Tampere University of Applied Sciences

Improving leading practices in blended working environment

Company X managerial change after pandemic

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BACHELOR'S THESIS
May 2021

Bachelor's Degree Programme in International Business

ABSTRACT

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
Tampere University of Applied Sciences
Bachelor's Degree Programme in International Business

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Improving leading practices in blended working environment

Bachelor's thesis 26 pages, appendices 1 pages
May 2021

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This thesis was commissioned by a company X that operates in Finland. It is part of a European concern, and it is operating in financial field. The goal of this research was to help the commissioner company improve its managers tools and leading methods in a situation where employees are working both from home and in the office. This is called a blended working environment. It is a new situation for a commissioner company X because its customer service centre employees used to work only from the office before the Covid-19 pandemic.

An empirical research was conducted, where eight team managers were interviewed in Fall 2020. The research was qualitative and based on those interviews, the most concerning areas from managerial point of view were communication and work monitoring. Those aspects will be analysed, and based on the information acquired, recommendations will be given for the commissioner company.

Theoretical framework of this thesis focuses on communication, contingency theory and Human Resource Management. These topics support the interview respondents needs and with those aspects, the needed results were found for the commissioner company. The end results of this research were that managers desires tools and training especially for communication and work monitoring, and solutions for those problems were found.

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Key words: remote working, covid-19, blended working, human resource management, line manager

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this bachelor's thesis is to analyze the change in commissioner company X, where employees are working both from home and at the office in the future and try to find solutions and give advices to management in this kind of "blended working" environment. According to Khwatenge (2020), blended working is a mix of technology and face-to-face task deliverables. It combines traditional physical presence set up with online working, and employees have some control over the time, pace, and place of their work.

The idea of this thesis is to do research from managerial point of view and to give the commissioner company advice on how to lead managers as smooth as possible to a new normal: blended working environment. Blended working is a "hybrid- model" of teleworking and office working. In this case for company X, it means that in the future, employees have more flexibility to decide where their working is located.

It is essential to be able to manage this type of team placement. The topic of this bachelor's thesis is "Improving leading practices in blended working environment in a company X" and it analyzes the hopes that team managers have from the future. Eight team managers have been interviewed from commissioner company X, and based on those interviews, the most important areas to do research were communication and work monitoring. Those two are the main focus areas in this thesis.

In 2020, when Covid-19 was changing the norms of working in many organizations, company X wanted to prepare itself to a bigger change. As the training and implementation of new employees happened from home, the situation was new both for the employee and for the company. The company had never had to train new employees from home office, and at that time there were no office days at all. The organization had to adapt to the new situation and start to think about the future where employees are not at the office every day. This research question has been a concern of the company's executive team since Covid-19 started to affect the working methods, and it was a great chance to do research about the

topic and also interview the managers. When the thesis topic was still unclear to its author, the executive team suggested it to the employee and it was developed to as it is now. The main concern was to be able to offer all the essential tools for managers to adapt to a new normal.

Spring 2020 was a big change to many companies all around the world, and this case company had to also adapt to a new situation. Before Spring 2020, the employees were mostly only working from the office. They only had a chance to work from home 1-2 days a week, and because of the worldwide situation, employees had to move to home office quite fast. The organization managed to adapt to the change well, and the results of teleworking were good. It gave a lot of opportunities to everyone, and the situation most likely will never go back to the same it was before.

New practices, good plans, team principles and management practices are quickly reversed if organizations don't know how to manage the changes or are not able to implement them continuously. Working has not changed as rapidly and significantly in the past years as it has been changed because of Covid-19.

The changes in working life seen in 2019 have been talked about for a longer time, and teleworking with video conferencing, for example, was familiar to many before. However, remote working in Finland was not so popular for example in 2018. According to Finnish Working Conditions Barometer 2019, only 23% of Finnish employees did remote working regularly and 14% occasionally in 2018. Majority of Finnish employees had not done remote working at all in 2018 (Working Conditions Barometer 2019, 17).

The change is so far-reaching, and so many months behind and in front, that 2020 changed working life once and for all. Now that it has been seen that the change is permanent and did not last only for one Spring, companies have to prepare managers and employees for different working habits and also make changes to ensure managers have the tools they did not have before to make blended working successful for all.

This topic and research is very relevant as this is the new era for many companies, and for this case company as well. There are many financial reasons to lead this change as well, for example blended working allows the company to have less office space since people are able to work more from home. If successful, blended working possibilities will increase employee motivation and result in better work performance.

