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# UNIFYING HYBRID LEADERSHIP IN A GLOBAL ORGANIZATION

A comparative study of the Finnish and Brazilian  
units of Company X

Master's thesis

Master of Business Administration

International Business Management

2024



South-Eastern Finland  
University of Applied Sciences

Degree title	Master of Business Administration
Author(s)	Tarja Karell
Thesis title	Unifying hybrid leadership in a global organization
Commissioned by	Company X
Year	2024
Pages	106 pages, 2 pages of appendices
Supervisor(s)	Nina Hartikainen

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how the management of hybrid teams differs between the Finnish and Brazilian units of Company X. The study suggests strategies helping in unifying and establishing hybrid working practices aimed to support the wellbeing and the development of the teams involved. By comparing existing routines and by examining the new possibilities and the wishes of the team members and team leaders, this thesis targets to identify the best practises that can be globally implemented. A qualitative approach is utilized in this study by interviews directed to the team managers and to nine of their team members in both countries.

The existing literature of remote and hybrid work and leadership, and hybrid working models and team practices are utilized when investigating how teams in a global organization operate together and individually in hybrid mode. The challenges, advantages and disadvantages are highlighted accordingly. The target of the study is to establish hybrid working routines that support the wellbeing, health, and professional growth of the teams and the team members.

The data for this study is collected qualitatively via interviews. The idea is to find out similarities and differences in hybrid leadership practices between units in Finland and Brazil. It is important to understand unique cultural and contextual factors influencing the dynamics of the hybrid teams in these countries before proposing the strategies for unifying hybrid leadership in a global organization. By comparing the best practises, the study aims to find out what would be the best way to create inclusive and engaging working environments that support the development and wellbeing of every team member.

The outcomes of this thesis offer insights into successful routines that can be applied to hybrid leadership and hybrid work arrangements across diverse cultural contexts. The study aims to help global organizations in building and managing effective and enthusiastic hybrid teams by emphasising team routines and continuous improvement.

Key words: hybrid work, remote leadership, global organization, team wellbeing, team development

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

After the COVID-19 pandemic, global organizations are constantly increasing the possibilities of remote work which is why it is important to keep updating the challenges and advantages of hybrid working. For sustainable hybrid working teams, it is crucial to have effective and unified in-office and remote leadership practises, as well as working routines that promote the wellbeing and development of the team members. This Thesis concentrates on understanding the existing remote and hybrid leadership practises in Company X's Brazil and Finland units, aims to point out the differences, and proposes the strategies for unifying the hybrid leadership in a global organization in a way that enhances the teams' wellbeing and development.

Remote working is a great way to save energy and work more efficiently. It is also important for a social person to meet colleagues on a weekly basis. In the long run, a home office can make people sick and lonely. That is why the hybrid approach of flexible working is perfect for social people. (Work Anywhere 2022.) However, many workplaces also have people who find it annoying to work in an open office because they find it hard to concentrate while other people are talking and laughing in corridors and virtual meetings. Therefore, everyone should be able to choose the best way of working, whether it is fully teleworking, hybrid working or fully working in an office, as long as the work gets done and employees are happy and motivated.

Managing in remote environments is very challenging. At least in the early days, when remote work was also new for all managers, they started to lose touch with their employees. Some managers tried to hold weekly meetings, at least with their newest employees. Some managers only monitored results, and if the work was done well, they did not even try to reach their employees. It is more difficult for managers to find time to communicate with all employees remotely than it would be if they could only meet occasionally in the office corridors or at

lunchtime. This makes it harder to know how employees are doing, whether they are over- or underloaded, or whether they need more interaction.

This Thesis can provide new ideas for managers and supervisors to manage hybrid work. The results of this study may provide useful strategies and team management practices, as well as ideas for developing hybrid routines. These results can be used to develop policies and training programs that support team performance and well-being in hybrid work. Corporate decision-makers can use this study as a guide to develop effective and inclusive hybrid management practices that take into account employee well-being.

The author's personal experience serves as a motivator to this study because even though there are some disadvantages in remote working at the moment to the wellbeing of people and their families, remote and hybrid working in some extents are here to stay and have all in all a lot of advantages.

The research results will be disseminated inside the organization in trainings and workshops via teams and in face-to-face meetings. The results will be shared in Company X's Intranet as a short article with key findings.

## **2 CONTEXTUALIZATION**

### **2.1 Company X**

Company X is one of the leading global developer and supplier of technologies and services in a special industry sector (Company X n.d.A). Company X works around several business lines and in almost all geographical areas of the world, including South America and Europe. Company X is a market leader and has a strong market position in all its business lines. The net sales of Company X were several billions in 2023. The target business line of this Thesis is spare parts services that covers around one third of the orders received by the Company X. (Company X n.d.A.)

### **2.2 Sociocultural environments**

Company X has been operating in Brazil for decades. When Company X internationalized to Brazil, it manufactured agricultural machinery. When machinery production ceased, there were ready-made premises for a small production unit and a large sales unit selling specialized technology and services in South America. Brazil's large natural resources provided a very good basis for building a special technology company after the mid-19th century. Company X's competitive advantages in South America include leading technology, a trusted brand, natural resources, and market expertise. (Company X n.d.B.) Brazil is Latin America's largest economy and geographically the largest country. It is also the ninth largest economy in the world. Brazil has therefore always been attractive to foreign investors. (Reference for business n.d.)

There are two widely acclaimed cultural dimensions theories that work as a framework for cross-cultural psychology (Koppa 2013). These are Hofstede Dimensions and Schwartz Dimensions. The six main dimensions of Hofstede are individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity-femininity, and short- vs. long-term orientation. When considering Hofstede's dimension about individualism and collectivism, we can see that Brazilians are generally less individualistic and more social/collective. Another thing that ranks

high among Brazilians is uncertainty avoidance; organizations are control based and involve multiple rules and regulations. In the Brazilian society, there is a strong need for rules and legal systems for structuring the life. Brazilians believe that bureaucracy, laws, and rules are key to making the society a safer place to live in. (Nicol 2012.)

Schwartz Dimension (Schwartz 2009, 140) is a theory of seven cultural orientations that form three major cultural value dimensions through which culture can be classified. The first one is the relationship between individual and the group, which describes how people live in relation to their groups. These cultural orientations are autonomy and embeddedness. The second one is how responsible behavior is assured in society in the way people cooperate and feel concern about everyone's welfare. Here the cultural orientation is called egalitarianism. The third one is about the relationship of human beings towards the natural and social world. It is classified with harmony and mastery values where harmony means living in harmony with the society and nature trying to accept it in the way it is, not to change, direct or exploit it. Mastery is an opposite behavior to harmony and means trying to direct and change the natural and social environment. Success, competence, and daring are also part of mastery cultures. In an embedded society, the group is predominant over an individual, whereas in an autonomous society, individuals have the freedom to pursue their own interests. Autonomy can also be divided into two different types: intellectual autonomy and affective autonomy. In an intellectual autonomy people are free to pursue their intellectual agendas, and in affective autonomy people can freely express their emotions. (Schwartz 2009, 140-141.)

Table 1: The 7 Schwartz cultural value orientation scores for Brazil and Finland (Schwartz 2008.)

	Harmony	Embeddedness	Hierarchy	Mastery	Affective autonomy	Intellectual autonomy	Egalitarianism
Brazil	4.03	3.62	2.37	3.93	3.52	4.27	4.89
Finland	4.34	3.37	1.8	3.66	3.96	4.93	4.9



In Table 1 above the cultural orientations are classified between Finland and Brazil. As we can see from the table, in comparison with the Brazil, Finland has more harmony value. Finns love nature and take strong measures to protect the environment. In Brazil, on the other hand, embeddedness is higher rated than in Finland. Brazilian people tend to live with their families and have very strong bond with the extended family as well. Finns are not so attached emotionally to their families. Also, Finns do not communicate as enthusiastically as Brazilians; they prefer to speak only if there is something important to speak about. Mastery has more value in Brazil, which is due to the fact that Brazilian culture is more masculine, and masculinity means competence and daring. Brazilians live in the world of high hierarchy compared to Finland, and because of the class system in Brazil there is more social discrimination, whereas Finns believe in equality and equal opportunities. Finland has higher intellectual and affective autonomy than Brazil because Finns can expect more freedom to pursue their own interests and desires. Finland has only a little bit lower rate in egalitarianism than Brazil.

(Schwartz 2008.)

In the terms of management and organizations, there is an interesting research project called the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness – GLOBE 2020 (Globe 2020 n.d.A.). In GLOBE project there are 9 cultural dimensions out of which six are in correspondence with Hofstede cultural dimensions, these dimensions are assertiveness, gender egalitarianism, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance. The other three are based on other previous literature, these three are future orientation, performance orientation and humane orientation. The GLOBE project also identifies that the leadership dimensions constitute these six factors: team-oriented leadership, charismatic/value-based leadership, autonomous leadership, humane leadership, participative leadership, self-protective leadership. (Jagdeep et al. 2007, xv.)

The 9 cultural dimensions values between Finland and Brazil settle in the scale of 1-7 as follows according to the Global project (Globe 2020 n.d.B.; Globe 2020 n.d.C.).

Table 2: The 9 cultural dimensions values for Brazil and Finland. (Globe 2020 n.d.B.; Globe 2020 n.d.C.)

	Performance orientation	Assertiveness	Future orientation	Humane orientation	Institutional collectivism	In-group collectivism	Gender egalitarianism	Power Distance	Uncertainty avoidance
Brazil	6.13	2.91	5.69	5.68	5.62	5.15	4.99	2.35	4.99
Finland	6.11	3.68	5.07	5.81	4.11	5.42	4.24	2.19	3.85

As shown in Table 2, performance orientation is on quite high level in both countries. It means that in both countries' performance improvements are rewarded by group members. Assertiveness has higher value in Finnish culture than in Brazil, but both countries still have it in quite low level, which means that confrontations and aggressiveness are quite low valued in Finland and Brazil. Future orientation is a bit higher valued in Finland than in Brazil but in both countries, it is valued high as also inhumane behavior which on the opposite is little bit more valued in Finland than in Brazil. Institutional collectiveness is higher valued in Brazil, which means that in Brazil collective distribution of resources is more valued than in Finland. In-group collectivism on the other hand means the way people are loyal and cohesive in their organizations and families. In both countries this value is quite high, even though in Finland it is a little bit higher. Surprisingly gender egalitarianism gets higher value in Brazil than in Finland according to the GLOBE (n.d.B.; n.d.C.) project research. Interestingly power distance is valued very low not only in Finland, but also in Brazil. According to the research, like also confirmed by the Hofstede dimensions, Brazilians like social norms, rules, and procedures more than Finns which is why uncertainty avoidance is ranked higher in Brazil. (Globe 2020 n.d.B.; Globe 2020 n.d.C.)

In the GLOBE project the following cultural and leadership orientation values were analyzed in Finland and Brazil and the results were as follows in the scale of 1-7 (Globe 2020 n.d.B.; Globe 2020 n.d.C.).

Table 3: The 6 cultural and leadership values for Brazil and Finland (GLOBE n.d.B.; n.d.C.)

	Charismatic	Team Oriented	Participative	Humane Oriented	Autonomous	Self-Protective
Brazil	6	6.17	6.06	4.84	2.27	3.49
Finland	5.94	5.85	5.91	4.3	4.08	2.55

According to the GLOBE (n.d.B; n.d.C.) project (Table 3) Brazil and Finland have quite similar values in cultural and leadership orientation regarding charisma, team orientation, and participative and inhumane behavior. However, in Brazil the leaders are more independent and individualistic than in Finland, which refers to autonomy, and also in self-protectiveness, which refers to the way the leaders ensure safety and face-saving of individuals and group.

### 2.3 Existing research

Hybrid work means that some part of the work is done at the office and some part remotely. Since the development of remote working technology, a growing amount of research has been conducted about remote work and remote work management. This is also due to covid-19 pandemic that forced people to work remotely all around the world. However, different countries had different possibilities for remote work and in developing and emerging countries far less people were able to work remotely than in developed countries. One study about multilevel perspective to virtual leadership suggests that having virtual teams nowadays has many advantages, one of which is competing over talents all over the world (Liao 2016).

Social interaction and wellbeing are very important part of remote work discussions. Hyvämäki (2023) has made research about "Ways to boost social interaction remotely in remote companies in Europe and USA". According to this research, many companies try to boost social interaction with different remote

practices. One of them is leaving a small space for open discussion before starting the Teams meetings.

Regardless of the high amount of research around remote work, not so much research has been done about hybrid work management, yet. There is a literature-based MBA Thesis from the Johannes Kepler University of Linz. In his thesis, Mario Stich is asking what hybrid work managers should do to foster successful outcomes in hybrid teams (Stich 2022, 2). His conclusion is that the most important things are to build trust, give support and be transparent (Stich 2022, 54).

Another research about leading hybrid teams is the Master Thesis of Linda Hämäläinen. In her thesis, she is trying to develop recommendations for leaders in creating and managing highly motivated hybrid teams (Hämäläinen 2022, 6). The target of her study is a company that has teams working in hybrid mode. The outcome of the thesis is a list of recommendations for hybrid work management including for example weekly coffee breaks, and monthly check-ups and coaching sessions (Hämäläinen 2022, 80).

Finland is one of the most advanced countries in the world in terms of technology and work life flexibility (European Commission 2022.B.; Savage 2019). Brazil, on the other hand, belongs to emerging countries and is still struggling with many issues related to technology and remote work (Mishima-Santos et al. 2021). Also, management hierarchy differs largely between Finland and Brazil. There are not any previous comparative studies about hybrid nor remote leadership between Finland and Brazil. However, there is a study exploring remote work in Brazil. Mishima-Santos et al. (2021) have investigated the wellbeing of Brazilian remote workers during the pandemic. They found out that only more educated people from higher class were able to work remotely and those who were working remotely were a bit disappointed with the management style of their leaders.

There is an existing gap of research between hybrid work management in Finland and Brazil. The findings of this study will be interesting for both, Finnish and Brazilian managers, as they can both learn from each other's practices and

develop better practices in this way. Finland, as a rather anti-social country, can learn from social Brazilians, for example, how to improve the social contacts during remote work and Brazilians can learn how to apply the lower hierarchy model to remote workers to improve their satisfaction in remote settings.

## **2.4 Contemporary policy debates around remote work and remote leadership**

Because remote work is an important part of hybrid work arrangement, below there is a PESTLE analysis about contemporary policy debates around remote work and remote leadership. PESTLE analysis can be used to analyse macro-environmental factors that influence the topic in question. It investigates political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors in the external environment and identifies the threats and weaknesses.

(Washington state university n.d.)

### **Political**

EU encourages flexible work arrangements, including remote and hybrid work, as a way to increase work-life balance and promote gender equality. EU's Work-Life Balance Directive means that hybrid working is not considered as a privilege anymore as EU law imposes it on member states. This directive entered into force in August 2019. The directive aims to improve flexible work arrangements and access to family leave. (European Commission 2022.A.)

Directives and regulations have an impact on leading remote teams. EU's Working Time Directive sets limits on the maximum weekly working hours and minimum rest breaks (European commission 2023, 1), and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) regulates the processing and protection of personal data (EUR-lex 2016). Additionally, some EU member states have their own laws and regulations regarding remote work, which is why it is important for employers to be aware of them when leading remote teams where the team members are located in different countries (Turlan 2014).

The Labour Regulations of Brazil treat the employees the same whether they work home or in the office with one exemption; if the company is not monitoring the working hours, the employees are not allowed to work overtime in remote settings. The employees are also not allowed to their statutory benefit, the transport allowance, however, the meal vouchers must still be granted in certain circumstances. (Boundless 2024.)

### **Economic**

Remote work has significant economic benefits for employees. These benefits include cost savings on commuting, work outfits and parking (Beno 2021). However, there are also potential drawbacks in the costs, such as increased costs for internet, electricity, and utility. This is due to the need for employees to have a stable and secure home environment for work. (Agar 2022.)

### **Social**

Remote work has significant social implications for families, communities, and company culture. It can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, as well as difficulties in maintaining work-life balance. (Socolic 2022, 207.) On the other hand, remote work can also increase the flexibility and autonomy of employees, leading to improved mental health and job satisfaction (Vicaria 2023).

### **Technological**

Investing in remote working technology gives global companies the infrastructure to manage onboarding, payroll, and benefits in other countries (Resources for employers n.d.). Governments have more possibilities to enhance visa and immigration policies and worker relocation possibilities, which will lead to digital wanderer families (Hooper et al. 2022, 2). The downside of the technology is the possibility that as digital nomad families become accustomed to working from their own living spaces, insecure and unmonitored home networks can expose companies' proprietary data, trade secrets, video conversations, and more to hackers or industry rivals (Cubeless 2023).

New apps like Teamflow enable users to move about in a virtual-office floor plan and meet with colleagues. Users can hear the voices of coworkers whose

bubbles are close to theirs (Teamflow n.d.). Another app, Gather, tries to create features that promote a sense of spontaneity, such as “shoulder taps” and virtual games of pool, to make virtual interactions feel more natural (Gather n.d.).

