, with, with your leader work. And it's probably this way. And because it's a very good relationship you have there right is a partnership, right is a friendship is where you can trust each other, you know that the work will be done. I can trust you. And that's important, right? Do you believe that would happen if you didn't know him before the pandemic? Now, if the I know that your morning went? Well, because you're used to remote learning environment?

S3: Let's call it this way. Yeah, I don't think we work together right now, if we were on working before. Because he wrote me as I was his internship before now and onward, me here.

I: What do you think that you would have had difficulties in working with someone you didn't know, in a remote environment?

S3: I think... I don't think so. If the person would be friendly, willing to ask questions, like, I don't think I would have problems.

I: But do you think that they have the ability that you have to not be afraid to ask questions, right? comes from the fact that you knew a piano before and you knew that for him, you can go and ask questions to him?

S3: No, not really, because it is not only with Adriana, I also ask questions to recognise my boss. Okay, now, I don't look. I didn't know that.

I: How does that work? Let's talk about others. How is your relationship with others? How is that growing?

S3: Yes, it is great. Everyone is willing. This company is willing to answer my questions within I don't know, 60 minutes time, with all the data details I need. Yeah, I am not stressed at all. When we were having trainings, yeah. I asked a lot of questions because I didn't know stuff. And, you know, this was the thing that I didn't meet. I didn't even meet this person life. We were just having remote trainings. And they were so nice. I was stressed at all, and we're having trainings and asking questions and smiling and it was great.

I: Great, great. And he was all remote. Yes, yeah. And so how is going with the let's say team building experiences like are you did you make any friend already or friend you know what I mean, you know, do you know someone in the company or

S3: on the from the from work? I don't know then I personally but I made some friends. I mean, for example, I have a friend from this park that I met here actually. And you know, we message themselves and outside the park sometimes so

that's nice. And you also met outside of work? No, no, I only only virtually all it Isn't it? No, I met her actually in the office. Oh, you met her in the office? Okay. Yes. And then you start messaging after you met her in the office? Yes, yes. Okay, cool. Great. So you already said

that it was pretty easy for you to adapt to remote and to this remote environment. And what lessons have you learned? Sorry. Okay. Yeah. So maybe I can close the door. Okay. Okay, I'm back. No worries. Thank you. Was that sunny? Yes, it was. So what lessons have you learned from working remote?

Yeah, definitely building trust, and legitimacy, difficulty being more motivated, definitely, like self control, maybe. But also actually taking care of myself. Because when I work remotely, I told you that I forget about taking breaks, and stuff like that. And this is also important. When I work at home, I have more time to eat, for example, while here I am sitting, for example, sometimes I forget. And this is not good. Right? So it is also like, work life balance. Yeah, taking care of myself.

I: So let's explore the other the other points that you made, you said, taking care of yourself. You said that trust building trust. So how do you do that? Well, you said something before already. So how would you do that? building trust?

S3: I would just do my work. Yeah, that's it and show them that I did it.

I: And what was the second point? Sorry?

S3: It was like, taking care of myself. Did you mean that? Yeah. No, there was a taking care of yourself there was it was because I don't suffer. Because motivation, motivation. So how do you motivate yourself? It doesn't come as something difficult for me to be honest. I don't know. I just it's hard to say because I just, it just the things I don't know, I just says maybe I know, I'm, I have a planner, and I'm writing my tasks. And maybe this is kind of a motivational thing. That makes me more motivated, that makes me do this job, because I haven't listed and, you know, I know what I do what I need to do. And

I: so and then there was the taking care of yourself. And then you mentioned that certain bind, sort of finding balance, right. But also, you mentioned that you are a bit of a workaholic. So how do you manage to find balance if you're a workaholic?

S3: I don't know. I mean, that what I meant by that is that conditioning at work, like physically at work, I just wouldn't tells you I just forget about things like taking breaks and not maybe eating. Really, I just do my work and I forget about that. And when I'm at home, I always have someone to tell me that you should eat something, you know.

I: So you have more of, you're able to have a more complete work life balance into a remote environment than that. Okay. And the more healthy life yeah, and about flexibility.

S3: flexibility. I think I am more flexible when I work remote family. But it depends, because I'm also studying. So for example here. When I'm at work, I sometimes take my classes for more, actually, I go for an hour and I take my class. But now when I'm at home, it is kind of more easy because I have a lot of stuff already because I don't bring all of the stuff to not to the office for example notes. So it is it is much better for me to work in study from home when I have an option. And when I finished already, the examination examination session has finished today I had last exam. So yeah,

I: right. Great. Congratulations.

S3: Thank you.

I: Congratulations, I cannot wait to finish this thesis. So what are the top three recommendation you would do to leaders to deal with remote team members?

S3: Firstly, the big trust them. The second one would be actually monitor them and check if they did they work, because it's important. And the third one is get to know that you maybe have to have to put it make them know that, that you appreciate their the work that they did for me, which may be sometimes difficult. Yeah,

we talked a bit, we talked a lot about trust over this interview, tell me just a bit about how we can make that. Sorry, my brain is Have I been in maintenance too late in the morning. So point number two was was it was just that it was Check, check, check, check for gifted work, in terms of have a daily where you understand how things are going if you can help him with things, and evaluate, you know, maybe at the beginning of the week, at the end of the week, how things are going, if you can work on it. Last, of course, as you said all the communication, like pick up the phone calling, sending messages and WhatsApp. And the third point was then third recommendation was,

i: and the third point was that you can make an argument, evaluate them, but make them know that

S3: appreciate them, appreciate them appreciate appreciate for the effort they've done for the work they've done. So be appreciated. That's very good recommendation. Everyone, just if feedback is important, you know, this is not always about appreciation, feedback.

I: Do you think that moving into a remote environment in the company? You're right? I helped with the leader follower relationship?

S3: Yes, I would say so. I'm not working here long. But as far as I know, yes.

I: Because I already had, you know, you know, exactly the story and what happened and that the people were there and that they wanted to stay in the day, you know, it feels like people are proud of what they've done and that they are there. So it's nice that they shared this with other members that have been just joining the team recently. And yeah, yeah. And so you believe that moving into this remote leadership, like because of probably series of factors strengthen the relationship they had. And do you feel that this had an impact on the behaviour of the team?

S3: I wish I had known them before, but I believe so. Like, what I can see now is that they are happy. We are even having like separate rooms for chatting. Now. It's I feel like we are very close to each other. And for me, this is

I: great. Great. So we are done. Thank you very much. I'm stopping recording. Okay.

## Statement of Affirmation

I hereby declare that all parts of this thesis were exclusively prepared by me, without using resources other than those stated above. The thoughts taken directly or indirectly from external sources are appropriately annotated. This thesis or parts of it were not previously submitted to any other academic institution and have not yet been published.

Dornbirn, 29. 07. 2021



Andrea Camillo Anastasi