The purpose of this thesis is to ensure the team managers have the best possible tools for leading in the new era of working, and to make sure that executive team of this company X are aware of those needs and will be able to offer solutions for those.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theories that will be introduced in the following parts will form the basis to this thesis. These aspects are common to the topics discussed in this research.

2.1 Communication

In a blended working environment where the majority of communication is made via phone, chat or a video call, people's messages can be interpreted wrong more likely than in person. A successful conversation requires ways to interpret another person. A skilled conversationalist makes observations that have nothing to do with the spoken words. When the corona virus forced the majority of people to telecommute, making these nonverbal observations became harder. Right now, it is even more important to make sure every now and then that you understand the other person correctly.

A manager takes a big risk if he/she doesn't learn communication skills. Managers are the ones who have to have the toughest conversations that others might not have to. A skilled conversationalist might turn a situation that looks like a disaster into a good result with his/her expertise. Accodring to Maka Language Consulting (2016), conversation skills alone won't get you far, but a lack of them will stop you from getting ahead. Qualifications and business acumen are important, but to get noticed you need to communicate. Communication plays a big role in blended working environment, and it was also one of the main concerns that interview respondents had when doing this research.

Facing a big organizational change will cause a lot of tough discussions. These are the situations where brave conversationalists are needed: people who know how to manage expectations, face even the hardest situations so that after the conversation the situation is better than it was before it. Employees in a commissioner company will most likely have many questions and prejudices about blended working, so communication is highlighted in these situations.

Sometimes in a work community there is a belief that something should not be talked about or differing opinions should not be given. This leads to a fruitless,

like-minded pressure, and if we think about a work community where everyone is each other's clone, it wouldn't be fun or progressive. According to Robinson, Segal and Smith (2020), in order to communicate effectively with someone, you don't have to like them or agree with their ideas, values, or opinions. However, you do need to set aside your judgment and withhold blame and criticism in order to fully understand them. In blended-working environment, there can be novel worries and different thoughts that employees want to discuss about with their managers.

In a workplace community, it is common for people to avoid certain types of conversations. People tend to avoid conversations that might raise emotions in another person. This leads to a lack of communication which is never a good thing. Starting a conversation about a difficult subject isn't always easy even for trained professionals. In a pressurized situation, most people lose their communication skills, and if they don't recognize it, people tend to resort to their old patterns. According to Robinson, Segal and Smith (2020), When a conversation starts to get heated, you need something quick and immediate to bring down the emotional intensity. By learning to quickly reduce stress in the moment, you can safely take stock of any strong emotions you're experiencing, regulate your feelings, and behave appropriately. You need to recognize when you're getting stressed and take a moment to calm down to continue the conversation to have a pleasant outcome for everyone attending the conversation. If you feel like there is a miscommunication and it causes pressure to the conversation, you can simply ask "I feel like you're saying this, am I right?" It is also important to be ready to correct yourself right away if you notice that you were interpreted wrong.

People also might have high expectations of a conversation, but they are not prepared at all to a situation where the conversation moves to a direction they have not expected. Typical pressurized conversations are those where the participants have different views of the direction and the objective of the conversation.

According to Occupational Safety Center of Finland (Työturvallisuuskeskus), listening, genuine presence, interest, ability to cooperate and giving space to another promotes good communication. In the other hand, strong preconception, bias, lack of interest, hurry, generalization and recrimination prevents good communication.

Preparation is essential for a good conversation. Preparation brings certainty in a situation where you might become distressed. Preparing for a conversation and getting to know your counterpart does not kill spontaneity, but it will broaden your views and increase relaxedness and presence. Even if there is pressure in the conversation, the speaker is able to act and allows him/herself and the counterpart to feel the emotions that the conversation might raise. Even if you're insecure you can still function. Having emotions is one thing, and how you express them is another.

Just as important as preparing for a conversation is to set up a good atmosphere and release the conversation to roll on its own tracks, but also make observations of the situation. Ask yourself questions such as "Do I understand this person correctly?" "Are we even having the same question". According to Robinson, Segal and Smith (2020), when used appropriately, humor is a great way to relieve stress when communicating. When you or those around you start taking things too seriously, find a way to lighten the mood by sharing a joke or an amusing story. This is a great way to maintain a good team spirit and atmosphere in a blended working environment. In addition to discretion it is important to understand that your own observations are always imperfect and to allow others to give input in your opinions. This strengthens the us-sprit of the work community and helps everyone to be on the same page.