Some companies are said to be starting to sell brain monitoring systems, that measure external brain waves with a practice called electroencephalography. Studies have shown that alertness can be measured through EEG. (Sanders 2021.) However, companies have not yet proven their promises for these headsets true.

### **Legal**

The legal implications of remote work for leaders vary depending on the laws and regulations of the country in which the organization operates. However, there are some common legal considerations for leaders to keep in mind:

**Labor laws:** Remote work can have an impact in the compliance with local labor laws, such as minimum wage laws, working hours regulations, and overtime requirements. (Goldstein et al. 2021.)

**Health and safety:** Leaders need to make sure that remote workers have a safe and healthy working environment. It includes providing ergonomic equipment and following health and safety regulations. (OSG n.d.)

**Data privacy and security:** Leaders need to make sure that sensitive company data and employees’ personal information is protected and secure in remote settings. (Goldstein et al. 2021.)

**Taxation:** The organization’s tax obligations and liabilities may be impacted by remote work. This can affect both, the organization, and the employees, especially where multinational teams are in place. (Unger 2022.)

**Intellectual property:** Leaders need to make sure that remote workers have the necessary tools and equipment to perform their jobs and protect the organizations’ intellectual property. (Unger 2022.)

Anti-Discrimination: Leaders need to make sure that remote work policies do not discriminate against any laws in the working location and that remote workers are treated properly under their medical issues. (Unger 2022.)

Contractual obligations: Leaders need to make sure that remote work policies are consistent with any existing contractual obligations, such as restrictive covenant agreements. (Unger 2022.)

Leaders should always seek the advice of legal counsel to understand the specific legal implications of remote work in their country or region and to develop policies and procedures that comply with applicable laws.

### **Environmental**

Remote work has been found to lead to both positive and negative outcomes regarding its environmental impacts and changes.

Gas emissions: the decrease in commuting has decreased gas emissions. (Shreedhar et al. 2022.) As a consequence, also air quality has improved, which leads to lower rates of diseases such as cancer, respiratory conditions, and heart diseases in the future (Miller 2022).

Plastic waste: working from home has decreased the use of plastic utensils such as cups or cutlery because coffees and snacks are consumed at home and also cooking is done at home instead of buying packed meals. (Miller 2022.)

Energy consumption: instead of having one big common space (office) to work, people are working separately. This has led to higher usage of online communication and higher utility usage because instead of one office, there are multiple homes with different electricity equipment in use. (Miller 2022.)



### 3 IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

#### 3.1 Managerial perspective

After the COVID-19 pandemic many companies have changed their remote working policies in a way that many employees are now able to work remotely even full time. However, at Company X the organization policy to remote working is hybrid, where all the employees in all locations globally are allowed to work remotely 2 days per week. This is causing debate inside the organization and there seem to be difficulties in making the policy apply to everybody.

Organization wide it is relevant to create common practices for each team to support their wellbeing and development.

One of the key themes at Company X this year is how to work together as a team in the hybrid mode and what are the new practices that would work for the advantage of each team. Each team should establish hybrid routines by setting team routines for in-office and remote work. These practices should also support the wellbeing, safety, and development. Changing already established activities is a challenge, because directing the action means that both common sense and emotion must be involved in the process. Therefore, achieving change requires the identification of internal interpretations and emotions related to them (Levanto, n.d.).

What can motivate us as a team and as individuals to change our well-established practices? Because work communities are complex entities, their dynamics are not always self-evident and consistent. It is therefore important for the manager to maintain constant interaction between the different parties involved and to encourage not only teamwork but also self-direction. Self-leadership and self-management provide the opportunity for entrepreneurial thinking, motivated by one's own values and goals. Self-leadership in hybrid work makes it possible to achieve excellent results in the work community if the manager knows how to support it in the right way and encourages employees to develop themselves and to go beyond their comfort zone.

### **3.2 Academic perspective**

There is little or no research that focuses specifically on the differences in hybrid team management between Finland and Brazil. However, there is existing literature of remote working and remote leadership and there can be contradictory results and conclusions in them. Existing literature can also be found about working practices, social interactions and cultural conventions of Finland and Brazil.

As a boundary conditions to the study cultural differences, language barriers, industry context and technological capabilities may affect the findings and conclusions when interpreting the results.

#### **4 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The aim of this study is to offer insights into successful routines that can be applied to hybrid leadership and hybrid work arrangements across diverse cultural context.

The objectives include comparing the management practices of hybrid teams in Company X's Finnish and Brazilian units, understanding the challenges and opportunities in leading hybrid teams in a global company, investigating the possibilities of unifying hybrid leadership in a global company, and developing unified hybrid working routines that enhance the team development and wellbeing.

The scope of the research is geographical: Finland and Brazil, and organizational: global organization Company X. It also involves hybrid leadership practices, and hybrid team practices and dynamics.

The main research question of this study is answered with the help of three sub questions.

The main research question is:

1. What unified hybrid leadership and hybrid work routines in a global organization support the teams' development and wellbeing?

And the sub questions are:

2. What advantages and disadvantages in hybrid work there are for employees in Company X Finland and Company X Brazil?
3. What are the existing routines in hybrid work in Company X Finland and Company X Brazil?
4. How does the organization and management support the development and wellbeing in hybrid work settings?

The aim of this study is to investigate and compare the current routines of remote and hybrid working and hybrid management in Company X in Finland and Brazil, and to create coherent hybrid routines to support team development and well-being by setting team routines for office and remote working. This will ensure that working practices support wellbeing, safety and development and are continuously developed based on health and safety findings. The aim is to build a working environment where everyone can feel engaged.

## 5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 5.1 Remote work

Remote, hybrid, virtual, or distributed are the terms that are widely used nowadays of the flexible work settings. There are not many companies that are not offering any remote working possibilities if the work is possible to do remotely. (Edmondson et al. 2022, 7.) According to Choudhury et al. (2018), working from anywhere (excluding your own home) has also increased popularity during recent years and it allows people to work in places with e.g., lower living costs or other advantages that make life easier.

Remote work means work from anywhere but the office (Eriksson & Petrosian 2020). While working remotely, whether it is from home, on the road or in a coffee shop, the day-to-day aspects to the work will change compared to the ones at the office. One needs to figure out how to stay productive in different settings, sometimes surrounded by different distractions, how to collaborate with colleagues that suddenly appear only in Teams meetings and, as a manager, how to support and be in contact with the remote team. For some people it may also cause mental health issues due to isolation and perhaps exhaustion from differing expectations of when the workday actually ends. (HBR 2021, vii.)

Because of improved technology, the possibilities for remote work have been growing for decades. Finally, the Covid-19 crisis made remote work a new normal, much faster than anybody could have expected. Remote work gives the flexibility, convenience, and comfort but on the other hand, it can sometimes turn out to be hard to stay motivated while own house is the office. The negative sides of remote work are also related to human contacts one used to have at the office: the smiling eyes, side glance, spontaneous interaction and the creativity arising from bouncing around the questions and ideas. (HBR 2021, 2.). One also misses interaction that happens face-to-face and informal learning possibilities that come from networking and observing others at the office (Cappelli 2021, 18).

Vargas et al. (2022) points out that according to many studies, remote workers work more productively possibly due to the autonomy they have, to work in a way that best suits their lifestyle. This also increases job satisfaction and improves mental health and the balance between work and free time. People are generally more satisfied when they can affect the way they work. However, some criticism is arising towards the productivity claim, as Niinivuo (2023) points out in his article the latest study of the productivity in remote work made in India. According to this study, people working remotely were 18 % less productive than those working at the office.

Even though remote work has led to the significant increase in flexibility and cost savings, some leaders have also expressed concerns about the potential for decreased productivity, social isolation, and a lack of workplace oversight, which is a matter of concern to employers (Mortensen, 2023). Further issues related to leading remote teams come from the calls for better support systems for remote workers, workplace safety and privacy, and investments in technology and training programs to help employees be successful in a remote work environment (Errichiello et al. 2021, 221).

The whole idea of remote work has been here for centuries. Already in the seventeenth century, in pre-industrial England and western Europe, workers and their families took part in the textile and manufacturing process from their own homes. This practice was ended by factories with centralized capital equipment. During the 1970's, there was an air pollution crisis in Los Angeles, due to which many people worked from home. This led to the term "telecommuting", as telephone was the only connection to the office at that time. (Cappelli 2021, 17.)

After computers started to take over working sector in 1990's, the big question in the field of management was how the work gets done at remote offices. According to various studies, the conclusion to this question was "not good". The biggest problem was caused by the situation where someone was working from home, while others were at the office. This was not the case during covid-19 pandemic. (Cappelli 2021, 18.)

Completely remote teams mean teams where people have a common goal, but they are physically located in different places and mostly their communication is not face-to-face (Eikenberry & Turmel 2018, 25). Many companies and for example startups nowadays can be built from a broad range of remote employees with different educational and cultural backgrounds. In this way remote-first teams can create great possibilities to innovation. (Vargas et al. 2022.)

Digitality is a part of today's remote work and remote work supervision. Information technology allows companies to supervise precisely the work done by the employees and at the same time it gives many workers the possibility to work wherever they choose. In today's work life, digitality is present in most of the job descriptions from caring to industrial work. (Kovalainen et al. 2022, 335.)

Trust plays a big role in remote work. Trust between teammates and between employees and the managers is an important part of getting the work done on time. Everybody should be able to trust that everyone is doing their part, even though people are working in different locations. In a remote team trust is built while doing things together to reach the common goal. (Haapakoski et al. 2020, 51.) Organizational trust is built in the process of the interaction between the parties involved, which means the employees and the managers, and the company stakeholders. Organizations whose operations are based on trust, were the pioneers of taking advantage of the remote work practices already during the covid-19 pandemic. (Alasoini & Selander 2023, 35.) For remote management to work, Haapakoski et al. (2020, 66) state that it should be based on trust, appreciation, openness, rules, continuous dialogue, and community spirit. The ability to trust, is one of the most important abilities of remote managers.

In Finland trust is part of social institutional mechanism, it is based on the belief that you don't need to question the trustworthiness of the police or the government. And this is also how Finnish working life is built, around institutional trust in the labor market that has been built over years and years. The same inbuilt trust has been applied to remote work since covid pandemic and it has proven its worth in Finnish society. (Kovalainen et al. 2022, 338.) During the

remote work under pandemic many of the Finns realized that there was no supervision at all related to work performance, time spent in working, or the content of the work (Kovalainen et al. 2022, 343).

Digital sophistication, and institutional and organizational trust are important parts of business life at remote work times, but to be able to succeed in the future business life and in the talent competition, it is the ability of the organization to combine the in-office and remote work into hybrid work flexibly that can be the most important resilience factor for organizations in the long run than the ability to work only remotely. (Alasoini & Selander 2023, 35.)

## **5.2 Hybrid work**

Hybrid has a different meaning as a word than remote. Remote means distance, barriers, or separateness. Hybrid values the inclusion of all team members, regardless of where they are located. More and more companies are now opting for hybrid working as a way of working, with people trying to find a balance between remote work and in-office work. (Workplace solutions 2023.) According to Edmondson et al. (2022, 7) for different companies hybrid can have different meanings. Some companies have some people working remotely in different parts of the world while others are at the office. Some companies have set a certain number of days when people need to work at the office, so all the employees live at a tolerable distance from the workplace. At the moment, the business world is redefining the future of work by innovating, improving and finding new solutions to make hybrid working better. (Edmondson et al. 2022, 7.)

The positive side of hybrid working, says Edmondson et al. (2022, 7) is that while working in hybrid mode and connecting with colleagues and business partners from outside the office people get to know each other at a deeper level; they get to know the homes, families, pets, etc. Also, managers get to know and appreciate all aspects of their team members, not just their work personalities. Hybrid work means allowing people to be accepted the way they are, as entirety, and allowing them to choose the work setting that suits best for them and brings out their strengths. Flexibility means also allowing people to choose the days that



suit them best for being at the office and trusting them to get their work done. People work best when they have a choice. (Workplace solutions 2022.)

The traditional model of organizations never really thought about people working somewhere else than at the office, even though companies can get the best out of their employees through embracing different working modes and flexibility. It can lead to losing the best talents, who most likely have possibility to work for the companies that offer flexibility. (Edmondson et al. 2022, 7.) Workplace relationships have not lost their meaning, which is why hybrid often works better than completely remote work (Workplace solutions 2022). Edmondson et al. (2022, 8) state that hybrid work – at its best – is the new era of working, where the employee's own choice about where and when they work is not affecting their career progress or their contribution to the business. This also gives companies the possibility to hire highly skilled talents from different sides of world without any location limitations (Vicaria 2023).

Working hybrid means different office settings. It means more open spaces that can be more easily used for quick stand-up meetings, easy to access technology in other spaces, and different levels of visual and acoustic privacy settings. These new fluid workspaces can flex when needs change. (Edmondson et al. 2022, 19-20.) Meetings can also be held in a hybrid posture, including all team members, whether they are at home or at the office (Workplace solutions 2023). However, Edmondson et al. (2022, 20) point out that for workers to enjoy the in-office days, new hybrid offices have to provide them with a better experience that they would have at their home. It means different types of spaces for different types of work. This can also be a competitive advantage for a company when they are hiring new talents.

The downside of hybridity is that it can leave the employees with different type of access to resources and with different levels of visibility which can lead to unequal possibilities to perform the required tasks (Edmondson et al. 2022, 39). Lately there have also been problems with employees not showing up to the office during office-days and problematic dynamics that can be created in the

office where some people belong to the inner circle and the others to the outer circle (Mattila 2023).

### **5.3 The challenges of leading hybrid teams**

The top challenges managers face, according to Owen (2021, 6-7) when leading hybrid teams are how to manage the workloads and performance of the team members in a way that it doesn't affect the mental wellbeing of the remote workers, how to communicate and co-ordinate spontaneously when it is not possible to have spontaneous, informal conversations, how to influence people and the decisions when it is not possible to have informal chats, how to resolve problems and misunderstandings remotely, how to motivate via Teams or an email, and how to discuss goals remotely so that the team members understand what should be done and most importantly why because when discussing face-to-face, understanding and buy-in are better. (Owen 2021, 6-7.) No matter how skilled the manager is, creativity, innovation, mentoring, building trust, and building values are best done in a direct contact at the office (Owen 2022, 8).

Remote workers can be seen by the managers as less engaged as those who want to go back to the office. Therefore, remote workers are less included in valued activities like strategic decisions making, and they are regarded less important. This makes the career progress harder for those who are working remotely. However, many may value their freedom and own space higher than the possibilities to climb the corporate ladder. (Cappelli 2021, 19.)

The four reasons why hybrid teams fail are according to Ivanov (2020, 9) their incapacity to build trust, problems in overcoming the barriers that are related to technology, distance, goal settings, decision making and handling conflicts, their individual goals differ from those of the team goals (the members have hidden agendas), and the vision and the goal of the team is not clearly explained. The best way to handle the last issue is to make the team set the vision and goal together. (Ivanov 2020, 9.)

If the managers want to make hybrid work successful, they need to concentrate on individuals and their needs, not only to institutional needs like they are used to

(Edmondson et al. 2022, 10). Here are some questions managers need to ask themselves when coordinating their team members working in different hybrid modes: Are you treating all team members fairly? Is everybody feeling included? According to some research, if a person feels they are not treated fairly, it can increase the risk of burnout, hurt productivity, and lessen the willingness for collaboration. (Edmondson et al. 2022, 16.)

The managers of hybrid workers should put in extra effort so that the remote team members feel connected to other colleagues. According to Knight (HBR 2021, 143-147), hybrid leaders must set performance goals that are regularly reviewed, arrange regularly predictable visits to their location, and create effective channels for open communication – the team must understand that they are obligated to communicate regularly and create unplanned conversations e.g., in a form of “watercooler moments” which are video links between offices where shared spaces are created. These spaces provide possibilities for spontaneous workplace conversations. Managers also need to build trust with remote workers by getting to know them on a personal level and encourage their team members to do the same with their remote colleagues. Personal details bind the hybrid teams together. An important thing is to make hybrid team members feel part of the team, even though they are not present at the office. Their work needs to be recognized, which signals to the co-workers that they are equal and should be treated as such. (HBR 2021, 143-147.)

If the managers are not willing to concentrate on the employees’ preferences, it can backfire during the times when competition for the talent is greater than ever. Employees leave for better opportunities and better engagement, and it becomes harder to attract new ideal candidates. In the end, this will affect the company’s success. (Work anywhere 2022.)

