

The Impact of COVID-19 and Remote Work on the Perception of Company Values.

Case Company: Supermetrics Oy

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Abstract

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Title of the thesis The Impact of COVID-19 and Remote Work on the Perception of Company Values. Case Company: Supermetrics Oy		
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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, working from home became the standard for many employees across various industries. As employees go home to continue working in a virtual environment, companies faced the challenge of upholding organizational values when everyone is remote.</p> <p>The purpose of the study was to examine how employees at Supermetrics Oy perceive the company's core values when working from home and to evaluate how the values and their perceptions have changed since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>The thesis work utilized the inductive approach, and it is backed by primary and secondary data. In the theoretical part, secondary data was collected to form the theoretical background of the study by defining and exploring concepts of organizational values, organizational culture, remote work, and the challenges of remote work from an organizational culture perspective.</p> <p>Primary data in the empirical part was collected in the form of qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and quantitative data from a survey questionnaire. Five managers from Supermetrics participated in the interviews and 59 Supermetrics employees responded to the questionnaire.</p> <p>The results of the study reveal that practically all employees agree with and practice the company's core values, but different groups of employees perceive the values differently. The findings also show that some of the core values are favorably more important when working remotely, and non-core values such as flexibility, empathy, and work-life balance became familiar among teams. The data further suggests that a lack of work-based social support may have affected the values of the company, but casual activities and monthly company-wide meetings help with feeling, seeing, and maintaining Supermetrics' organizational values.</p>		
Keywords organizational values, COVID-19, remote work, work from home, telework		

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Before the year 2020, work has always been traditionally associated with congregating employees to the same location. It was the norm to be able to have managers and fellow co-workers to cooperate and verbally communicate at ease with each other at a workplace. The benefits were obvious – there is a clear boundary between work and personal life by having a separate location for work, and the gathering of employees creates a social experience. (Mulki et al. 2009.) Even though the idea of remote work was unpopular, it was generally conducted out of necessity or urgency, depending on the job. Although there are certain professions that already allowed people to work from home or in a separate location other than an office, the point that people's time and work were bound to specific places still stands. This has since changed for many employed people in all industries affected by the pandemic, which was caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in early 2020.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, companies all over the world quickly transitioned jobs to adopt a remote work approach for daily operations. In Finland during March 2020, the government recommended that people work remotely when appropriate and if possible (Yle 2020). Shortly after, early findings in April 2020 revealed that almost 60 percent of the workforce in Finland had switched to remote work since the pandemic began. This was the highest proportion of workers that started working remotely in the European Union. (Eurofound 2020a.) Figure 1 shows that this may appear as a natural trend for Finland, considering that the past decade showed a steady uprise in practicing remote work, particularly in the IT and communications sectors. At least 14 percent of employed persons in Finland reported working from home in 2019. (Eurostat 2021.)