In some conversations one of the counterparts might be having a knowledge-based conversation when the other one is having an emotional conversation. For example, a manager might think that the conversation is about solving a problem, when the subordinate might be thinking that the manager is disappointed in him/her and what it will do to his/her career in the future. These are dangerous situations in blended working environment, and managers should be aware of these risks to avoid them.

2.1.1 Contingency Theory

Contingency Theory explains that there are specific situational factors which can affect the direct relationship between independent and dependent variables in the study of organizational behavior. Independent variables are the cause of the change in the dependent variable, which in this study means for example productivity. According to Flinsch-Rodriguez (2010) there is no best way to lead an organization. There are too many external and internal constraints that will alter what really is the best way to lead in a given situation. There are many situational variables when moving to blended working from a manager's point of view, for example seeing their team members face-to-face or being able to have a quick chat at the coffee room. Contingency theory is very relevant when moving into a new kind of working environment, because the company has never been in blended-working situation so managers need to find the best tools to manage this new situation and to meet the needs of their team. According to Indeed Editorial Team (2020) Contingency theorists would say that no matter how successful a leader is, there will always be a particular situation that will challenge them. Therefore, leaders must be willing to acknowledge the fact that their success depends partially on their circumstances in addition to their personal skills. Even though the commissioner company has very talented and experienced managers, blended-working will most definitely challenge them. Managing a team where some employees are telecommuting while others are physically in the office will bring new challenges on how to lead, communicate and supervise the employees most effectively.

Contingency theory states that in order to maximize work group performance, leaders must be matched to the right leadership situation (Figure 1). It means that the way you manage should change depending upon the circumstances. When blended working environment becomes a new normal, leaders are facing a big change and also their leadership style must change. The commissioner company X needs to give the right tools for managers so that they can implement their new leadership styles in practice.
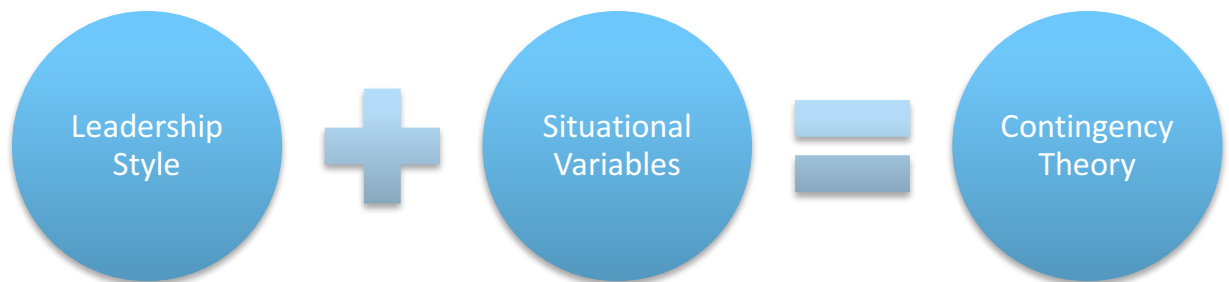
FIGURE 1. The idea of Contingency Theory

2.2   Human Resource Management

Leading today is harder than ever before and a leader needs to have many qualities to understand people. The world's globalization is increasing extremely fast all the time, and it requires better interaction among people from diverse backgrounds, cultures and beliefs. According to Inc. website (2020), a term Human Resource Management describes formal systems devised for the management of people within an organization. The responsibilities of a human resource manager (or management team) fall into three areas: staffing, employee compensation and benefits. It also defines and designs work. The purpose of Human Resource Management is to maximize the productivity of an organization by optimizing the effectiveness of its employees. Some of the most important tasks Human Resource Management has are planning work, staffing, developing employees, appraising, evaluating performances, managing change, maintaining relationships and motivating employees (Figure 2).

What forms the effectiveness of an organization is employee skills, motivation, and strategic focus of work. In order to optimize this, the focus of Human Resource assessment should be on a strategy that includes information to support and underpin Human Resource management.