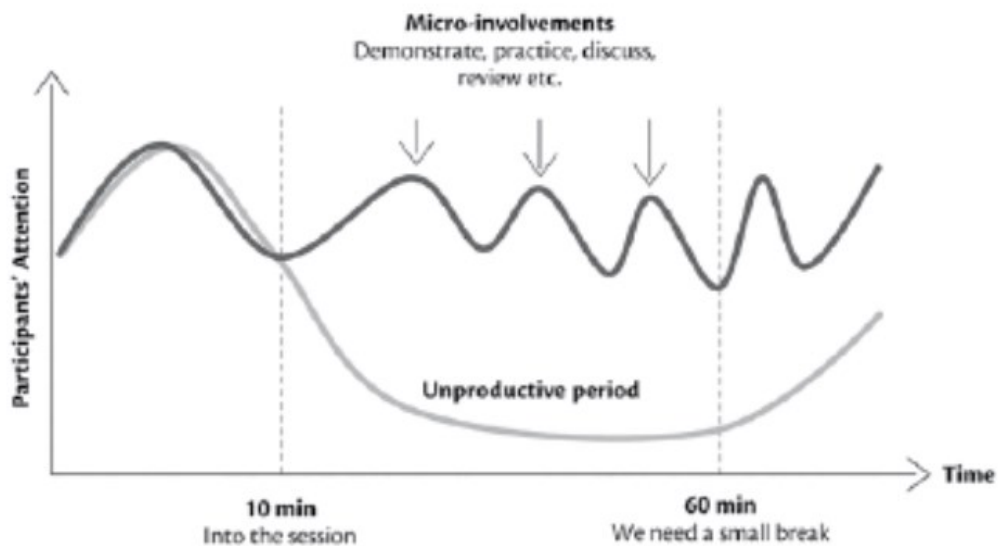
Edmondson et al. (2022, 20) indicate that many managers have since covid-19 pandemic started to rethink the purpose of the office. Some have concluded that the office is the place where collaborative work happens. The challenge is to boost collaboration also in remote settings. Equally important however, after

collaboration, is to have time to process the ideas alone in a calm and peaceful place like home-office. Otherwise too much “we” time can result in groupthink.

When having a meeting as a manager, it is always important to have a plan. But when having a virtual meeting, it becomes even more important to have a plan, as there is less flexibility in virtual session than in face-to-face meetings. To have an outcome where everybody feels engaged and the impact is desired, the plan needs to be made carefully and the manager needs to invest their time in it. (Andersen et al. 2021, 85.) For many managers creating engagement during virtual sessions is difficult, and one of the main challenges is to keep the audience interested during the whole session, when the attention span in virtual meeting starts to drop already after 5 minutes from the start of the meeting.

Figure 1. (Andersen et al. 2021, 171-172.)

Figure 1: The attention span during the virtual session (Andersen et al. 2021, 172.)



As shown in the Figure 1, the participants should be engaged during the meeting, otherwise their attention will be completely lost already after 10 minutes. Micro-involvements get them back to the track for short periods of time. The reason for the attention loss is that the brain can't sustain itself passively for a long period in a row. The best way to keep the participants' brains involved is to have the micro-

involvements throughout the meeting. (Andersen et al. 2021, 173.) One of the most important skills for a good virtual meeting manager is asking good questions. The questions asked during the meetings should lead to interaction, instead of “yes” or “no” questions.

In hybrid settings, the managers should not be managing people. Their goal should be to bring out the best from people by serving them (Elliot et al. 2022, 132.) Managers should be able to unlock the potential, inspire trust, and create clarity. Figure 2.

Figure 2: Leadership principles for hybrid work managers (Elliot et al. 2022, 132.)



When in the past the main functions of management were planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling, in today’s hybrid workplaces the main skill managers should possess is empathy. It is important to lead with sensitive touch by preventing burnouts, communicating transparently, and accepting and owning mistakes. These soft skills are now more important than ever. (Elliot et al. 2022, 132.) To be able to accomplish this, the hybrid teams should be the size

where managers are able to focus on creating the high impact relationships (Edmondson et al. 2022, 38).

### **5.3.1 Social interaction and wellbeing in hybrid work**

Social interaction is often an in-built part of human nature. While working from home the collaboration and communication you can attend naturally at the office turns out to be much more difficult and requires much more effort, causing even distress to some people as one most likely must call people one doesn't even know. What also affects the well-being in remote settings is that it is not as easy to set oneself boundaries about when to quit working, sometimes the manager may even expect the team members to be always available. (HBR 2021, 3.) The most recognized challenge of remote work is the lack of social contacts, and the most recognized benefit is increased productivity as there are usually less distraction at the remote facilities (Edmondson et al. 2022, 16). Loneliness is one major issue causing health problems in remote work. It can also increase employee turnover. This is one major challenge nowadays in hybrid workforce management. (Work anywhere 2022.)

In remote settings, it is important to create the sense of inclusion for each team member. This requires organizing informal communication, intentionally. (Rockmann & Pratt 2015.) These can be a virtual water cooler or break room, that is an area where remote or hybrid workers can discuss non-work-related topics, arrange off-work events, and engage in shared interest such as cooking, sports, travel etc. One very popular way to virtually promote remote workers engagement are virtual games. Hyvämäki (2023, 49) lists in his Master's Thesis questionnaire part the following ways to make intentional, informal communication during remote work. Some of them can be held during the workday and some of them after work. These are online games, virtual bingos, virtual coffee breaks, channels for sharing non-work-related topics, virtual trivias, virtual icebreakers, photo contests and/or sharing, guided meditations, team lunch virtually, virtual scavenger hunt activities, virtual escape rooms, virtual happy hours, personality tests, praise trains (each person complement each

other), team music playlists, daily questions, virtual drinks, cheese etc. tastings, virtual talent shows, and virtual birthday parties.

According to O'Neill (2022), the social interaction makes work relationships more meaningful, it makes it easier for the employees to approach the management, it makes the cooperation between individuals and teams easier, colleagues express more caring towards each other, everybody has the sense of inclusion, there's the sense of fun, and birthdays and promotions are celebrated. O'Neill (2022) suggest that some ways for managers to achieve this are for example establishing daily or weekly check-ins. This creates the sense of inclusion by demonstrating that the management cares about how the employees are doing. Another way to make some sense of togetherness and fun is to get creative when celebrating accomplishments by for example sending party hats or cocktail kits and then having a video chat to celebrate.

Providing opportunities for remote social interaction is easily done by leaving some time at the beginning of teams calls for non-work issues. In this way the attendants can spend the first minutes just catching up with each other. Sensitive managers also offer encouragement and emotional support by listening to employees' anxieties and empathizing with their struggles. (Larson et al. 2020.) Companies can also offer training and support their workers in navigating the challenges of socializing, and in managing time effectively and maintaining the balance between work-life and private life (Hyvämäki 2023, 58).

When transiting from all remote covid time to hybrid work, it is crucial that companies create guidelines how to follow-up employee well-being and the changes in it. Managers must have strong skills in discussing team members well-being and recognize changes in it. Employees should be aware of the tools they can use and who they can contact in case they need to. The expectations towards employees and managers should be clear and visible and included in the on-boarding training. (Lindholm 2021, 59.)

Social interaction benefits the business in many ways. It increases happiness, reduces stress, improves the loyalty and employee engagement, and decreases employee turnover. US companies implement more spontaneous social

interaction practices and outside work happenings than European companies. (Hyvämäki 2022, 56.)

Remote work means relying on the technology even more than at the office. The daily use of technology keeps multiplying, which has significant effects on emotional, physical, and social wellbeing. This causes anxiety, stress, and problems in concentration. (Dughi et al. 2022, 13.)

For many people separating the personal life from work has become difficult after starting to work from home. Isolation makes people more connected with their smart devices which has a negative impact on productivity and mental health. (Dughi et al. 2022, 14.) According to a survey “Stress in America”, employed people who check their email during their day off, are having the greatest level of stress. Digital devices have become an increasingly important way to relieve stress levels. However, it is important to set limits and think about what we used to do to relieve stress before we got addicted to our devices. (Dughi et al. 2022, 15.)

The final element to consider, regarding the social interaction and wellbeing in remote work, is physical activity that is considered one of the most important aspects of healthy lifestyle in our society. For example, WHO states that regularly performed physical activity is good for the body and mind. It relieves stress and can strengthen self-esteem and social resources as well. An active lifestyle can give confidence in overcoming everyday problems. (Dughi et al. 2022, 83.) While working remotely, people tend to move less, because the daily commute is eliminated, moving around in the office for lunch and coffee breaks is eliminated, and possibly also recreational gymnastics offered at the office settings is eliminated. In this way the possibilities for remote workers to get the recommended minimum level of exercise every week is decreased. (Dughi et al. 2022, 83.)



## **5.4 Cultural factors influencing hybrid work in Finland and Brazil**

### **5.4.1 Overview of work culture and remote work in Brazil**

Brazil is a large country, and people living in different parts of Brazil have different types of manners and cultural behavior patterns as different parts were originally populated from different cultures (IOR World 2023). However, there are similarities too that are mostly typical to Latin cultures but some of them are only typical for Brazilians. Here are some things to consider from Brazilian work culture and remote work.

Brazilians believe that bureaucracy, laws, and regulations make the society safer place to live in. However, for Brazilians, all laws are not to obey. Some laws are to obey, but then it is also easy to get around some others, not so important laws, to make the business happen. (Kelm & Risner 2007, 73, 81.) The Brazilian famous saying is “to our friends, everything; to others, the law (Today translations 2023). In business negotiations Brazilians see law as a weapon that is used against the enemies. Therefore, if they see any lack of trust from the counterparts, they immediately feel uncomfortable. (Kelm & Risner 2007, 172).

Brazilians are very sensitive of rude behavior towards them. They also have problems in giving direct feedback when it's negative. Positive, public praise, however, is very welcome. Brazilians like to be treated as they were very special. (IOR World 2023).

Because of their high sensitivity level, Brazilians don't want to be embarrassed. Therefore, they may not even try to speak English, even though they can, if they feel like they can't do it perfectly. (Kelm & Risner 2007, 42.) When meetings are conducted in English with Brazilian counterparts without interpreters, it is important to use short sentences and speak slowly and make sure the message is been understood perfectly. It is important to talk lively and look straight into the eyes of the Brazilians while talking. Brazilians can interrupt you in the middle of the sentence and may overlap their viewpoints, but this only means that the conversation is interesting to them. (Branco et al. 2016, 148.)

Brazilians get great pleasure from dealing with people, preferably face-to-face. Brazilian companies focus on one-to-one relationships with their customers and suppliers, not strictly to productivity and profits. (Storti 2011.) Most substantive communication can take place within the context of this personal relationship that enables adequate levels of trust to undertake most business arrangements. As a result, in Brazil, personal understandings may well prove more binding than contracts. (Reference for business, n.d.) In business relationships it is recommended to contact by telephone until the first face-to-face meeting. Meeting should be agreed many weeks beforehand and confirmed via email a couple days before. (Santander 2023.) However, meeting can be cancelled at short notice. Paying a visit without notification beforehand is totally unacceptable. Important contracts are never made via email or telephone. If a mutual acquaintance can make an introduction, it will lead to successful outcome. (Branco et al. 2016, 145.)

Shaking hands is common greeting in Brazil, and men usually shake hands every time they meet. When women are involved, they are greeted with kisses to both cheeks. An eye contact is always expected, and a lot of touching is usual. The personal space of Brazilians is very small. (Today Translations 2023.)

Because of the high value of personal relationships, it is important to know right people in Brazil to be able to make the best business contacts and profits. This requires effort and a lot of time in creating personal relationships. (Storti 2011.) During sales visits it is a custom to spend a long time at the customer, sit down and relax, and have a mixture of small talk and business talk. A little cup of coffee will be offered in the beginning of the meeting. It is important to wait until the Brazilian counterpart indicates when it is time to start doing the business. (Branco et al. 2016, 146.) Presentations are recommended to be short, preferably less than 30 minutes. One will get often interrupted during the presentations as Brazilian meetings are very energetic. It is important to be confident and assuring and to be able to explain in detail. (Santander 2023.) Foreign visitors are always expected to show up in time to meeting, even though Brazilian managers and executives can arrive late (Branco et al. 2016, 146).

Brazilians approach the business very emotionally. This means, that when having negotiations with Brazilians, it is important to mix the conversation with some personal questions. In this way Brazilians feel they are more included and appreciated. (Nicol 2012.) The negotiations are carried out between people, not companies (Today Translation. 2023). As an advice to Finnish managers, to manage personal schedules, one should budget extra time in between scheduled activities. This will compensate for the Brazilian counterpart's flexible time management approach and low ability to follow tight schedules. (Storti 2011). In Brazilian culture time is very flexible, the interaction process is more important than getting things done. Brazilians are often patient and live in the moment. They are not used to and not trained to appropriate time management, as we see it in western countries. (Storti 2011.) Brazilian negotiations develop in slow phase and the agreements are made slowly. They look at issues very analytically and each situation is handled separately. (Branco et al. 2016, 150.)

In Brazilian business negotiations it is highly important to build trust. The body language is also regarded important as high degree of informational content is implied, rather than communicated explicitly. (Mella 2021.) Written contracts follow the European contract law tradition, when finalizing agreements during negotiations. Even though sometimes it is common to practice mutual trust in agreements, which possesses lower certainty unto the terms of agreement to be fulfilled. In negotiations it is important, however, to put something in writing, because proper contracts will protect the position best in the case of disagreements. (Deffenti n.d.). Properly written legal documents are very much appreciated also by Brazilian counterparts (Commisceo Global 2022).

Brazilians love, when their business partners from other countries try to learn their language and culture. This will be a great icebreaker, as the Brazilians will take much more open approach to a person who is willing to make some effort in this and will answer more openly and truthfully to their questions. (Mella 2021.) Giving gift is important manner in Brazilian business life, but they are usually not offered during initial meeting, and they should not be too expensive. If a Brazilian business partner invites the counterpart to their home, it is considered a special honor. (Branco 2016, 151.) Business entertainment over lunch and dinner is a

very good way to get to know the Brazilian counterparts. These meals are often lengthy and can last over 2 hours. During these meals the actual business matters are not discussed. (Branco et al. 2016, 153.)

In Brazilian business world performance during the job is based on trust. There are no measurement systems that would tell if somebody is performing better than others. (Kelm & Risner 2007, 10.)

Brazilian management style is hierarchical, from the top to down (IOR World 2023). Business managers usually have secretaries (Santander 2023). Important decisions are made by the senior managers, and after that implemented to other staff (Branco et al. 2016, 142). Brazilian employees are more used to following orders than instructions, and in a case of Brazilian managers, they are more used to giving orders. If there would be a participatory management, it would not end up well, as Brazilians are loud and vocative, and everybody would try to get their way over others. (IOR World 2023). In business occasions Brazilians should not be addressed by their first names, first names are allowed to use only if invited to do so. Unlike in many other cultures, in Brazil it is highly admirable if you come from a respected family. Inherited wealth is also considered to be positive. (Branco et al. 2016, 142.) In business negotiations the hierarchy can be seen in seating plan (Branco et al. 2016, 147).

Even though Brazil has in the past been very conservative regarding the roles of men and women, lately the society has been widely modernizing and many women work in respected professions like doctors and lawyers and own their own businesses. Even though some Brazilian men still prefer to negotiate with men, foreign women should not be facing any problems in Brazilian business life. (Branco et al. 2016, 143.) Brazilians don't have too strict dress codes, and they dress formally in business occasions while the atmosphere in them is informal. The dress will give a sign to your counterpart about your respect to them. Nice outfit can communicate as much as words. (IOR World 2023.) The dress code for men and women is different. While men are expected to dress in suits, women are expected to dress "sexy" and elegant on all occasions. In Brazilian culture people believe that the outer appearance talks about the way one takes care of

their business. Foreign women should wear feminine dresses or pantsuits accompanied by medium heels. (Branco et al. 2016, 143.)

In the research of Mishima-Santos et al. (2021), which is handling Brazilian remote workers during the time of pandemic, it is pointed out that due to the great inequalities in wealth in the country, only a small percentage from those who belong to higher social classes were able to work remotely. People from lower classes did not have a change for remote work. Remote work in general in Brazil and other emerging countries is new and not that widespread. The results of the research, however, point out, that getting and giving feedback is important for Brazilians when working remotely. Also, social support was considered important. Brazilian remote workers felt like too much controlling and monitoring is not so much needed than creating other ways of interaction between the team members and managers. As a result, the research also indicates that the work characteristics, the variety of the working skills and how the problems are solved, are affecting the wellbeing of the Brazilians that are working remotely.

#### **5.4.2 Overview of work culture and remote work in Finland**

Finns are known for being not so chatty nation. In business negotiations, Finns only say what they mean and what is necessary. They are always honest and sincere with what they want to express. Finns speak very well other languages, and are hardworking, punctual, and well organized. (Lewis 2005, 82.) They are very focused on business matters, which is why they may seem serious and melancholic to the foreigners (Leney & Barrett 2021, 163). The opinions and statements made by Finns are the result of very deep research and thinking. Finnish people are not ready to change their minds in a whim but can negotiate and meet in the halfway if the conditions are reasonable. (Leney & Barrett 2021, 175.) They like new things, and hate if something starts to work inefficiently, that's why Finns are very open for changes if something is not working (Leney & Barrett 2021, 163).

Finns are very logical progressors in negotiations and want to concentrate to the facts. However, even though Finnish men are very economical with their use of words and expressions, Finnish women are more communicative and emotional

in their expression. In Finland you can find that many of the people in leading positions can also be women that are also highly educated. (Lewis 2005, 84.)