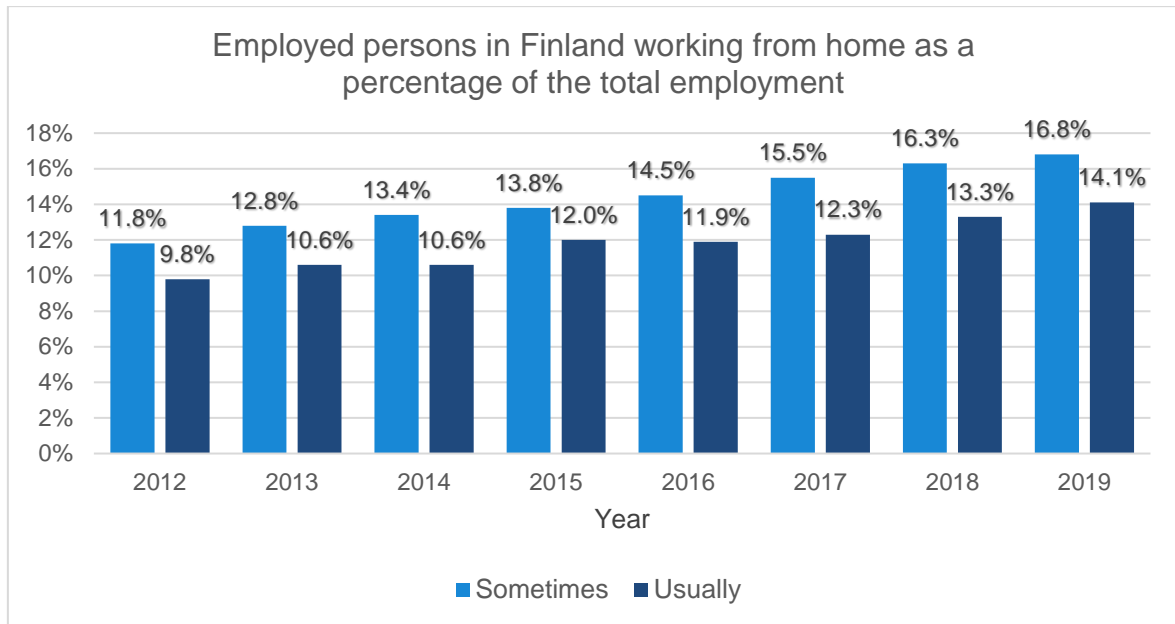


Figure 1. Share of workforce in Finland working remotely 2012–2019 (Eurostat 2021)

A similar pattern was observed in the United States as well. Before the crisis, 15 percent of the workforce was already working from home. This share grew to half the workforce working from home by April with no significant increase in May, suggesting that the nationwide shift to remote work had been largely in effect by early April. (Brynjolfsson et al. 2020.) Other reports in the US, however, show a much more conservative portion of the workforce working remotely. According to Bick, Blandin, and Mertens (2020), their data revealed an estimate of 35 percent of the workforce worked entirely from home in May 2020.

Challenges	Definition
Work-life Balance	Employees' "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home."
Workplace Isolation	Employee's perceptions of the availability of co-workers, peers, and supervisors for work-based social support.
Lack of Face-to-Face Communication	Lack of in-person contact.

Lack of Visibility	A deficiency in “the possibility for supervisors and others to observe workers.”
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Table 1. The Key Challenges of Remote Work (Mulki et al. 2009)

Remote work comes with its challenges, notably making it harder for companies to maintain organizational culture. Mulki, Bardhi, Lasik, and Nanavaty-Dahl (2009) identified the four key challenges of remote work as seen in Table 1.

Each of these key challenges can negatively affect organizational culture. First, there's work-life balance where employees feel that it is difficult to separate themselves from their job, resulting in overworking. Second, being isolated from the workplace can cause a feeling of loneliness, a lack of comradery among colleagues, and a harder time to stay up to date with important work matters. Third, the lack of in-person communication slows down and complicates communication in general, but more importantly people cannot pick up on non-verbal cues and expressions. Lastly, a lack of visibility between employees and managers may make it harder to trust others or feel trusted by others, and may get you more or less attention, for better or worse. Without visible examples of the company culture in effect from co-workers, employees can become disengaged from the company culture. This virtual environment makes it feel that there is less guidance from leaders, but culture is about guiding actions and decisions of all employees in the company to proceed in the right direction (Brower 2020).

With the pandemic lasting already for over a year, many organizations had to adopt new strategies on how they can maintain culture in this new norm. For instance, companies can highlight and recognize employees who act, behave, and perform in alignment with the company culture to counter the lack of visibility issue. Moreover, worries of the culture changing is further compounded by the fact that nearly half of young remote workers had never worked from home before (Eurofound, 2020b). This is especially true for organizations successfully expanding and hiring throughout the pandemic. One way to address this issue is by hiring and promoting people who are resilient and adaptable. These are a few examples on how to feature the company's cultural values through more substantial means. (Brower 2020; Chatman & Gino, 2020.)