According to Isopoussu (2017), Human Resource Management is one of the company's most important competitive factors. Good human resource management means combining business and people's operations so that the best possible result is obtained. According to Gabcanova (2011), a good human resources management becomes extremely important because the well-being of a company's employees is directly related to their productivity and therefore related to the performance of the company. If the employees' well-being is ignored in a blended working environment, slacking can take place more easily than in a traditional working environment because supervising the performance of the employees is harder. With good human resources policies, the employees of a company tend to be more productive and performance of the company stays adequate regardless of the change.
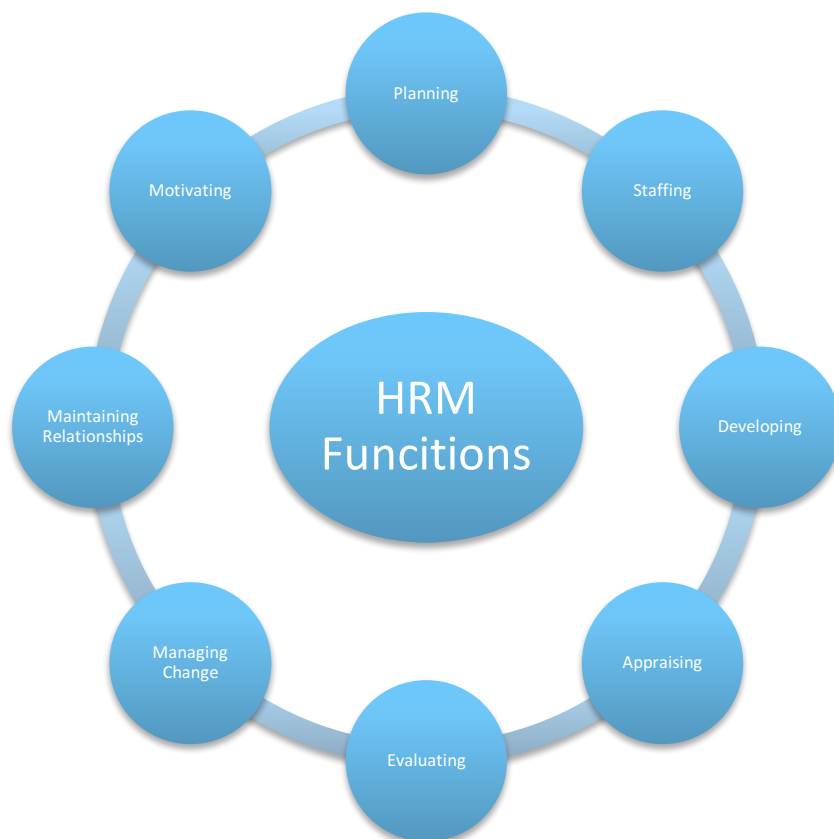

FIGURE 2. Eight examples of Human Resource Management Functions.

In this research, the managers that were interviewed are line managers. The executive team of the commissioner company wants to improve its tools for blended working situation especially from line managerial point of view. A line manager directly manages other employees and operations of a business and they report to a higher-ranking manager. They delegate work and give feedback to their team members. They make sure their group has the resources they need to do their job and they supervise and train their employees. Line manager is an intermediate between a group of employees and the higher managers in a company. According to Inc. website (2020) a line manager oversees the quality of the job and they perform any improvements needed. Since the Human Resource Management department or manager is charged with managing the productivity and development of workers at all levels, human resource personnel should have access to, and the support of, key decision makers.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Qualitative Research

The chosen research method for this thesis was qualitative research. In this study, it means interviews with team managers from a commissioner company X. Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. According to Bhandari (2020), qualitative research is the opposite of quantitative research, which involves collecting and analyzing numerical data for statistical analysis. Qualitative research can provide in-depth and accurate information on a topic or a problem but it is often suitable only for use with a small group of people. Since there were only 8 respondents, qualitative research and interviews was the best option.

The interviews were made in September 2019 in personal Skype video meetings with each of the respondents. One reason why qualitative research method and interviews were chosen, was that the commissioner company wanted to get honest opinions and interviewing the managers enables the interviewer to ask clarifying questions and gives a chance to guide the conversation to the direction the respondent feels important. The interviews provide detailed information on the opinions and views of the interviewees. The information is usually qualitative, but to some extent it can also be presented in numerical form.

3.2 Questions and respondents

The respondents of the interviews were eight team managers from a commissioner company X. All managers have between eight to twenty team members and most of them work in a customer service centre. Most of the managers have been leading their team for several years, but there were also a newer team managers who have been in management level for less than two years. Every respondent is a line manager, and their job is to motivate, train, evaluate and develop their team members. It is also in their responsibility to report the team's

success to their managers and make sure that the goals of the organization sets will be reached. Every respondent is a professional in leading and managing.