According to Lewis (2005, 139) and Leney & Barrett (2021, 165) Finnish negotiations are informal, and using first names and informal outfits are a common habit in them. Everyone is treated alike, and what is said from the Finns side is more important than who says it. Small talk is decreased to minimum, and it is not usual to talk about anything besides the business during the negotiations. Finns communicate very straightforward and politely and express disagreement very openly, but politely.

Using charisma raises suspicion among Finns. They have realistic views, and they want to pay attention also to worst case scenarios, wasting time is not appreciated. Being reasonable and moderate is a virtue, unlike persuasion and hard sell. It is not polite to interrupt when someone is speaking but humorous cynicism is always welcome during the conversation. Any type of protocol is not paid attention to, but after making a deal, Finns expect that the terms are relied upon, and the payments are prompt. (Lewis 2005, 139.) Contracts are interpreted based on what has been written to them, not based on legislation (Leney & Barrett 2021, 175). Honesty and truthfulness are similarly expected from the colleagues and friends (Leney & Barrett 2021, 168).

In Finland speaking directly is not rude, quite the opposite. Finns like to speak directly, and it is normal in working life. For example, one should inform the manager if they can't get the work done. In meetings Finns go straight to the point without wasting time. Job interviews are usually informal. (The European Business Review 2021.) Presentations in Finland are mostly well prepared and structured. Finns don't usually slip from the content of their slides and notes and may appear visibly nervous while giving the presentation especially when the presentation language is English. (Leney & Barrett 2021, 170.)

In Finland men and women are equal, and Finnish women are as respected as men in leading positions (Leney & Barrett 2021, 173). Also due to the level of education of women, they are very intelligent and confident, they possess very good language skills, are goal-oriented, and knowledgeable. Finland in very

progressed with female rights, so women are treated equal to men in all business occasions. (Leney & Barrett 2021, 176.)

Finland is one of the best countries in the world in global competitiveness. Finland was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in 2023 (Yle News 2023) in competitiveness, and in literacy, mathematics, and science Finland is well above OECD average (Ahonen 2020). Finland is one of the most stable societies in the world with best-managed economy (Lewis 2005, 87). Finnish is very difficult language to learn, but Finns will appreciate if a foreigner tries to speak it (The European Business Review 2021).

Finns are good team players, reliable, good individual thinkers, and inventive. Finnish education system has changed the earlier cultural resistance to teamwork, and nowadays Finns often break off to small groups to tackle the issues. (Leney & Barrett 2021, 172.) Lewis 2005, 98 says that Finns are good in utilizing the most developed technology but also know how to use common sense in everyday decisions. Finns like simplicity and harmony of things, and in decision making ecological issues and human rights play a major role (Leney & Barrett 2021, 172).

Finland has a national obsession for achievement and innovation (Leney & Barrett 2021, 164), but Finns can only be led by Finns. Finnish leadership is pragmatic and effective (Lewis 2005, 88). In Finland the common way to manage is to create autonomous teams that are empowered to manage their own resources (Lewis 2005, 98).

Finns want to live up to the standards they have promised, more than any other nation. Punctuality is one of the things Finns are well known of, nine o'clock means 9.00, not five minutes pass. (Leney & Barrett 2021, 176.) Also, the most deep-rooted value of Finns, is to always pay the debts (Lewis 2005, 99, 123). When something is agreed together, employees and employer will expect everybody to stick on the agreement. It is very important in Finland also to follow agreed schedules and come to work exactly when agreed. (The European Business Review 2021.)

During remote work in Finland, women are more in charge of taking care of the children. What affects to the wellbeing of remote workers is the blurred line between work and free time. Many people who live alone, have ended up working all the time, even without a lunch break. (Niskanen 2021.)

Although majority of Finns are satisfied with their remote work because it increases work efficiency, they find constant remote meetings exhausting. Because there is no physical presence in remote work, it has been perceived to be stressful from time to time. Because Finns are very polite and introverted nation, they often have difficulties in contacting colleagues during remote work because they feel like they can interrupt something. (Anttonen 2020.)

#### **5.4.3 The main differences between Brazilian and Finnish work cultures and remote work**

Lewis (2005,89) divides leader-styles of different nations in three category which are linear-actives, reactives, and multi-actives. For example, Northers Europeans in general and Americans belong to linear-actives with their calm and factual leadership styles. Asians, however, have more reactive leadership style as they are courteous, compromising, and good listeners. Finland belongs in both categories with all the linear-active characteristics and also reactive characteristics like humbleness and good listening skills. Brazilians are completely different from Finns in this sense, as they belong to multi-active group with their warm, emotional, and impulsive characteristics.

While Brazilian managers are very autocratic, Finnish managers are very democratic but are also able to use their power when needed to get things done (Lewis 2005, 92-93). The decisions, however, are usually made democratically in a Finnish company (Leney & Barrett 2021,172). A Finnish manager trusts that the work gets done without constant monitoring. When planning the work, employees' opinions are always considered. (The European Business Review 2021.)

Finnish managers are modest and humble and rarely over persuasive. And unlike Brazilians, they are not arrogant and don't rely on charisma. Finns seem cold and



unmovable to Brazilians. (Lewis 2005, 97, 125.) If Brazilians get expressive and persuasive in negotiations, like Latins tend to, Finns get withdrawn and suspicious (Lewis 2005, 125).

To get along with Brazilians, Finns need to let their guards down, show that they have a heart, learn to ask personal questions, confess some private sins, and stay up drinking until the morning. For Finnish women this is much easier to do than for men. (Lewis 2005, 127.)

Brazilians tend to obey laws when it is necessary, Finns on the other hand are seen as “law-abiding to the point of being docile” (Lewis 2005, 126). Finnish people are also very knowledgeable of the laws and their rights and will stand up to them if needed (The European Business Review, 2021).

Leskinen (2022) writes in his article about remote work in Finland that 25% of Finns worked remotely during the years 2020-2021. Just under a third of the workers were not able to work remotely at all (Kovalainen et al. 2022, 342). This has also brought out the differentiation in working life in Finland, says Niskanen (2021). A large part of the work is the type of work, that cannot be done remotely. Also, Finnish remote workers often possess a higher educational (74 %) or professional background, or a certain stage of wealth (67 %) (Kovalainen et al. 2022, 342) which is the case also in Brazil, even though smaller percentage of Brazilians have the education and background that makes the remote work possible to implement. The level of wealth and living conditions affect to the remote workers, because in a big house it is easy to arrange remote work settings, but it is difficult in a small apartment.

## 6 METHOD

The two main research methods are qualitative and quantitative research. In quantitative research a large data is collected and converted to numerical form. The conclusions are made based on the statistical calculations of the data. Usually, there is already identified problem where there is a theory that can be measured with numbers. The goal is to find out if the generalization of the theory is true. (Habib et al. 2014, 8.) The measurement of the findings needs to be objective and statistically valid. The sample size must be calculated as a certain percentage of the given population to receive findings that have acceptable amount of accuracy. Quantitative research doesn't have conclusive evidence, but it is exploratory with structured questions. (Habib et al. 2014, 8-9.)

Qualitative research is interested in a people's personal experiences of the issue under study. The research type of qualitative research is empirical. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 27.) In qualitative research the data is collected directly from people and analyzed and interpreted afterwards (Habib et al. 2014, 9). Sometimes in the reports of qualitative research quotes from the original interviews can be used. However, it is not too much to say that the quotations may easily make a good report worse. Which is why one should consider carefully when using them. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 27-28.) The advantage of using qualitative method is to have the interviewees observed in their natural settings (Kuada 2012, 94). Most often research in business administration and engineering is done via quantitative research. It takes only small samples, has broad range of questions and is descriptive and conclusive. (Habib et al. 2014, 94.)

In qualitative research the question of the credibility of the research goes in two ways: on the other hand, there is a question of how the interviewer understands the interviewee, and on the other hand, how the reader understands the report written by the interviewer? (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 76.) According to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2018, 77) the most important part is to get the information out of the

collected data and convince the reader of what is being said. This is why it is too late to start thinking the analyzing method after the data is already collected. The analyzing method should be decided before starting the interviews.

One of the first introduced ways of doing qualitative research is case study. Especially in practice-oriented fields, like management, case studies have been proven valuable (Starman 2014, 29). Case studies are used, when the questions needing answers are how, and why. The answers are collected via direct observations of the events and interviews of the people that are/were involved in these events. As case studies are investigating a certain case, they can also use all sorts of sources of information to get all the needed data of the event in question. These include e.g., documents and artifacts. (Yin 2009, 11.) The importance of theory in qualitative research cannot be underestimated. Theory gives guidance to the qualitative research. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 23.)

The methodology for conducting the research at hand includes the theory part with a literature about Finnish and Brazilian work and cultural contexts, and remote and hybrid leadership methods and challenges. The qualitative data of the research is collected from the Brazilian team and the Finnish team of Company X's spare parts services unit. The data itself is collected via orally implemented interviews using Microsoft Teams calls as the channel of communication. The camera is not on during the interviews to protect the privacy of the interviewees. As the participants give the information with their own words, there may well be new insights to the matter as a conclusion of the research. (Kuada 2012, 94.)

## **6.1 Data collection**

Focus groups, observations, and qualitative interviews are the three techniques often used in qualitative data collection (Kuada 2012, 95). According to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2018, 83) also survey and documents can be used to collect information for qualitative research. All these methods can be used either separately or mixed in different variations.

The survey consists of a questionnaire that is filled in by the respondent. Answers can be given in an observed location or at home. Interview means that the data is collected orally by asking the questions from the interviewee and then recording them or writing them down. The big advantage of an interview method is that it is very flexible, and the interviewer can repeat and clarify the questions during the process. To get as much information from the subject it is also possible and recommended to give the questions to the interviewee beforehand so that they can be prepared. Observation can also be done during the interview process. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 86.)

Qualitative interviews are made to get a reflection of the life lived by the interviewees. The most important thing is to spend much time in analyzing the data collected and let the understanding to the issue come from the data. Qualitative data is used to explain and produce new insights to the theories that have been discussed in the theoretical framework of the research. (Kuada 2012, 100.) When collecting qualitative data semi-structured interview format is the most frequently used technique because of its flexibility and versatility. In semi-structured interview, the interviewer can make follow-up questions based on the responses of the interviewees if needed. (Kallio et al. 2016.)

The options for interview methods are thematic interview, in-depth interview, and dialogue (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 87 and 90). In thematic interviews, interviewees' answers can be expanded with more in-depth and probing questions, similar to semi-structured interviews. The idea is to emphasize different people's interpretations of the certain circumstances. In-depth interview, on the other hand, is completely without structure. It can also be called an open interview, where there are only open questions based on a certain phenomenon from which the researcher is concentrating to find information. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 88-89.) Dialogue as a data collection method cannot be planned beforehand and the result is always open. A dialogue is always different and includes both parties involved in the interaction, and the interviewer needs to bring their own assumptions openly to the discussion. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 91-92.)

In a thesis level paper, the size of the data collected should not be considered too relevant of an issue. More important is the depth and sustainability of the analysis. Usually in master's level thesis the data size is small. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 98-99.) It is not supposed to give any statistical generalization, but to describe a certain phenomenon or event, or to understand a certain type of behavior. However, the people chosen to participate to the research should have adequate information of the issue at hand, and the reason why they were chosen to participate should be revealed in the research report. A very appropriate number of interviewees in a master's thesis for one researcher is six. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 98-99.) If the answers start to repeat themselves while interviewing, a smaller amount of data would be also enough to collect (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 99).

In this thesis, qualitative thematic interviews are conducted as semi-structured interviews with Brazilian and Finnish team leaders and nine team members from both teams. It is a case study involving two teams from the spare parts department of company X in Finland and Brazil. The scope of the data to be collected is based on the number of people in each team and the potential frequency of responses, and therefore not all members of each team will be interviewed.

## **6.2 Validity of the data collected**

The personality of the interviewer and the personality of interviewees affect to the collected data. Some people may be more able to give deeper views to the matter than others. Some may also be reluctant to tell their honest opinions. It is also possible to misunderstand the received information. (Kuada 2012, 100.)

When evaluating the qualitative data collected, what needs to be considered is its trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness of the information is analyzed from the point of view of its credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. (Kuada 2012, 100.) Credibility of the data is assessed via respondent validation. It means that interview transcripts are sent to the

respondents to confirm that the information they have given is correctly understood. (Kuada 2012, 101.)

Transferability means giving detailed description of the circumstances where the data is collected. This will give the future researchers a possibility to compare their own studies with the study in question and find out if the results would be the same in another context. (Kuada 2012, 101.) Dependability means keeping a record of every part of the data collection. This is to provide evidence of that the study has been really made in a way it is described. (Kuada 2012, 101.) Confirmability requires a demonstration of that the researcher did not have any other interests to understand the outcomes of the study than the ones that were set in the beginning (Kuada 2012, 101).

The authenticity of the research is in correlation with the fairness of the data collection. It means that all relevant people and their viewpoint have been considered. (Kuada 2012, 101.)

### **6.3 Data analysis**

The most important part of the research is the data analysis. The collected data is analyzed via patterns created from the information received. The conclusions are made through analytical and logical reasoning. (University of Pretoria n.d.)

The data analysis is based on the chosen research questions, the method of the study, and the type of collected data. When analyzing qualitative data, the themes, types of people, topics, etc., are classified through coding. The variation within each coding category is examined and described in the analysis. All collected information that are text-based, can be coded, and integrated into patterns. This can also be done by using computer software. (Lapan et al. 2012.) Another way is to first listen to all recorded interviews and make transcriptions word by word. After that all collected data needs to be carefully examined and simplified expressions examined, underlined, and listed. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 123.)

A spreadsheet, or another form of software that takes statistical data can also be used in organizing the collected data. Before analysis the data must be cleaned up from duplications and errors. The four basic types of data analysis are: *descriptive*: describing what happened in a given period, *diagnostic*: describing why something happened in this given period, *predictive*: *describing* what might be happening in the near future, and *prescriptive*: describing what should be done in the future to get into certain result. (Frankenfield 2023.)

There are two types of analysis methods for qualitative research. The other one is guided by certain type of theoretical positioning. And the other one is not guided by any theories, but any type of theories can freely be applied to it. Thematic analysis and content analysis belong to this second method. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 103.) Content analysis and thematic analysis are very similar in data processing. The aim is to describe the documented data verbally. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 119.) According to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2018, 142) in thematic analysis the data will be categorized according to themes, which helps in comparing certain themes that come up in the data, whereas in content analysis different subcategories are formed. It is important only to include the data that is interesting in the research point of view and leave out everything that is not (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 104). Thematic and content analysis can be either inductive or deductive. Inductive means that the conclusions are made from single to general, deductive means making them from general to single. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 105.)

In the content analysis described by Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2018, 123) after the simplified expressions are found from the research data, they should be categorized according to their similarities and differences. These categories can be formed into groups either by finding upper categories and their subcategories, or by their themes. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 123.) After processing the data, the qualitative researcher writes analytic summaries of the results (Lapan et al. 2012). To get there, however, it requires recordings of interviews in field, transcribing some of the interviews recorded, listening to the

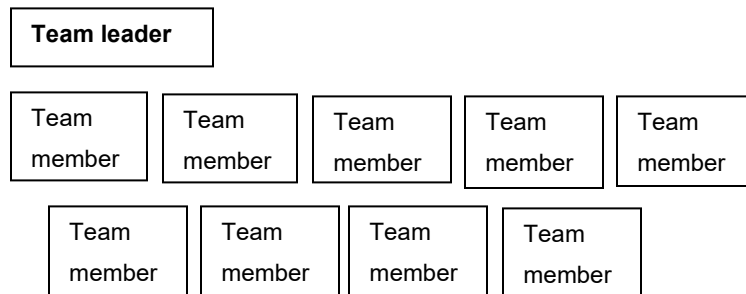
recordings again and again, and discussing, thinking, reflecting, and analyzing with others (Wielenga n.d.).

This study will conduct a thematic analysis based on the data collected, comparing, analyzing, and presenting leadership practices and challenges and other results according to the interviews with Finnish and Brazilian team leaders and their team members in accordance with the research questions.

#### 6.4 Analysis of the material

Before the interviews were conducted, they were structured to answer the research questions. The interview was first sent for preview and then rehearsed with a member of the Finnish team and was found to work for research purposes. The questions were asked and answered in Finnish with the Finnish team members and in English with the Brazilian team members. The questions asked of the team leaders differed in some respects from the questions asked of the team members. Figure 3 presents the Finnish organization chart of the interviewees.

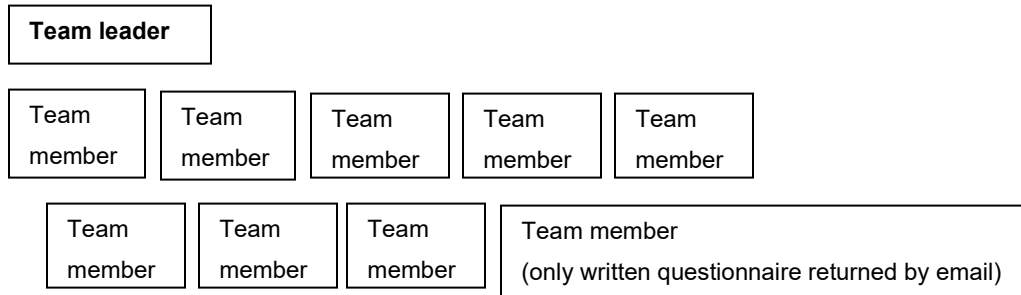
Figure 3. Finnish organization chart of the interviewees



First, the questions were sent to nine Finnish interviewees for preview, then the Finnish team members were interviewed via Team calls. The Finnish team leader then received the questions for preview and was interviewed. The questions were presented aloud and answered aloud in Teams calls with each interviewee. All interviews were recorded and transcribed using Teams tools. All this was done over a two-week period. Figure 4 presents the Brazilian organization chart of the interviewees.