The case company of this thesis is Supermetrics Oy, one of Finland's fastest growing companies that has been scaling up in the past year. In the beginning of the pandemic, remote work was enforced as part of social distancing measures and as recommended by the government. Despite the challenges caused by the pandemic and remote work, Supermetrics

has managed to grow, not only financially, but in staff personnel as well. The Helsinki-based company has been doubling staff every year, which has generated discussion among employees on how the company culture will be maintained during the expansion.

The motivation behind this thesis is because one of the co-authors is a full-time employee of the case company and the partner co-author has a general interest in the Human Resources space. The authors realized that there are many business implications caused by remote work and the pandemic, one of which could be a paradigm shift in company culture. However, organizational values will be undertaken as the focus of this study.

1.2 Thesis Objectives, Research Questions, and Limitations

The objectives of the thesis are to study the importance of company values at the case company and to gather how the employees perceive the company's core values during COVID-19. Measuring and analyzing the attitudes and consistency of values among employees will help identify if there is indeed a disconnect in culture caused by working from home. These findings are to ultimately reveal any disparities that may exist between employees and various levels of the company, providing deeper insight on values for the People Operations team looking to improve and sustain the company culture at Supermetrics.

The main research question is

- How have the employees' perceptions of the company values changed due to the impact of COVID-19 and remote work?

This research requires supporting questions before an answer can be concluded. Leading up to the research question, the following sub-questions are

- Which values are most consistent within all levels of the organization?
- How do the value perceptions compare between different groups of employees?
- What strategies or activities are used to promote the company values?

By identifying and understanding the current situation where employees stand on company values with the pertinent sub-questions, it will be clearer to highlight the values that guided employees best when working unsupervised at home.

The thesis has a strong case company focus. It pertains to a specific medium-sized company with multicultural, multi-ethnic employees. The case company is based in Finland with additional offices in North America and Lithuania. Considering all offices and including remote workers outside of these regions, the employees represent over 25 nationalities and

ethnicities. English is also the working language and nearly half the company consists of foreigners, which is quite multicultural for a company in Finland, so personal, national, and work values among employees can vastly vary.

The thesis has a specific focus on company values rather than company culture holistically. Company values serve as one of several parts of a functional company culture, and this thesis aims to study the perceptions of company values at a growing company under remote work policies. Other studies can expand on this for a more comprehensive research on company culture.

Suggestions to modify the company values or company culture will not be made in the conclusion of the study.

The effective relationship between values and work performance, nor the relationship between values and financial performance will not be measured or evaluated in the thesis.

Similarly, the thesis also does not measure or analyze the impact of COVID-19 on work performance or financial performance of the company.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the thesis will consist of a thorough review on values, culture, and remote work. These topics serve as the foundation for the thesis and provide a background to both the study and the reader.