The questions (appendix 1) were semi- open questions and they were sent to respondents before the interviews so that they can evaluate these subjects and consider the answers carefully. This also allows the respondents to pick the questions they have the most input in. There were eight questions sent to each respondent, and all of the interviews lasted about one hour, which tells that it was very conversational and open interview. The purpose for this type of interview was to be able to get the most information from the field that felt the most important for the managers. It is worth remembering that there is a research interest in an open interview. Despite the free discussion, the interviewer must, if necessary, guide the discussion along the line of research interest. That was done in all of the interviews made for this research. Even though there were eight questions, only about five of them got more time in each interview based on the opinions of the respondents.

4   RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1   Interview results

The following sections open the interview results from two different point of views. These two aspects were chosen by the main concerns managers told in the interviews. Those main points are communication and work monitoring. The answers between managers were quite similar with each other: the main concerns were all similar, even though some managers were more concerned about specific areas than others. In the interview questions, the respondents were asked about the positive effects of blended working leading, and all respondents agreed on the positive sides of the new normal. Since the main concerns were clear from the first interviews onwards, the interviews focused mostly on the negative effects and respondents told widely about their needs and what they are afraid of in blended working situation. A SWOT-Analysis based on these eight interviews was also made.

4.1.1   Communication

All eight respondents agreed that communication is the main aspect the company needs to focus the most on and react to the fastest. By the time the interviews (September 2019) were made, the company was using Skype for everyday chatting and communication, and all managers said that they wish the company would change to Teams or some other, more convenient, chatting platform. Skype does not offer a chance to save group chats, so every morning teams had to make a new group chat. Managers wanted a solution that allows teams to have more group chats that stay as they are every day to be able to have "coffee groups" and a chat where team members can talk more unofficially. These unofficial messages would not disturb the official chat that people use for asking help and for important information. Three out of eight respondents were worried about the sizes of their teams. All three managers have about 20 team members and they were wondering if the group size is too big to be able to communicate and stay in touch as much as needed in blended working

environment. Six out of eight respondents mentioned that new employees should visit office regularly to orientate them to the work environment and to their new team. They felt that it is extremely important to gain "quiet knowledge" from colleagues, which in this case means all the information you get by hearing your colleagues talking on the phone with clients or on the hallway about the company.

4.1.2 Work Monitoring

Work monitoring is crucial for managers, and its importance is emphasised in customer service centre where every customer contact is measured in time and quality. According to Hughes (2021), finding effective ways of managing remote workers will be a priority of many businesses in the months to come, as new styles of working spurred by COVID-19 settle into long-term trends. In blended working environment, work monitoring is naturally a big topic. Managers are responsible to report the efficiency of the team and that is why work monitoring was one of the main concerns when speaking about teleworking. It is naturally a lot easier to supervise employees in the office, where you can physically see what they are doing during the day. Six out of eight interview respondents thought that they would want more tools to monitor their team members working. They wished that there would be more tools to get data from the tasks that are done during the day. Better work monitoring tool would benefit because managers would be able to trust their employees to work from home more often, but most importantly an efficient tool would save time from team managers. Some managers mentioned that even though they trust their employees, it would be good to allow managers to see their team members' computer screens during workdays. When working in the office, managers can walk past the employees, but remote workers are not physically reachable, so a chance to see the screen would gain trust that remote workers would not misuse the chance to work from home.

It is also a challenge for the commissioner company to be able to implement new work monitoring tools and methods for employees without making the employees feel that they are being stalked and maintain the feeling that they are trustworthy in the eyes of managers. According to Bhaduri, Raj and Sharma (2017) some

employees tend to feel overwhelmed by work monitoring and organizational demands for excellence. They state that the leadership styles which exercises least control/monitoring, has the most positive effect on climate and business performance.