Figure 4. Brazilian organization chart of the interviewees



The Brazilian team leader also got the questions first for preview, and was interviewed, and after that nine of the Brazilian team members got the questions for preview and were interviewed the same way as the Finnish team members. But due to the time difference between Finland and Brazil, the trainings and holidays of the Brazilian team members and their English language skills, it took almost two months to conduct all the interviews with the Brazilians. Only a few of the Finnish team members had written down their answers before the interview and almost all the Brazilian team members had written down their answers before the interview because they felt quite nervous speaking in English. One of the Brazilian team members decided only to send the answers by email, and not to participate to the oral interview at all.

The interview questions to the team members were divided into six sections including *background information, hybrid work routines, remote leadership practices and communication, wellbeing and development, organizational support and trust, and suggestions and feedback*. All these sections included 2-4 questions.

The interview questions to the team leaders were also divided into six sections including *background information, hybrid work routines, remote leadership practices and communication, organizational support and trust, lessons learned and recommendations, and suggestions and feedback*. And similarly to the team member interviews, these sections included 2-4 questions each.

The questionnaires of the interviews are in the attachments of this Thesis.

The answers from the Finnish team were very clear and understandable and they were much more thorough compared to Brazilian team answers, probably because Finnish interviews were conducted in the native language of the interviewees. The Brazilian interviewees did not always understand the questions correctly, and their answers were also sometimes difficult to understand. Asking again and explaining did not always help in clarifying the information given or received, and some of the Brazilians needed examples to understand the questions properly. This may have in some cases directed their replies. At the end of the interviews, all members of the Finnish and Brazilian teams were very happy to have been given the opportunity to answer these questions, and many found most of the questions interesting and valid. Many Brazilians were also very pleased to have been able to practice speaking English in this way.

After the interviews were conducted in Teams calls with both teams, they were transcribed and written down to the questionnaire form under every question in a different color code per person. Finnish and Brazilian interview answers were written on separate documents. All team member interview answers from Finland and Brazil were written on these documents, and the answers of the team leaders were written on separate documents as individual answers.

After that, the main points of all answers were written down to the research document in a way that best describes the overall answers of the team and their leaders.

The data of this study was collected via interviews of two Company X's team leaders in Finland and Brazil and nine team members from both teams. All in all, 19 interviews were conducted orally, as one of the Brazilian team members felt uncomfortable giving the interview orally in Microsoft Teams call and chose to only answer the questions in written which he then sent back via email. The members of Finnish team interviewed are in four different offices around Finland, whereas the members interviewed from Brazilian team are mostly located in the

same office, while only one of them is located close to the customer's facility in a different city. The interviews with Finnish team were conducted within two weeks' period, but because of the time difference and language issues, it took almost two months to get all the interviews ready from the Brazilian team. With Finnish team members there were no language barrier, as the questions and answers were given in their native language. With the Brazilian team there were some issues in understanding the questions and answers correctly because the questions and answers were given in English. This may have affected the interview results, as the majority of the Brazilians interviewed felt somehow uneasy talking in English.

The questions presented to the team leaders in Brazil and Finland were slightly different from those presented to the team members. The idea was to get the management point of view, by asking questions about things related to hybrid management. The results are presented here first by team, and then together. In the documentation forms of the transliterated interviews, the Finnish interviewees are coded as A1-A10 and the Brazilian interviewees as B1-B10. Quotes from the interviews have been translated from Finnish into English in the text and some of the Brazilian quotes have also been grammatically corrected. The questions addressed to the team leaders have been placed in the text itself to make the answers easier to read.

## 7 RESULTS

### 7.1 Results of Finnish team interviews

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

##### **How long have you been working in hybrid settings?**

Most of the team members (7 out of 9) had been working over three years in hybrid mode. However, one person had worked only one year in these types of settings, and another for 2 years. Four of the interviewees had been working over four years in hybrid settings. The team leader has been leading this team in hybrid mode for six months.

##### **Advantages of remote work**

Some of the team members work in a single room at the office, while others work in an open facility, depending on the location they work at. Six out of nine team members felt that it is easier to concentrate at home, because there are less noise and disruptions. Two of them even felt that it was the only advantage of remote work.

“The peace. It's easier to concentrate and, of course, the fact that the working day, as a whole, is shorter because you don't need to spend time travelling to work and, of course, you don't need to spend money to it either.” A6

Cost and time savings from commuting came out as advantages in six of the team member interviews. Two of the interviewees praised the possibility to sleep longer during remote days, while one of the interviewees loved the possibility to start the day earlier. Each way, there will be more free time left after remote working days. Two of the interviewees pointed out, that there are also time savings from dressing up and doing hair and make-up.

Two people had better ergonomic and lightning at home. Other advantages that were brought up by only one of the interviewees, (but not the same person)

where that one can easier arrange time for children who are going to school, one doesn't need to waste time in interacting with people at work, one can open the door for the renovation guy if needed, one can travel to other city and work from there for a few days if needed, and there is more flexibility in life which decreases the stress.

The team leader pointed out only one advantage which was that it is easier to balance between family and work life, if one needs to go somewhere straight after work.

"If you need to get somewhere after work, then of course you can get there easier after a remote day. That's really all I have to say about it." A10

### **Disadvantages of remote work**

The interviewees' views to disadvantages of remote work were more distributed. Three people thought that there were no disadvantages at all, while two thought that for new people it is difficult to make contact in remote settings. Three of the interviewees thought that it would be boring not to have any face-to-face contact if they had to work 100 % remotely.

"After a long time [working remotely] it's a bit boring, it's nice to see people face to face." A8

While one person thought that it is very difficult to relax and have coffee breaks and lunch breaks at home, the other thought that it can be too easy to get lazy at home. The person with children in school replied, that it is hard to concentrate when kids are at home after school, but it is also sometimes hard to concentrate at the office when there are a lot of people around.

One interviewee regarded the ergonomics worse at home than at the office. The other felt that it would be nice to have a restaurant near home, because it would then be possible to have lunch outside the home office.

The team leader felt that it is good to work only two days per week remotely, because seeing people makes the wellbeing better, and it is much more difficult to have effective communication with the team members remotely.

“Well, it has more to do with the communication involved and I personally don't like working remotely for a long time.” A10

### **The effectiveness of remote team communication and collaboration on 1-10 scale**

The average scale of remote team effectiveness was 9. People who had been working very long time at the company and had very good channels and contacts with their team members scaled the effectiveness as high as 10. Three people scaled it to eight, because they found that everybody is not responding to Teams calls and Teams chats easily. One person, who had just started working at the company, scaled the communication and collaboration to six, because they felt it was not so easy to communicate in Teams with people you don't know yet.

“All too often people fail to respond or react to your comment [in Teams].” A3

The team leader's response was that in single matters with one team member only involved the scale of communication effectiveness is as high as ten. But when the collaboration and communication involve all or many team members, it is as low as seven. He feels that response from the team members is easier to get in face-to-face meetings.

## **HYBRID WORK ROUTINES**

### **Hybrid work routines with teammates**

At the moment, two of the team members have no hybrid work routines at all with their teammates. Six of them, however, had coffee breaks or lunch at the office with colleagues. Two team members pointed out the virtual meetings together with the team members every second week.

The team leader pointed out that there are sales team meetings virtually twice a month, which is a routine, and one-to-one meetings every month between the manager and the team member.

### **Hybrid work routines alone remotely**

Three of the interviewees had no specific routines while working alone remotely. Two of the interviewees usually went for a short walk outside during the lunch break.

“Yeah, well, the only thing that differs from the office day is that I go out for a walk at lunchtime.” A1

Two other people sometimes had coffee break with other colleagues via Teams, one had a habit of calling one of their teammates sometimes during coffee breaks when working remotely. Two people pointed out that they had coffee breaks alone in the morning, and two people had also lunch breaks always at the same time when alone at home.

### **Hybrid work routines that would be beneficial**

Three of the interviewees couldn't think any routines that could be beneficial to them in hybrid work. Two people thought that it would be good to have one day agreed when everybody would go to the office.

“Yes, it could be something like this, that everyone would go to the office at the same time. It could be combined to something like going together to the meeting room to go through some things.” A8

One person would be happy if their routines would include regular coffee breaks for 10 minutes with some colleagues twice a day. Another suggested a weekly workout session while working remotely in Teams having the cameras on. One person thought their routine should include attending the area meetings once a week where the people from his sales area are gathering. One thought that having good night sleep before work would be a beneficial routine for them.

**The benefits of hybrid policy**

All team members thought that the possibility to work remotely gives more flexibility to life. Two people said that it is easier to arrange things in private life while working remotely.

“It makes life easier and reduces stress.” A4

Two pointed out the cost and time savings from commuting. One person said that it is also good for the employer, because for example when the employee is sick and cannot go to the office, they can still work remotely. Two people thought that it is also good to be able to stay home if the weather is bad. One pointed out that it is good to have someone at the office if they were at home, because sometimes there is something one needs to check from archive. Another person said it made their wellbeing better and third loved the possibility to sleep longer during remote days.

The team leader was asked, **how he creates the sense of unity between the team members regardless of their location**. He replied that the whole team has a meeting face-to-face once a year. Also, he would like to have a separate meeting between our sales team and the sourcing team as a routine. And when some part of the teams makes a successful outcome, he would like it to be celebrated together as a team.

**Difficulties faced while working in hybrid mode**

One of the interviewees felt that hybrid policy has not caused any difficulties, while two of the interviewees had had problems with internet connection sometimes while working remotely. For one person the difficulty was caused by going to the office, which causes the stress, adds expenses and causes decrease in effectiveness rate.



“When you have your own internet connection here [remotely], if you don’t get a fast enough internet connection, like I didn’t have at first, it might cause a problem with the functionality of the [company] systems.” B3

For the other person the difficulty was caused by sometimes leaving without any good working place at the office, because there aren’t enough good places if everybody decides to go to the office at the same time, while another person complained that sometimes there were no-one at the office when they have arrived there, and there is no point in being alone at the office. Four people felt strongly that 3 days a week at the office is too much, and there should be more flexibility allowed to that policy.

## **REMOTE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND COMMUNICATION**

### **The leadership style of the remote leader**

When asked about the leadership style of the remote team leader, the answers were very diverse. Five of the team members, however, thought that the leader is supportive.

“I guess maybe supportive is the right word, he offers to help when asked.” A9

Two of the interviewees thought the leader was doing more follow-up than needed, which can cause motivation issues in a long run in a team that is very self-directed in the first place. It can also cause people to do their work in a hurry, which leads to worse results and more mistakes. This is seen as a trust issue by one person. Another person thought it is caused by the fact that the leader doesn’t understand how things work and is in a learning stage for now.

Two team members felt that the team leader doesn’t make too much contact, which they felt was good, because they didn’t need it from him. Two of the interviewees thought the leader gives feedback very well.

One person thought the leader is trusting, another said he communicates the targets very well and is easily available. Third person thought he is directive, directing the team towards the company hybrid policy. Even though one of the interviewees felt the team leader understands people well, another thought he is not taking into consideration the wellbeing of the team. For example, he never asks anything but work-related issues, when it would be preferable to also ask about the life and mood of the team members.

“The manager could occasionally ask you how you are doing, and then he should also ask about your ability to cope and not just about work.” A1

When the team leader was asked, **how he ensures that everybody in the team is motivated and get support in remote settings**, he replied that he will discuss about this matter with everybody face-to-face during the monthly 15 minutes one-to-one meetings. He will ask what a person expects from him and what type of support they need, if any. However, he hadn't started these discussions prior to the interview.

### **Does the team leader communicate expectations, goals, and feedback effectively?**

Seven of the team members thought the team leader communicates expectations, goals and feedback effectively. One person thought that communicating expectations is even too effective and not needed in that sense. Two people said that he communicates goals well but does not give enough positive feedback. Also, another person thought that there is sometimes not enough feedback.

“There are targets all right, but no praise whatsoever; *fine words butter no parsnips.*” A4

The team leader was asked, **what type of tools and technologies he uses to make remote team communication and coordination easier and smoother,**

he replied that in addition to Teams tools and emails, he tries to illustrate important things by pictures to make them more memorable than written texts.

Another question for the team leader regarding the leadership practices and communication was, **how he keeps people involved during virtual meetings**. His opinion was that he will talk about this in next year's annual review and express there his expectations for everybody to participate more boldly in virtual meetings and to put their cameras on.

"Using camera enhances the involvement in virtual meetings." A10

## **WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **How the remote team leader supports the wellbeing and development of the team members?**

Most of the team members (8 out of 9) felt their wellbeing and development was supported by the team leader if there were any issues, they themselves requested support to.

"He at least has not prevented [the development] in any way, and during these annual meetings he asks where I want to develop and says that he can help in it."  
A7

One of the interviewees thought they were asked how they were doing, which supported their wellbeing. One person interviewed had got some suggestions for their career development. This person also felt being well supported if they needed to take more remote days because of health issues. Two other people had got support to their own ideas for their career development. One person thought it was up to them to suggest development ideas, not the team leader. One person thought they would appreciate the support from the team leader and him asking how they are doing in life, but felt they were not getting that now.

**Do the team members feel they are well connected with each other despite working remotely?**

Eight out of nine people interviewed felt they were well connected with their teammates despite working remotely.

“Absolutely [I feel well connected]. I would almost say that after the pandemic the connection has even improved, so it's better than before, maybe the threshold for using teams has even lowered.” A6

Two people had the experience that they were very badly connected with others while in remote work. The other one said they only had connection with 3 people out of their 20 teammates and the other felt that people were not answering to their Teams calls.

**What they feel would enhance their wellbeing and development in remote settings?**

Four out of nine people interviewed thought there were nothing that could enhance their wellbeing and development in remote settings. Two people said that better ergonomic at home office would make their wellbeing better. One person felt that it would be good to have more open discussions about how to behave in remote settings and how much one needs to work while working remotely. One person thought their wellbeing would be better if they could work 100 % remotely, which would give them the opportunity to live in another city close to friends and family.

**Where the team members feel they are most productive?**

Four team members felt they were most productive while working at home, three said they were most productive at the office, however, one of them felt they were more productive at the office only if there were less noise and would prefer if someone would actively ask people to lower their voices in office settings. Two of the interviewees saw no difference in their productivity related to where they were working.

The team leader was asked **what kind of challenges he has faced in leading the remote team and how he has overcome them**. He replied that he thinks the biggest challenge is building the trust. He feels he has overcome this challenge, but also feels like he still needs to keep building the trust by visiting people in their locations more often.

The team leader was also **asked how he feels the remote team leadership differs from in-office leadership**. He said that getting the given information understood the way it is meant to be understood is harder in remote settings, because even at the office, face-to-face, the message may not be understood correctly, so it is even more challenging remotely.

“Well, most communication, or a large part of communication, is non-verbal communication. In remote management it's left out.” A10

## **ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND TRUST**

**Are the team members happy with the support and resources organization provides to make the remote work and team collaboration easier?**

Seven of the interviewees thought they were happy with the organizational support and resources. One thought there weren't much support offered and another said the company is not supporting the remote work ergonomics. One person said the company is not supporting the remote work enough, because people are forced to go to the office three days per week.

The team leader was asked, **what kind of support and resources the organization provides to remote team leaders**. He said that hybrid model given by the organization is a good support in leading towards the hybrid work policy.

“The support is the written hybrid model to be followed, it gives the support to leaders when directing the team members to follow the model.” A10

One good resource he gets from the organization is that he has the possibility to travel to other locations to see the team members whenever he feels it's needed. He wants to make it a continuous routine for him. There are some trainings on the issue, but he feels they are not giving so much to him.

Then the team leader was asked, **what kind of policies or guidelines there are in the organization to support remote team leadership and hybrid work arrangements**. He said that all the policies and guidelines are well described in the hybrid policy model. Also, in the management team meetings there are a lot of talk about trust building, which can be sometimes forgotten. Then, there are discussions about celebrating the successes, that it is good to celebrate successes and spend some money on that, so the management work is not only about requirements and follow-ups.

The team leader was also asked, **does he feel that the organization gives enough support to remote leadership**. He said that he hasn't been asking support for remote leadership, but if he has had any questions or individual flexibility measures are required by some team members, he sees that he has got support to that and green light if needed. In this way he feels that he gets enough support to remote leadership from the organization.

**Do the team members feel the organization/manager trusts that they are doing their work while working remotely?**

All team members felt they are trusted while they are doing their work remotely. Also, the *team leader* says he trusts everyone. One person felt that for them it is better to document the things they are doing during remote days, and having phone calls with the manager from time to time makes them feel more at ease and more trusted while working remotely.

"It would be good to discuss [about remote work practices more in depth] with your manager to get the feeling that you are doing enough." A8

## **SUGGESTIONS AND FEEDBACK**

### **Suggestions or improvements for enhancing remote team leadership and collaboration.**

Two of the team members suggested virtual coffee breaks, other two suggested a Teams channel for the whole team where everyone could send their messages, questions, and answers. Two people felt that it would be good to have team meetings face-to-face with the whole team more often than once a year. It would create the sense of belonging and unity among the team members. Collaboration meetings with logistics and purchasing teams were suggested, remote gymnastics with cameras on, and a work chair from the company to home office use.

The team leader would like to have the team members to be more communicative and active during virtual meetings in Teams. He wants to encourage and challenge everyone to join the conversations and put their cameras on.

### **Feedback**

Five interviewees felt that the flexibility of having to work remotely two days a week is very good, and working remotely is effective and stress-free way to work. However, three of them felt that three days per week at the office is too much, less than three days or full remote would be preferable for them.

“Well, I'm in favor of remote work, I'd be in favor of 100% remote work, but also that if I need to go to the office, it's not a problem, but forcing people to go to the office when it doesn't matter where I work and when my team leader isn't sitting there, I just don't understand why I'm there and then sometimes when I'm there all alone, it feels completely useless.” A5

Two people said that for them it would be unbearable to have one certain day settled when everybody must go to the office, even though it is sometimes frustrating to be alone at the office. One person felt it is very stressful to work at

the office and wonder if they are disturbing someone during their Teams calls. Another person was very unhappy about the situation with the parking slots at their location. Everybody doesn't have their own parking slots there, which makes it very difficult to go to work by car. One person wanted to have more precise description of how to work and what is expected from them during remote work.

The remote team leader confesses that from his point of view, leading a remote team is more difficult than leading face-to-face. However, he feels that it can be done successfully.

## **7.2 Results of Brazilian team interviews**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **How long have you been working in hybrid settings?**

Seven out of nine people from the Brazilian team interviewed had been working in hybrid settings two years or more. Three people had been working three years or more, one person one and half years and one person only half a year. The *team leader* had been leading the hybrid team over 3.5 years.

#### **Advantages of the remote work**

Five people thought that while working remotely, they can sleep longer, which is an advantage. Four people pointed out, that they can spend more time with their families during remote working days. Three people were happy that they didn't need to commute. Two people felt that working at home is more comfortable than at the office.

"I work in my room so the place for me is quieter so I can concentrate better, and I don't need to wake up two hours before 8:00 AM so I save in transport time and sleeping time." B3

Two people mentioned that it is good to have the possibility to do running things during lunch hour while working remotely. One interviewee mentioned the flexibility as an advantage, another the quality time, third thought they had more



time to exercise and fourth mentioned the money savings. One person, who lives in another city than the office is, said that it is good to be able to work close to the customer's facility.

The team leader's perspective to the issue is that the advantage from the whole team's perspective is that they are all happier because of the flexibility. It creates good life balance and time savings from commuting. And when people need to travel to customer's location, they can also work and do virtual calls from there. So, one can work wherever they are and take care of their work responsibilities, which enhances the customer and team happiness.

"Perhaps this is a win-win situation; the client and the team are happy, and the opportunity to work wherever you are and take responsibility for your duties is also very good." B10

### **Disadvantages of the remote work**

Three people interviewed felt that lack of face-to-face time with others is a disadvantage.

"I think the lack of communication is a disadvantage comparing to face-to-face daily." B4

Two people admit they work too much remotely and don't stop at five when they should. Two said, that in the beginning they didn't have good ergonomic, which they have now, however. One person had sometimes problems with internet connection, another had problems with their mom who was disturbing them when working at home. Third didn't like the fact that they needed to cook for themselves during remote days.

According to the team leader, some young people and some new people are not performing very well while working remotely as they get distracted from work. However, some people work also very effectively while working remotely.

“But on the other hand, we have really good people working remotely, maybe they are even better working at home than at the office.” B10

The team leader points out that communication issues are a disadvantage in remote work, because when talking with someone sitting in the same office one doesn't need to start with “hello, how are you?”. This polite conversation takes a lot of time from the work when talking in Teams with many people throughout the day. It is also difficult to teach people new systems while they are working remotely. The learning curve is much slower in that way.

### **The effectiveness of remote team communication and collaboration on 1-10 scale**

The average scale of the remote team effectiveness was rated to 8 by the team members. Four interviewees scaled it to 9. They felt it was very effective but didn't give 10 because they thought face-to-face is always more effective. Three people rated the effectiveness to 8, and one person to 7, because they felt it is easier to get help at the office. One person felt that the lack of communication makes the effectiveness as low as 5 during the remote days.

The team leader rated the effectiveness to 6, because the team is young and not so experienced.

“The commitment is different as far as you're getting older, you have bills to pay, and whatever.” B10

## **HYBRID WORK ROUTINES**

### **Hybrid work routines alone remotely**

Three of the interviewees said they had no specific routines while working remotely. Two team members said they sleep longer and take shower before starting the work. One person did the exercise before starting to work, another usually organized the house during lunch hour, and two of the interviewees

walked the dog during lunch hour. One team member had less breaks while at home, the other was calling with the manager in the morning and in the evening.

### **Hybrid work routines together with teammates**

Almost all team members said they had many meetings with their team during the week face-to-face and in Teams. Two people said that at the office they have coffee breaks and lunch together and talk about their work and private lives.

“When we lunch together, we talk about our personal lives you know, and exchange ideas.” B2

The team leader said that during in-office days, they have face-to-face team meetings. In this way it is easier to communicate and see the participants’ reactions and body language. This team in Brazil has set remote days to Wednesday and Friday, and everybody is at the office on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. And because some of the team members prefer to go to the office also on Wednesday and Friday, the team leader is at the office every day of the week too because he wants to be available whenever it is needed.

### **Hybrid work routines that would be beneficial**

Three people said that some gymnastics or going to the gym would be beneficial routine for them.

“Maybe some gymnastics like with the arms and shoulders.” B7

Two people thought they should have coffee breaks. Two people felt that at home there should be more quiet time to be productive. One said that more meetings during in-office days would be beneficial, and another felt that talking together more about special cases would be good. Three people were happy with the way things were.

### **The benefits of hybrid policy**

Five of the interviewees praised the flexibility, quality of life, and private life and work life balance the hybrid model helps them to achieve. One person mentioned

the possibility of doing the running things during remote days, another said they had more time to spend with family and go to the gym. Four people liked how they can save money and time from commuting. One likes the possibility to sleep longer during remote days.

The team leader was asked, **how he creates the sense of unity between the team members regardless of their location**. He replied that every month they have a meeting, where everybody participates, also those team members who are located in different cities apart from the office and they stay at the office for the whole week so they can feel they are part of the team.

“We usually ask them to participate in the performance parts meeting every month face-to-face.” B10

### **Difficulties faced while working in hybrid mode**

Four of the team members said they had problems working remotely in the beginning because of bad ergonomic; no desk, chair, or extra screen. One person said, they still need a better screen, headset and chair for remote work. Three people had problems sometimes with the internet connection in remote settings. One interviewee said they get distracted from work at home, another felt that they work too much at home without any breaks. One thought that learning the work as a new employee in remote settings was very challenging.

“I faced difficulties at the beginning when I didn't have much experience and I didn't have access to tools.” B3

One person felt they had more time to relax during lunch break while working at the office, because at home they need to cook, clean and do the laundry within an hour-long lunch time.

## REMOTE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND COMMUNICATION

### **The leadership style of the remote leader**

Seven interviewees thought that the leadership style of their remote team leader is supportive.

“I think it's supportive because our leader always has empathy and concern for the team's well-being, so we feel comfortable talking about the problems we face at work because we know we will get supported.” B3

Five of the interviewees felt the leader is always very helpful. Two people considered the team leader understanding. One person said he is friendly. Another person thought he is also very democratic and extremely open. Only one person felt lack of communication with the team leader during remote days.

When the team leader was asked, **how he ensures that everybody in the team is motivated and gets support in remote settings**, he replied that he calls them every day regarding general issues and arranges face-to-face meetings at the office.

“We have taken an advantage when the guys are at the office to settle some face-to-face meetings, face-to-face feedbacks, so we adapted the routine of having meetings in a way that we are all face-to-face rather than online.” B10

However, he says his habit is now not to give feedback regularly, only one feedback per person every two months. He wants to push the team members to ask the feedback more independently.

### **Does the team leader communicate expectations, goals, and feedback effectively?**

Eight of the team members felt their team leader communicates expectations, goals, and feedback very well. Three people also stressed that the communication with the team leader is very clear. Two people pointed out that

there are meetings every week where they receive guidance and feedback. Only one of the interviewees said they think the team leader communicates expectations and goals ok, but not the feedback in remote settings.

“Feedback should be given face-to-face.” B4

The team leader was asked, **what kind of tools and technologies he uses to make remote team communication and coordination easier and smoother**, he replied that he uses email, Teams, WhatsApp and phone calls. There is a WhatsApp group for the whole team, and several different groups to communicate with different compositions of the team regarding the matter in question.

Another question for the team leader regarding the leadership practices and communication was, **how he keeps people involved during virtual meetings**. He said that he got training some time ago about this matter. One way to keep people involved is to motivate them to put their cameras on during calls. It means that they put their cameras on because the team leader does it as well, even though they don't always like it. The team leader motivates them to using camera by explaining how it is better for them to see each other, and they have agreed with that. Then it is easier for the team leader to see if people are paying attention, if they seem concerned, or if they are getting the message he is giving.

“During virtual meetings when I feel like I'm starting to lose them I make some questions they need to reply to, then they come back and start paying attention.”

B10

## **WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **How the remote team leader supports the wellbeing and development of the team members?**

All interviewees felt their remote team leader supported their wellbeing and development; two said that by having Teams meetings every morning, three

people said that by helping with their problems. Also, two of the interviewees felt that their development is supported by trainings. Four interviewees felt that the team leader is interested of their lives and communicates about things which makes their wellbeing better.

“I think the leader is asking about our lives, if we are well, and by following our social networks too.” B8

**Do the team members feel they are well connected with each other despite working remotely?**

All the interviewees felt that they were well connected with each other, and the team is well united despite working remotely. Only one person wanted to stress, however, that face-to-face the communication is still better.

"I believe my team is well united, so I speak with all in the team every day." B8

**What they feel would enhance their wellbeing and development in remote settings?**

Three people said that a second screen would enhance their wellbeing in remote settings. One person mentioned better ergonomic and faster systems, and another needed better internet connection. One person was missing more communication and feedback with the team leader.

“I think regular communication and feedback from my leader in purposes of health balance between personal and professional life would be good.” B3

Another needed more group work and interaction with other team members during remote days. One of the interviewees felt they needed better time management for themselves and better ability to concentrate on work while working at home.

**Where the team members feel they are most productive?**

Four of the team members felt they could work best at home, and other four

thought they are most productive at the office. One person didn't find any difference in their productivity either way.

The team leader was asked **what kind of challenges he has faced in leading the remote team and how he has overcome them**. He replied that in the beginning everything related to remote work management was difficult.

"Everything we were supposed to do in the beginning of remote work to follow-up the teams' performance was difficult." B10

After some time, he started to understand the things and for example the Microsoft Teams features better. Also, some KPIs were dropping in the beginning, which was a challenge to overcome. Then some people had difficulties in working at the office after working remotely for two years. They needed support in getting used to coming back to office for 3 days a week. And of course, some people were complaining about the time spent to commuting. But when the company offered the possibility to have two remote days, because minimum office days were now set to 3, they asked the team members which days they would prefer to stay at home. The team chose Wednesday and Friday. So, it was agreed with, and good results were required from the team in return. If the results would drop, they would have to go to the office four days a week. But so far everything has been going well.

The team leader was also **asked how he feels the remote team leadership differs from in-office leadership**. He said that communication is always better face-to-face. Therefore, he always schedules feedback to in-office days.

"What differs is the contact, interaction, and communication. It is better to give feedback face-to-face." B10



## ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND TRUST

### **Are the team members happy with the support and resources organization provides to make the remote work and team collaboration easier?**

All team members were happy with the support and resources company provides. However, one person said that there could still be more support, and another said that that the company could provide screen and headset for remote work.

“[The support] is not so bad but could be better. Yeah, if they would buy the screen, second headset and things like that.”

The team leader was asked, **what kind of support and resources the organization provides to remote team leaders**. According to him, the organization gave training on how to use Teams a few years ago. He believes the organization provides what it is supposed to provide.

“The Teams version provided by the company is not the basic version, so it has a lot of resources.” B10

Then the team leader was asked, **what kind of policies or guidelines there are in the organization to support remote team leadership and hybrid work arrangements**. He said that the policy is two days remotely and three days at the office. The Guideline is to encourage people to use video in Teams calls.

The team leader was also asked, **does he feel that the organization gives enough support to remote leadership**. He said that in the beginning of the pandemic they received leadership training and there were a lot of discussions about virtual leadership. However, he feels that it is something all companies are still practicing.

“Of course, it's something that everybody, not only inside the company here, but the other companies too, everybody's learning how to be a good leader with the

hybrid or 100% remote way. So, there is nothing that we have had in the literature, I mean we can't read about remote working. So, it's something that happened that didn't happen before." B10

**Do the team members feel the organization/manager trust that they are doing their work while working remotely?**

Seven out of nine people interviewed felt that they were trusted by the organization and their manager when working remotely. However, some of them felt the need to show management that they were working, with good results and emails. One person was quite suspicious about management trusting them and another said they think they don't trust, at least if the person has just started working in the company.

"It depends how long the person has been at the company and what the person has accomplished, it's easier to trust someone that have been like five years at a company than someone that has just joined." B4

The team leader said he has 100 % trust to everybody while working remotely. But if the customers start complaining about unsolved cases, he talks with the team members about the flexibility and what type of responsibility comes with it. Unsolved cases can occur, however, despite the remote work, so it is not always related to that, but a certain person and their personality.

"So, I think there's nothing with 100% related to remote work but the person itself." B10

**SUGGESTIONS AND FEEDBACK**

**Suggestions or improvements for enhancing remote team leadership and collaboration.**

Two of the team members felt they would like to have more meetings during the week or a day. One interviewee wanted to have Teams group for a quick consultation. Two people wanted to have more feedback more frequently. One of

them wanted clearer expectations and goals and more training and development possibilities. One person also pointed out good contact with team members and the importance of continuous dialogue.

“I think that [with the knowledge of] tools, it is important to empower the employees. Also, feedback, regular feedbacks to know what we need to improve and what we are doing well. I think it is important.” B3

The team leader wanted to have a team task collaboration tool in Teams to make remote teamwork easier. The tool would work in a way that the task is not needed to be sent to anybody by email, it would be shared in Teams in a way that one doesn't need to call anyone and spend time in chatting before getting down to work. He would prefer to have such a tool to reduce polite conversations, which are common in Brazilian culture but waste a lot of time.

### **Feedback**

All interviewees felt that hybrid model is very good and makes work and personal life balance better. They would like it to continue. One person, however, pointed out the importance of physical contact with co-workers and bad internet connections outside office that can slow down the work.

“It's very good, you can be closer to your family, closer to your client, however, depending on the location, the internet doesn't work very well, and it can take longer to carry out activities that could be done faster in the office. In my opinion, physical contact between co-workers and superiors is better in person, sometimes some activities are carried out more quickly.” B9

The team leader noted that there have been challenges with the performance of new employees. Building trust and having conversations is important before judging anyone. However, some team members work very well remotely. Others need more support and supervision.

### **7.3 Summary of the Finnish and Brazilian team interviews**

#### **Background information**

The majority of Finnish team members have worked in hybrid mode for at least three years, while the majority of Brazilian team members have worked in hybrid mode for at least two years.

#### **Advantages and disadvantages of hybrid work**

For most Finnish team members, the main benefits of remote working are a more relaxed working environment, flexibility in organizing personal and work life, and cost and time savings in commuting. For Brazilian team members, the main benefits are the ability to sleep longer and spend more time with their families, but also flexibility, work-life balance and time and cost savings in commuting. The Finnish team leader emphasizes better work-life balance, while the Brazilian team leader feels that his team is happier because of flexibility.

Many Finnish interviewees think there are no disadvantages at all in remote work, but also as many say it would be very boring not to have any face-to-face contact at all. For Brazilians, the lack of face-to-face contact as a disadvantage is mentioned the most and the second is working too much during remote days. Some people from Finnish and Brazilian teams thought their ergonomics are bad at home, and some thought it is better at home, depending on how they have invested to it themselves. Both, Finnish and Brazilian, team leaders say that the lack of effective communication with the team is the biggest disadvantage of remote work. The Brazilian team leader also points out the difficulties in getting new people on-board while working remotely.

While the average of remote team effectiveness is scaled to 9 in Finland, it is scaled to 8 in Brazil. Overall, Brazilian team gives lower grades to remote teamwork than Finns.