4.1.3 SWOT-Analysis

Based on the interviews that were made in this research, the SWOT analysis was made for the executive team to clearly see the main positive and negative effects of blended working from team managerial point of view (Figure 3). SWOT analysis is a tool for businesses that helps them to make strategy and recognise problems and opportunities in organization. SWOT analysis stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

STRENGHTS	WEAKNESSES
-Good atmosphere in team	-Communication tools
-Equality	-Work monitoring
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATHS
-Flexibility	-Distancing from team members
-Accessibility	-Lack of trust

FIGURE 3: SWOT-Analysis based on the interview responses

Strengths of the blended working environment in the commissioner's case will be good atmosphere in teams, and equality. Every respondent agreed that their team has a great general atmosphere and they felt that it will help facing the organizational change. The change is happening to every team and every team member in the organization, so all employees have equal chances to do blended working and no one is alone in the situation.

There were two clear weaknesses that all respondents agreed on. The biggest worry was communication tools, and also time for communication. Managers agreed that they would need more time and tools to have casual conversations

with their team members, and they thought that Skype is not offering that to them at the time. Now the commissioner company is using Teams for daily chatting, but the respondents wanted to have time slots and ideas to communicate more often. They also wished for mutual guidelines for team members from the corporation so that they do not have to make communication plans and guidelines themselves.

Opportunities that highlighted in every interview, were flexibility that the blended working situation offers both for team members and managers. People do not have to travel to work anymore, which saves time and energy. People are able to work from their cottage or even from another country if agreed on. Flexibility will raise motivation and employee satisfaction. In blended working environment, it is also important to highlight that people can choose whether they want to come to the office or not. It is not mandatory to work remotely. With flexible options, everyone can find their own best way to work.

Being able to use digital tools in blended working environment also improves accessibility according to the managers. Seven out of eight respondents mentioned that it is sometimes hard to reach them during the day if they are in a face to face meeting or on the other side of the office. Blended working environment brings meetings to a digital formation, and they felt that their team members can reach them more easily. It is a lot easier to have a quick video call or to send a small message than try to find your team manager from the large office.

One threat that managers saw was distancing from team members. This means that they are concerned about distancing themselves from their team, but also team members distancing from each other. It is more difficult to maintain a good team spirit when everyone is not in the same place, and managers fear that people that are in the office will distance from the remote workers. They think that there needs to be a tool that everyone can use for team building, despite where their work is located.

Another threat that managers agreed on was lack of trust. They fear that their team members can lose trust on equal treatment, and that the trust they enjoy from team managers would depend on their working method. Managers also are

afraid that it will be harder to trust the remote workers than employees in the office if they don't get a tool to be able to get more data from the remote working effectiveness. Especially with new employees, managers think that the trust between the organization and the employee is harder to build if new employees are only working from home. It is also easier to confirm the know-how and the abilities to work when new employees are physically reachable and it is also easier for them to ask for help and learn from a colleague sitting next to them.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

In Working Conditions Barometer 2020 made by Finnish Government, questions about general satisfaction to remote working during Corona pandemic were asked. The questions were asked from those employees that had started to do remote working because of Covid-19 or had started to do remote working more often because of it. Most of the respondents were satisfied on remote working- 44% were "very satisfied" and 48% were "quite satisfied". Only 6% said that they are "unsatisfied" (Working Conditions Barometer 2020, 79). This tells us that people will most likely want to do remote working in the future as well, so blended working environment will most likely be inevitable.

The main concerns that managers had are absolutely manageable, and the commissioner company can face the challenges and conquer them. They already have a good experience in remote working, and the main challenges are fixable with communication and work monitoring tools. When the right tools are found and employees learn how to use them, the blended working will work just fine.

Employees' feelings and problems should be brought to the attention of supervisors easily and without a threshold. This is mandatory in a blended working situation and requires a digital tool. More tools and time to communicate, and more information to supervisors about what are all the tools available. It is also very important to make clear instructions to each member of the organization about what the future blended working environment will mean in practice and when everyone should be in the office, for example. In order to train and team up new employees, a solution that allows them to adapt to the whole team, despite where everyone's work is located, must be found.

5.2   Recommendations

The commissioner company needs to train communication skills for the managers. Even though they are professionals already, it is good to prepare the managers well for conversations. The executive team should focus on training managers on blended working situation by giving them training sessions about communication and using different technical tools correctly. Also, managers should have trainings about the possibilities the communication and work monitoring tools offer, not just the basics to be able to use them.

It would save a lot of time for managers if they would have a clear and detailed information available of their team members work. The information should be gathered to an easily readable platform that managers can follow daily. If managers would not have to use a lot of time in work monitoring, it would release a lot of time to communicate and interact with their team members.