#### **Hybrid work routines**

Interaction with colleagues is very important for both teams. Finnish team members' hybrid work routines with teammates include most often coffee and

lunch breaks together, while majority of Brazilian team members mentioned having many meetings remotely and at the office together throughout the week as their routine but also having coffee and lunch breaks together at the office.

Management regards the interaction with their team members very important. Finnish team leader say they have a routine meeting as a team twice a month, and once a month a fifteen-minute-long face-to-face meeting one-on-one with all team members separately. The Brazilian team has arranged three office days when everyone is in the office together, and during these days they have one-to-one team meetings. Team calls with team members during remote working are a big part of the management routine in Brazil, which is not the case in Finland.

In both Brazilian and Finnish team interviews gymnastics and coffee breaks alone or together with teammates are considered beneficial hybrid working routines. Some of the Finnish team members wish that one day in the office with the team would be routine, so that they could meet their teammates face-to-face at least once a week, while the Brazilian team members thought that more face-to-face meetings during office days would be a good routine.

Internet access causes problems in both Finland and Brazil during remote work. Better ergonomics at home would improve the well-being of both teams. However, in the Finnish teams' responses, most of the difficulties with hybrid working arises from going to the office because it causes stress, reduces efficiency, and the office may not have good working spaces and other team members may not even be present at the same time, while the Brazilians feel that the problems with hybrid working are mainly due to poor ergonomics, distractions and difficulties in training new employees to work remotely.

### **Remote leadership practices and communication**

The team managers in both teams try to put some effort on making the team feel connected with each other. The interview answers show, that the Brazilian manager puts much more effort to that than his Finnish counterpart. The Finnish team leader says the unity between the team members is created by having a

team meeting once a year, while the Brazilian team leader says they have team meeting with everybody involved every month.

Both Finnish and Brazilian team leaders are considered mostly supportive by the team members. However, the Finnish team members have very different experiences of their leader, while the Brazilian team members did not. Some think the Finnish team leader communicates targets very well and is easily available while some other people feel he doesn't make too much contact and addresses their work uncomfortably. One person thinks he is understanding while another thinks he doesn't consider people's wellbeing the way he should. The Brazilian team leader is considered helpful, understanding, and friendly by almost everybody in the team. Only one person feel lack of communication with him. Majority from both teams think their leader communicates the expectations, goals and feedback effectively, but in Finland, it is not always perceived positively. A few people in both teams would appreciate more regular feedback of their work.

The difference between tools and technologies used in remote teams' communication is that when the Brazilian team leader uses Microsoft Teams, email, WhatsApp, several different WhatsApp-groups, and phone calls, the Finnish team leader is using only Teams and email.

When attending to meetings virtually, both Finnish and Brazilian team leaders want to highlight how important it is to use cameras in keeping people involved. Finnish team leader says he stresses the importance of communication in the Teams meetings to the team members themselves in annual discussions, and the Brazilian team leader says he starts making questions when he feels he is losing the attention of the people in virtual meetings.

### **Wellbeing and development in hybrid work**

All Brazilian team members and most of the Finnish team members feel they have good contact with each other while working remotely, but when the Brazilians feel their wellbeing would be better if they would have more interaction with others during remote days, the Finnish team doesn't bring it up at all. There is no big difference between Finland and Brazil in where people feel most

productive as approximately half of the team members in both teams feel they are most productive at home and the other half is most productive at the office. Two people in both teams doesn't see any difference in their productivity related to where they are working.

Majority of the Finnish team members feel their wellbeing and development is supported by the team leader, while all the Brazilian team members feel their wellbeing and development is supported by the team leader. One person in Finnish team thinks they have got suggestions for their career development from the team leader and some others think their own ideas of career development are supported. Brazilian team members think their development is supported by meetings and trainings, and with the help of the team leader in their problems. But while only a few of the Finnish team members are asked about their wellbeing by the team leader, many in Brazilian team feel their wellbeing is in the interest of their leader.

There is a big difference in how the Finnish and Brazilian team leaders spend their time in dealing with the motivation issues of their team members. The Finnish team leader says that his way to motivate and support people is by discussing with them one-on-one every month for 15 minutes, when the Brazilian team leader says he discusses with his team members every day and arranges face-to-face meetings at the office every week.

The challenge faced by the Finnish team leader in remote work is building the trust. He approaches it by thinking of making more in person visits to different locations. Brazilian team leader approaches the trust issue by following the KPIs and agreeing with the team members about certain results that should be achieved. In Finland all team members and their team leader trust that everyone is doing their work while working remotely. In Brazil, however, not all team members feel they are trusted in remote work and the team leader also feels that the results of the team members need to be somehow followed and encouraged.

The support both team leaders get to the remote leadership from the organization are the trainings. Brazilian team leader also mentions the Microsoft Teams with

amended possibilities for virtual leadership provided by the organization. Finnish team leader thinks that the management team meetings give good resources for hybrid leadership. Both leaders feel the organization gives enough support to the remote leadership when it is needed.

### **Suggestions and feedback**

Both Finnish and Brazilian employees have some ideas of hybrid work routines that would be beneficial for them. The idea of a Teams channel for quick consultation with colleagues is introduced in both teams. More team meetings are asked by both teams as well; Finnish team wants more team meetings where the whole team would gather face-to-face, and Brazilian team wants more team meetings throughout the week. A Finnish team member suggested virtual exercise once a week with a video as a good hybrid work related workout routine. Brazilian team members need clearer requirements and targets from their manager than the Finns. They also asked for clearer expectations, targets, feedback, training and development opportunities, and more communication and meetings with the team leader than Finnish team members.

Many in the Finnish team feel that less than three days per week at the office would be preferable. And even if some of the Finnish team want to have a scheduled day when everybody would be at the office, others feel that it would be unbearable. Brazilians are very happy with the flexibility they get from working two days a week remotely and three scheduled days in the office. Both Finnish and Brazilian team leaders feel that remote management requires different measures than office-based management.

The managers of both teams have some ideas for making the hybrid work better. Brazilian team leader suggests a Teams tool, that would make the Team collaboration faster and easier in a way that the contact could be like in in-office work. Finnish team leader stresses that the team members should start being more communicative during the virtual meetings and put their cameras on.



## **8 CONCLUSIONS AND DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS**

### **8.1 Answering research questions**

At the beginning of the thesis, four research questions were posed. In this chapter, the questions are answered on the basis of the theoretical framework and the interviews conducted. The sub-questions are answered first, and the main question is answered at the end of the chapter on the basis of the answers given to the sub-questions.

#### **What advantages and disadvantages in hybrid work there are for employees in Company X Finland and Company X Brazil?**

According to HBR (2021, vii), while working remotely, one needs to figure out how to stay productive in different settings, sometimes surrounded by different distractions, how to collaborate with colleagues that suddenly appear only in Teams meetings and, as a manager, how to support and be in contact with the remote team. For some people it may also cause mental health issues due to isolation and perhaps exhaustion from differing expectations of when the workday ends. This study has found that the majority of Finnish team members consider the best benefits of remote work are more peaceful settings at home, flexibility in private life and work arrangements, and cost and time savings on commuting. Brazilian team members cite the ability to sleep longer and spend more time with their families as the main benefits, but also flexibility, work-life balance and saving time and money on commuting. The Finnish team leader emphasizes the better work-life balance, while the Brazilian team leader feels that his team is more satisfied thanks to flexibility.

Lewis (2005, 82) says that Finns are known for being not so chatty nation. In business negotiations, Finns only say what they mean and what is necessary. Majority of the Finnish interviewees in this study feel that there are no disadvantages in remote work, but just as many also think that it would be pretty boring if there was no face-to-face contact at all, so the results of this study

reveal that although Finns are not very chatty in the core, many Finns still like to be in touch with other people. Storti (2011) states that Brazilians get great pleasure from dealing with people, preferably face-to-face. For Brazilians, the lack of face-to-face contact was also the most cited disadvantage in the results of this study, followed by working too much on remote days. Both Finnish and Brazilian team leaders said that the lack of effective communication with the team is the biggest disadvantage of working remotely.

Both teams have had problems with internet access while working remotely, and better ergonomics at home would improve the well-being of both teams. However, in the Finnish teams' responses, most of the difficulties of hybrid working arise from going to the office, which causes stress, reduces efficiency, and good workplaces may not be available. Brazilians felt that the problems of hybrid working were mainly due to poor ergonomics, distractions, and difficulties in training new employees to work remotely.

### **What are the existing routines in hybrid work in Company X Finland and Company X Brazil?**

Hybrid work routines are ideal in enhancing the wellbeing of the employees; they can serve as a motivator to work, and the routines together with the teammates make the team more unified. When team members feel they are part of the team with the manager, they feel motivated and enthusiastic in reaching the common goal together. This study has found that generally coffee breaks alone or together with teammates are considered important. Some of the Finnish team members wished for a scheduled office day so that they could meet their teammates face-to-face at least once a week, while the Brazilian team members stressed the need for more face-to-face meetings during office days.

O'Neill (2022) suggests that social interaction makes work relationships more meaningful; it makes it easier for the employees to approach the management, it makes the cooperation between individuals and teams easier, colleagues express more caring towards each other, and everybody has the sense of

inclusion. The study findings supported this theory as interaction with colleagues is very important to both teams. Finnish team members' hybrid work routines with teammates included most often coffee and lunch breaks together, while majority of the members of the Brazilian team mentioned having many meetings together throughout the week as their routine.

This study has also identified that the management regards the interaction with their team members very important. Finnish team leader said they have a routine meeting as a team twice a month, then once a month a fifteen-minute-long face-to-face meeting one-on-one with all team members separately. According to the Brazilian team leader, they have scheduled the three days, when everybody will be at the office, and during those days they have face-to-face team meetings. Also, O'Neill (2022) stresses that important ways of creating the sense of inclusion are demonstrating that the management cares how the employees are doing.

According to Dughi et al. (2022, 83) physical activity is considered one of the most important aspects of healthy lifestyle in our society. For example, WHO states that regularly performed physical activity is good for the body and mind. It relieves stress and can strengthen self-esteem and social resources as well. Physical activity came up also in the findings of this study. Hybrid work routines that came up in both Brazilian and Finnish team interviews are going to the gym, going for a walk, and doing some gymnastics.

### **How the development and wellbeing in hybrid work settings is supported by the organization and management?**

The theory of this study reveals that it is important for remote managers to go the extra mile to make remote workers feel connected, valued and part of the team. Knight (HBR 2021, 143-147) explains how remote leaders must set performance goals that are regularly reviewed, arrange regularly predictable visits to their location, create effective channels for open communication – the team must understand that they are obligated to communicate regularly and create

unplanned conversations. The findings of this study also show that the managers of the teams interviewed try to put some effort on making the team feel connected with each other. However, the Brazilian manager puts much more effort to that than the Finnish manager. The Finnish team leader said the unity between the team members is created by having a team meeting once a year, while the Brazilian team leader said they have team meeting with everybody involved every month.

This study has found, that despite the managers' approach, all Brazilian team members and majority of the Finnish team members felt they are well connected with each other while working remotely, but while Brazilians feel that their well-being would be better if they interacted more with others on remote days, Finns do not consider this important. In this context Storti (2011) suggests that Brazilians get great pleasure from dealing with people, preferably face-to-face. However, the results of this investigation show surprisingly, that there was no big difference between Finland and Brazil in where people felt most productive as approximately half of the team members in both teams felt they were most productive at home and the other half was most productive at the office.

According to (Elliot et al., 2022, 132) in the past the main functions of management where planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling, in today's hybrid workplaces the main skill managers should possess is empathy. This study has shown that both Finnish and Brazilian team leaders are considered mostly supportive by their team members. However, the Finnish team members have very different experiences of their leader. Some think he communicates targets very well and is easily available while some other people feel he doesn't make too much contact and addresses their work uncomfortably. One person thinks Finnish team leader is understanding while another thinks he doesn't consider people's wellbeing. The Brazilian team leader is considered helpful, understanding, and friendly by almost everybody in the team. Only one person feels lack of communication with him. Majority from both teams, however, think their leader communicates the expectations, goals and feedback effectively.

In the theory part of this study, it is pointed out that one of the managements goals these days is to look after the wellbeing and development possibilities of hybrid workers. Elliot et al. (2022, 132) states that it is important to lead with sensitive touch by preventing burnouts, communicating transparently, and accepting and owning mistakes. Soft management skills are now more important than ever. This study revealed that most of the Finnish team members feel their wellbeing and development is supported by the team leader, and all the Brazilian team members feel their leader supports their wellbeing and development. One person in Finnish team thinks they have got suggestions for their career development from the team leader, while some others think their own ideas of career development are supported. The Finnish team leader has asked a few team members about their well-being, while in the Brazilian team more people feel that their well-being is in the team leader's interest. Brazilian team members consider that their development is supported by meetings and trainings, and with the help of the team leader in their problems. Lewis (2005, 89) explains the differences between leadership styles of Finland and Brazil which this study also found, by dividing the leader-styles of different nations in three category which are linear-actives, reactives, and multi-actives. Northers Europeans belong to linear-actives with their calm and factual leadership styles. Asians, however, have more reactive leadership style as they are courteous, compromising, and good listeners. Finland belongs in both categories with all the linear-active characteristics and also reactive characteristics like humbleness and good listening skills. Brazilians, on the other hand, are completely different from Finns in this sense, as they belong to multi-active group with their warm, emotional, and impulsive characteristics.

Elliot, et al. (2022, 132) articulates that in hybrid settings, the managers should not be managing people. Their goal should be to bring out the best from people by serving them. Managers should be able to unlock the potential, inspire trust, and create clarity. The findings of this study reveal that the Finnish team leader motivates and supports people by discussing with them one-on-one every month for 15 minutes, the Brazilian team leader, on the other hand, discusses with his team members every day and arranges face-to-face meetings at the office. The challenge faced by the Finnish remote team leader is building the trust. He

approaches it by thinking of making more in person visits to different locations. Brazilian team leader approaches the trust issue by following the KPIs and agreeing with the team members about certain results that should be achieved.

Employee wellbeing is also affected by the level of trust that management has in them. This study has shown that in Finland all team members and their team leader trust that everyone is doing their work while working remotely. In Brazil, however, not all team members feel they are trusted in remote work and the team leader also feels that the results of the team members need to be somehow followed and encouraged. Lewis (2005, 92-93) states as well, that while Brazilian managers are very autocratic, Finnish managers are very democratic but are also able to use their power when needed to get things done. The decision, however, are usually made democratically in a Finnish company. (Leney & Barrett 2021,172.) A Finnish manager trusts that the work gets done without constant monitoring (The European Business Review, 2021). Kelm & Risner (2007, 10) also declare that in Brazilian business world performance during the job is based on trust. There are no measurement systems that would tell if somebody were performing better than others. In this case the findings of the study prove otherwise.

Virtual meetings are an important part of hybrid working and making them work as well as face-to-face meetings for all parties can be challenging. According to (Andersen et al. 2021, 171-172) creating engagement during virtual session is difficult, and one of the main challenges is to keep the audience interested during the whole session, when the attention span in virtual meeting starts to drop already after 5 minutes from the start of the meeting. This study has found that in virtual meetings both Finnish and Brazilian team leaders want to highlight the importance of using cameras when keeping people involved. The Finnish team leader also wants to stress the importance of communication in team meetings to the team members themselves in the annual discussions, while the Brazilian team leader starts asking questions when he feels he is losing the attention of people in virtual meetings.

Lindholm (2021, 59) states that when transiting from all remote covid time to hybrid work, it is important for the organizations to create guidelines how to follow-up employee well-being and the changes in it. The companies need to make sure that the managers have strong skills in discussing team members well-being and recognize changes in it. Employees should be informed about the tools they can use and who they can contact in case they need to. The expectations towards employees and managers should be clear and visible and included in the on-boarding training. This study revealed that the support both team leaders get to the remote leadership from the organization are the trainings. Brazilian team leader also mentions the Microsoft Teams with amended possibilities for virtual leadership provided by the organization. Finnish team leader thinks that the management team meetings give good resources for hybrid leadership. Both leaders feel the organization gives enough support when it is needed to remote leadership. The difference between tools and technologies used in remote teams' communication is that Finnish team leader is using only Teams and email, when the Brazilian team leader also uses WhatsApp, WhatsApp-groups, and phone calls.

### **What unified hybrid leadership and hybrid work routines in a global organization support the teams' development and wellbeing?**

HBR (2021, 143-147) points out that managers need to build trust with remote workers by getting to know them on a personal level and encourage their team members to do the same with their remote colleagues. Personal details bind the virtual teams together. An important thing is to make virtual team members feel part of the team, even though they are not present at the office. Their work needs to be recognized, which signals to the co-workers that they are equal and should be treated as such. Hybrid work routines together will help in getting to know the colleagues better and they also help in trust building. This study has identified that Finnish and Brazilian employees already have some ideas of hybrid work routines that would be beneficial for them. In both, Finnish and Brazilian teams, the idea of a Teams channel for quick consultation with colleagues was introduced. Also, more team meetings were asked by both teams; Finnish team wanted more team meetings where the whole team would gather face-to-face,

and Brazilian team wanted more team meetings throughout the week. Some of the Brazilian team members want to have clearer expectations, goals, feedback, training and development possibilities. A member of the Finnish team suggested gymnastics via a Teams call once a week with a video.

IOR World (2023) states that Brazilian management style is very hierarchical, and Brazilian employees are more used to following orders than instructions, and in a case of Brazilian managers, they are more used to giving orders. This can be the reason why this study also showed that some of the Brazilian employees need clearer requirements and targets from their manager. The results of the research of Mishima-Santos et al. (2021), as well as this study, revealed that getting and giving feedback is important for Brazilians when working remotely. Social support was also considered important. What also confirms the research findings of Mishima-Santos et al. (2021) when compared to this study, is that according to Mishima-Santos et al. (2021) Brazilian remote workers felt like too much controlling and monitoring is not so much needed than creating other ways of interaction between the team members and managers. The same can be seen in this study, with Brazilian team members wanting more communication and meetings with the team leader.

This study has also explored managers' ideas on how to improve hybrid working. Brazilian team leader suggested a Teams tool, that would make the Team collaboration faster and easier in a way that the contact could be like in in-office work. Finnish team leader stressed that the team members should start being more communicative during the virtual meetings and put their cameras on.

When talking about the organization wide hybrid work routine: *two days remotely and three days at the office every week*, majority in the Finnish team feel that less than three days per week at the office would be preferable. And even though some people from the Finnish team want to have a scheduled day every week when everybody would be at the office, others feel that it would be unbearable routine. Brazilians are very happy with the flexibility they get from working two days a week remotely and three scheduled days in the office. Both Finnish and



Brazilian team leaders feel that managing remotely requires different measures than managing in the office.

Following a review of the theoretical framework for remote and hybrid working and management and interviews with Finnish and Brazilian teams, the following new hybrid routines are recommended for supporting employee wellbeing and development. These routines can be used in both organizations, Finland and Brazil: A Teams channel for quick consultation with colleagues, one scheduled day a week at the office when the team has face-to-face meetings, virtual gymnastics with video once a week for 10 minutes, virtual coffee break in 2-3 people groups once a week, changing the formation of the group every week, feedback from the team leader face-to-face once a month, celebration of a success together with pizza-delivery virtually or at the office every third month, and team meetings face-to-face with team building program with the whole team twice a year

## **8.2 Further development**

As a further development, I suggest the following for the Company X to successfully proceed with previously recommended new hybrid routines.

### **A Teams channel for quick consultation with colleagues**

In the Company X's Finnish team there are basically two different types of tasks that the team members are handling; other part of the team handles only technical issues, and the other part of the team handles the sales related issues. This team will create one channel in Teams, where everyone in the team is involved. This channel will be for quick consultation of technical questions. The other Teams channel that will be created within Finnish team is for salespeople only, and it will handle sales and system related issues. The channels work in the way that anybody in the network can ask in the chat their questions, or inform relevant issues, and anybody who knows the answer to questions raised, can reply to them in a short notice. This will make the work faster, because the questions can be solved much faster within a bigger network of professionals contributing than by asking from a one person only. In Brazil the team consists

only salespeople, so there would be only one teams channel consisting of all the team members.

### **One scheduled day a week at the office when the team has face-to-face meetings**

In Finnish team there is no scheduled day per week, when everybody would be at the office at same time. In Brazil, however, there are already scheduled in-office days. So, in this case, it is useful also for the Finnish team to have one scheduled day at the office, when the team would gather in the meeting room to go through relevant issues with the team manager. The team will also share coffee and lunch breaks together during that day and consult each other face-to-face about possible problems they have.

### **Virtual gymnastics with video once a week for 10 minutes**

Everybody will get an invitation via Teams to virtual gymnastics for 10 minutes once a week. This requires all the participants to have their videos on during the gymnastics so that people can see each other, see how others perform with the gymnastics and talk about un-work-related issues while working out. This will create a low-level possibility for the team members to socialize with each other, enhance the well-being and enhance the sense of togetherness. The gymnastics will be mainly for upper body, neck, and shoulders.

### **Virtual coffee break in 2-3 people groups once a week, changing the formation of the group every week**

This requires an excel sheet, where all the team members wanting to participate to these coffee breaks are listed. Then every week, a person will call to the colleague assigned as their that weeks coffee break buddy (or buddies). The people who are in turn of calling, are marked with red color in the sheet.

### **Feedback from the team leader face-to-face once a month**

The team leader will arrange face-to-face feedback with everybody individually once a month (or once per two months). The main idea of this event for the team

leader is to give positive feedback to the team members and that it will be done in person, face-to-face.

### **Celebration of a success together with pizza-delivery virtually or at the office every third month**

Every third month there will be one success story of the team, or a team member, picked up, and the team members will celebrate it together. It will be done preferably so that everybody will be at the office during that day, and the pizzas will be ordered and delivered to the office where the team members will enjoy them together with the team leader. Because in Finland the team members are in five different locations, the team can't gather together with everybody involved, but the team members can gather with their colleagues in the same location. The Finnish team leader can join the team members in different locations during different gatherings.

### **Team meetings face-to-face with team building program with the whole team twice a year**

Team-building events are very important to increase the sense of cohesion among team members. They create a sense of belonging to a particular group and increase personal commitment and engagement within the group. In the long-term it reduces the employee turnover. In the team building events, there are different types of tasks or sports events that help the team to co-ordinate together and learn about other people's strengths. It will create memories to laugh about also during the rest of the semester. One team building event will be arranged during spring semester, and other during autumn semester. Another possibility for the Finnish team would be to arrange the other meeting in one of the locations where some of the team members already are located, there the team would work together during the day, and then have the team building program in the evening after work.

## **8.3 Further research ideas**

In this study, respondents were not asked their age, gender, or family status. Since this study was carried out, it has become clear that these things have an

impact on a person's attitude towards hybrid work. In future research, these issues should be included in the research questions.

As further research idea a similar study could be conducted with the same target group after a year of testing this newly introduced hybrid routine to see how it has supported and improved the well-being and development of the participating teams. It would also shed light on whether it is really possible for a global company to adopt uniform hybrid routines that are suitable for different cultures in different countries. The follow-up study may also lead to new ideas on hybrid routines that work. Some questions that came up during my research were handling the effectiveness of hybrid work. One part of the further research could be a deeper analysis of the effectiveness of remote/in-office work compared between Finland and Brazil.

If I were to do the same survey again, I would start by asking about age, gender, and family status. I would also ask my team leader before starting the interview process if he had any preferences about the questions to be asked, as it turned out that he would have liked to put even more emphasis on the effectiveness and results of the hybrid work. This would make the study more useful to the organization. I would also test the questionnaire with a Brazilian test interviewee to see if it was easy to understand, or even give all interviewees the questions in Portuguese beforehand and explain further if they had any concerns before conducting the actual interviews.

#### **8.4 Reliability of the research**

The research methodology included a theoretical part, which included a literature review on the Finnish and Brazilian work and cultural contexts, as well as on the methods and challenges of remote and hybrid management. The qualitative data collection was conducted by using Company X's Brazilian team and Finnish team as sources of information. The thematic analysis was made based on the data collected, where the hybrid leadership practices and challenges and other outcomes of the interviews were categorized by themes, processed, summarized, compared, analyzed, and presented. In the end, the research questions were

answered and new hybrid routines to support the wellbeing and development of employees were presented as an outcome of the study.

The method was chosen because the answers to the research questions could best be collected through qualitative interviews, given the relatively small sample size of this study. The Company X's teams in Brazil and Finland both include approximately 20 people, and after conducting over five interviews the same answers became appearing repeatedly in both teams, which means that the adequate amount of data was received. The people chosen to be interviewed had been working in these teams in a hybrid mode for a while, some for several years, so it can be considered that they had adequate information of the research issues.

In this study, the bias may have been caused by the fact that many of the Brazilian interviewees did not understand the questions correctly or had insufficient vocabulary to answer as they would have liked. To minimize bias, the questions were sent to the interviewees a couple of days before the actual interview so that they could familiarize themselves with the questions and think about their answers. Another issue that could have caused bias in this study is the trust issue as it may well be that in both, Finnish and Brazilian teams, people were not giving their honest opinions because they could have been afraid of exposing themselves to their team leader. This bias was minimized by telling interviewees that no record would be kept of who said what, and that responses would be treated and presented anonymously.

The data was collected through one-on-one interviews in Microsoft Teams calls, without video footage. Finnish team was interviewed in their native language, which is probably why their answers were more comprehensive and longer than those of Brazilian teams'. Brazilian team was interviewed in English, which is not very strong language for Brazilians whose native language is Portuguese. This language issue caused some nervousness among some of the interviewees and all the questions were not correctly understood nor replied, and some of the answers of the Brazilian team members were difficult to understand for the

interviewer. This may have caused incorrect results from the Brazilian team interviews. Even though the questions were sent to the interviewees a couple of days before the interview, some interviewees needed examples of the answers to understand the questions, and this may have affected to their replies as well.

Most interviewees from the Finnish team had been working hybrid from three to four years, while most of Brazilian interviewees had been working in hybrid settings from two to three years. Therefore, Finnish team was more experienced in hybrid work, and this may have caused differentiation between the answers given by the Finnish and Brazilian team members.

The reliability of the study has been ensured by interviews conducted in Teams calls, which were also recorded. It ensures that the information provided by the interviewees has not been altered in any way for the purposes of the study.

The research limitations include language barriers and cultural barriers that may have affected to the information received from the interviewees. Also, the possibility, that the interviewees did not want to, or were afraid to give the most correct information of the matter in question need to be taken into account as a limitation.

## **8.5 Conclusions**

The key findings of this study revealed that hybrid work in Company X Brazil is more regulated by the management than the hybrid work in Finland. For Brazilians frequent and regular interaction with their colleagues is more crucial than for Finns, although Finns also have need for some type of contact with their colleagues. Company X's Brazilian employees have higher need for target setting and feedback than their Finnish counterparts. The study showed that Brazilian management is much more participative, directive, and supportive than Finnish management. In Finland, people are expected to be more self-directed, to ask for development opportunities on their own and to do their work with little interference from their superiors. However, it can be sometimes seen as a personality issue, as this study has identified that some people in Finland also

feel they would appreciate more guidance in remote work. In addition, some Brazilians are very self-directed and need less management intervention than others.

In Finland and Brazil there were same amount of people feeling most effective in remote work, and in in-office work. In Finnish interviews however, it was more stressed that the remote work is more effective, when in Brazilian interviews many felt more effective at the office where they could consult each other about problems very quickly. The effectiveness of remote work seems to be more deeply followed in Brazilian organization than in the Finnish organization, according to managers interviewed. Brazilian manager also pointed out, that some people from his team are very effective working remotely, while some are not. In Finland there seems to be no remarkable difference in it. In Finland it was pointed out, however, that the lack of efficiency is often caused by working at the office, because of the noisiness and socializing with the colleagues.

The main difference in the attitude towards remote work between Finnish and Brazilian team is that Brazilians value and appreciate the possibility to spend more time with their families during remote days, when Finns think more about practical issues like saving time and having more peaceful place to work at. Both teams appreciate the possibility for hybrid work, but when Brazilians expressed their gratitude for having the possibility to work two days per week remotely, Finns were not satisfied with the number of remote days. Finns felt it more stressful, knowing that they had to go to the office for three days per week, and would appreciate more flexibility and more remote days per week.

## 9 FINAL WORDS

This study attempted to find answer to four questions. The main question was: What unified hybrid leadership and hybrid work routines in a global organization support the teams' development and wellbeing? And the sub questions to help to find the answer to the main question were: What advantages and disadvantages in hybrid work there are for employees in Company X Finland and Company X Brazil, what are the existing routines in hybrid work in Company X Finland and Company X Brazil, and how does the organization and management support the development and wellbeing in hybrid work settings?

After the interviews, this study found that there are hardly any hybrid routines in Company X's Finnish unit and Company X's Brazilian unit. Also, the organization and management seemed to have very vague ideas of how to support the wellbeing and development of employees in hybrid settings. In the end, the aim of this study was to create a coherent set of hybrid working and management routines that would support employee wellbeing and development and that would be suitable regardless of the organizational country or culture. The study achieved the target by giving a suggestion for the routines, based on the answers of the interviewees and the theoretical framework. The suggestion for new unified routines were: A Teams channel for quick consultation with colleagues, one scheduled day a week at the office when the team has face-to-face meetings, virtual gymnastics with video once a week for 10 minutes, virtual coffee break in 2-3 people groups once a week, changing the formation of the group every week, feedback from the team leader face-to-face once a month, celebration of a success together with pizza-delivery virtually or in-office every third month, and team meeting face-to-face with team building program for the whole team twice a year.

The key findings of this study revealed that the Brazilian management is much more participative than Finnish management. It also revealed that even though Finns are not as social as Brazilians, they still need some type of interaction with their colleagues. In Finland it is expected for the people to be more self-directive



in hybrid mode, whereas in Brazil, hybrid work seems to be more regulated. However, it is also clear that the way different people work is sometimes personality-driven in both countries.

This study is of wider relevance to the field of hybrid management and hybrid work research, as it is a very new way of working in our society, and existing knowledge about it is currently very limited and often belongs to the internal knowledge of a single organization. However, hybrid work seems to be here to stay, so companies need to learn how to manage it in a way that maximizes the benefits for the company and its employees. This study contributes to that.

The research process gave me a lot of new information about Brazilian culture and business culture. I also learned about remote and hybrid management from many new perspectives, which has been very enlightening. As hybrid management is a new way of managing people in today's organizations, I believe it is a skill that will be increasingly required of managers in the future job market.

At the beginning of the thesis process, I didn't realize how much effort it would take to interview ten Brazilians, some of whom had poor English language skills. And how much joy, funny moments, and relevance the interviews would give not only to me, but also to the interviewees. Many of them felt gratitude for being able to express their thoughts of the matter in question. Discussing with people face-to-face, even if it was only through a Teams video call, can make one's day during this hybrid work era we are living in.

The discoveries of the leadership style of the Brazilian manager were unexpected and surprising in some extent. It was a great pleasure for me to find out how people endorsed their supportive and helpful manager, I think these are most crucial features that a good manager should possess to have motivated, engaged, and happy work team.

In the introduction to the study, I predicted that it could provide Company X's managers with new ideas for managing hybrid work, useful strategies for team

management practices and some ideas for developing hybrid routines. I believe that the study provided these ideas and some new insights for managing hybrid work.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Company X organization and my team leader for making this research process possible and for his support during the process. I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to all 20 interviewees who contributed to this study with their own views on hybrid work.

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## Questionnaire for the managers' interviews:

### Background information:

- a. How long you have been managing your team remotely or in a hybrid work setting?
- b. What advantages and disadvantages you have found from remote work?
- c. How would you rate the effectiveness of remote team communication and collaboration on 1-10 scale?

### Hybrid Work Routines:

- a. How do create a sense of unity among team members regardless of their location?
- b. What kind of existing routines you team has in hybrid settings?

### Remote leadership practices and communication:

- a. In what ways you make sure that your team members are motivated, and supported in a remote work environment?
- b. What tools or technologies do you use to make remote team coordination and communication easier and smoother?
- c. How do you keep people involved during virtual meetings?

### Organizational Support and trust:

- a. What kind of support and resources your organization provides to remote team leaders?
- c. What kind of policies or guidelines there are in your organization to support remote team leadership and hybrid work arrangements?
- d. Do you think your organizations gives enough support to remote leadership?
- e. Do you have trust over your team members for doing their work tasks effectively in remote settings?

### Lessons Learned and Recommendations:

- a. What challenges you have faced in remote leadership, and how you have overcome them?
- b. How, in your opinion, remote leadership differs from in-office leadership?

### Suggestions and Feedback:

- a. What suggestions or improvements you would give for enhancing remote team leadership and collaboration?
- b. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience working in a remote/hybrid team?

Questionnaire for the team member interviews:

Background information:

- a. How long you have been working remotely or in a hybrid work setting?
- b. What advantages and disadvantages you have found from remote work?
- c. How would you rate the effectiveness of remote team communication and collaboration on 1-10 scale?

Hybrid work routines:

- a. What kind of hybrid work routines you have alone or together with your teammates?
- b. What kind of hybrid work routines would be beneficial to you?
- c. What benefits you see in hybrid policy?
- d. What difficulties you have faced?

Remote Leadership practices and communication:

- a. Describe the leadership style of your remote team leader? (e.g., supportive, directive, empowering)
- b. Does your remote team leader communicate expectations, goals, and feedback effectively?

Well-being and development:

- a. How does your remote team leader support your well-being and development?
- b. Do you feel that you are well connected to other team members despite working remotely?
- c. What would enhance your well-being and development in remote settings?
- e. Where do you feel you are the most productive?

Organizational Support and Trust:

- a. Are you happy with the support and resources that your organization provides to make remote work and team collaboration easier.
- b. Do you feel the organization/manager trusts that you are doing your work while working remotely?

Suggestions and Feedback:

- a. What suggestions or improvements you would give for enhancing remote team leadership and collaboration?
- b. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience working in a remote/hybrid team?