The case company X should also find a solution to give managers more time to have small chats with their team members, and it would also be essential to offer every employee a platform (and time for using it) to have small, non-professional conversations during the day so that they would have a chance to interact with each other no matter where their work is located.

To be able to monitor the employees, it would be good to give managers a chance to see the screens of their employees work computer. It would bring equality, since the people who are at the office, share their screen's view with everyone who walk past them, and it would also bring trust to managers that remote workers are actually doing what they are supposed to do. This would need clear guidelines and a good explanation for employees for them to understand the importance of remote work monitoring. It would be at least good to have inquiry in organization and ask if the employees would be okay with it, and for what reasons.

A video call gives out much more information than just speech, and speech with its different tones give out more information than a text. Your tone of speech is

also extremely important. It would be good to have mutual guidelines for every team. For example, having to have a camera on in a video meeting, so that managers do not have to use their time or position to make those rules. It would be easier for them to have general rules that they can share to their team and everyone would follow organizational rules.

When chatting, all the tones disappear. Emojis are a good tool to communicate emotions. A good guideline is to write a politer text than what you would say when speaking. When there is no tone of speech, kindness has to be created with other ways. If written the same way as spoken it will come out harsher. Having a training for managers and team members about the tone of speech in text, the commissioner company would not have misunderstandings or conflicts because of its employee's lack of chat communication training.

Communication wise, there are apps available, such as TimeTree where a team can share one calendar with the possibility to set goals and give comments. There is also Freedcamp where you can make a detailed plan for projects, priority levels, set deadlines and choose what should be seen by the rest of the team and what should be private. By having the communication digitalized, it is possible to look back at what messages and task were given, and lessen the chance of having miscommunication. This also makes it less time consuming when you have the ability to reach out to everyone at the same time instead of contacting each team member one by one. It would be essential to have more time and chance to chat with team members individually. A good idea would be to have a 10 minute individual chat with every team member for example every two weeks, so that managers would have a chance to share their time with everyone. This would enable the managers time to focus on other things- bi-monthly chat with everyone would be in the calendar anyway, and they would not have to worry about not knowing about their team members possible problems. This is possible to do online or face-to-face, so working location is not important.
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Digitalized management tools enable for us to work efficiently. Introducing appropriate management tools allow us to automate useful service operation in the working hours, sharing tasks and identification problems in early stage.

To be able to analyse the ways and methods to motivate employees, it would be good to do a character analysis of every employee so that the managers would learn more about their team members. When knowing their employees better they are able to know for example if someone is introvert or extrovert and they would be able to motivate them in the right way in their work.

Another good way to be more aware of the team members' wellbeing would be a "feeling- meter", which has already been in use in company X occasionally. This feeling-meter allows employees to easily tap on five different icons about how they are feeling from very good to very bad. It also allows the employee to write a small comment. The feeling-meter would be easily seen and quick to answer daily. This way managers would see if his/her team member is feeling low for a longer period of time and it would also give the employee a low threshold chance to tell if they have not slept well or something else is bothering them. Managers would not have to stick to every emotion or message, but the idea would be that if something is wrong for a longer period of time, managers and employees can discuss openly and tell about possible barriers they have for the best performance all the time without any pressure.

To be able to maintain employee's physical wellbeing even better, the commissioner company could focus the Christmas (and other) gifts to stores that offer help for ergonomics, and encourage employees to physical activity, for example having team challenges or vouchers to do any sports.

Being as clear as possible about the blended working rules and expectations is one key aspect to a successful blended working environment. The Organization should give very clear and easy instructions for everyone, so that employees feel safe in the new situation. It would be great to have a separate channel for blended working information and guidelines.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview questions

- Miten näet esimiestyösi muuttuneen noin 3 vuoden päästä? (mitä toivoisit sen olevan ajatellen työntekijöiden läsnäoloa toimistolla?)
- Mikä on hankalinta etäjohtamisessa?
- Mikä on parasta etäjohtamisessa?
- Mitkä ovat lähijohtamisen suurimmat hyödyt?
- Mihin osa-alueisiin koet tarvitsevasi työkaluja "hybridijohtamisessa"?
- Mitä keinoja voisi olla työntekijöiden samankaltaiseen kohteluun ja osallistamiseen, kun kaikki eivät ole toimistolla?
- Mikä huolettaa eniten "hybridijohtamisessa"?
- 3 avainsanaa toimivaan hybridijohtamiseen