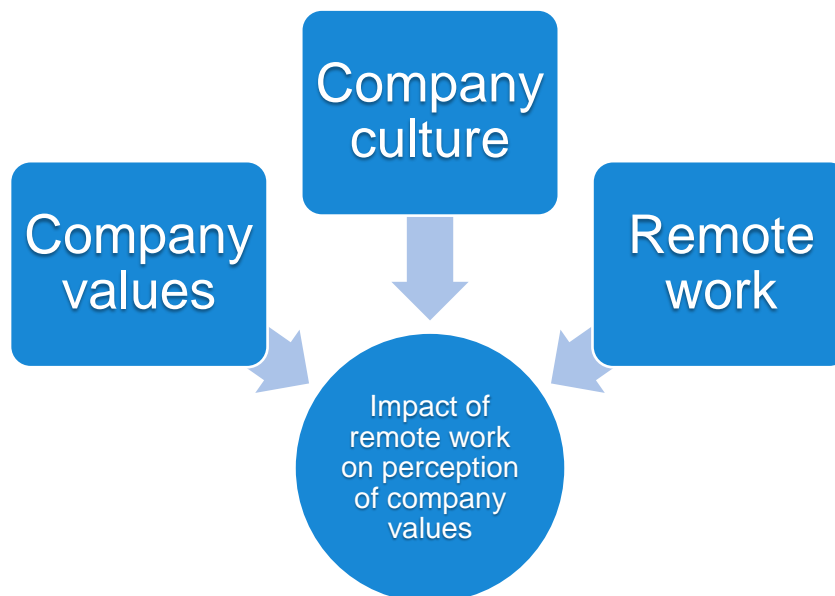


Figure 2. Topics of the theoretical framework

The first chapter of the literature review begins with defining values from a personal and organizational perspective, then culture both as a social phenomenon and within an organization. Subchapters under culture will discuss the levels of culture and the concept of organizational culture. Even though the thesis focuses on values, culture is highly relevant to the topic since values are part of culture, especially in organizations, so it cannot be ignored.

In the last chapter of the literature review, concepts of remote work, the challenge it brings to maintaining organizational culture, and relevant studies are explored. This chapter is important in forming a theoretical link between company values and remote work because the thesis targets this study space specifically.

1.4 Research Methodology and Data Collection

The two main categories to research approach are deductive and inductive. The deductive approach takes existing theory to formulate a hypothesis or several hypotheses, followed by research and testing to confirm or reject the hypothesis under the given circumstances (Business Research Methodology, 2021a). This approach focuses on starting the research from theory and designing a research strategy to test the theory, whereas the inductive approach focuses on starting the research by collecting data and proposing a theory based on the data. However, this does not mean that the inductive approach disregards theories when considering the research objectives and questions; theories and hypotheses do not apply at the start of this approach, but theories derived from academic literature can help formulate research questions (Business Research Methodology, 2021b). These two approaches largely differ from the starting points in research and the paths to reach a conclusion, where the deductive approach uses data collection to evaluate hypotheses to verify a theory, and the inductive approach uses data collection to explore phenomena and identify patterns to build a theory. (Saunders et al. 2019, 153–155.)

This thesis utilizes the inductive approach. Since the topic is relatively new, the worldwide shift to remote work forced by the pandemic is still a recent and ongoing phenomenon where relevant studies are scarce. Saunders et al. (2019, 157) suggest that it is more appropriate to apply the inductive approach, especially when there is a lack of literature to help establish a theoretical framework and a hypothesis for deductive reasoning. Because the aim of this thesis is to explore the impact of remote work on the perception of company values, the data analysis process will help infer theoretical themes and a conceptual framework regarding this topic through inductive reasoning.

The two main categories of research methodology are quantitative methods and qualitative methods. These two methods are distinguished by the data collection techniques and data analysis procedures used where quantitative methods involve numeric data, while qualitative methods deal with non-numeric data such as words, images, audio, video. Due to this, quantitative methods are usually expressed in variables and qualitative methods are expressed in generalizations and themes. (Saunders et al. 2019, 175; Business Research Methodology 2021c.) Qualitative methodology is often associated with the inductive approach whereas quantitative methodology is associated with the deductive approach (Newman & Benz 1998, 3). Either approach can be valid for both methodologies though. However, it is important to note that these two methodologies are not mutually exclusive; research does not need to commit to one or the other (Newman & Benz 1998, 115). When both methodologies are incorporated into the same research project, the methodology is then called mixed methods.

Mixed methods is the methodological choice in this study. Since the subject matter of this thesis is exploratory in nature, qualitative methods will provide an in-depth insight on the perceptions of company values as needed to answer the main research question and sub-questions. To answer the remaining sub-questions, quantitative methods must be supplemented into the research to measure and statistically compare how employees feel about values throughout various levels of the company.

There are two categories of data and data sources: primary and secondary. Primary data are new data gathered or observed specifically for the project being undertaken, and secondary data are previously published data that can include raw data or summaries initially collected for another purpose (Saunders et al. 2019, 338).

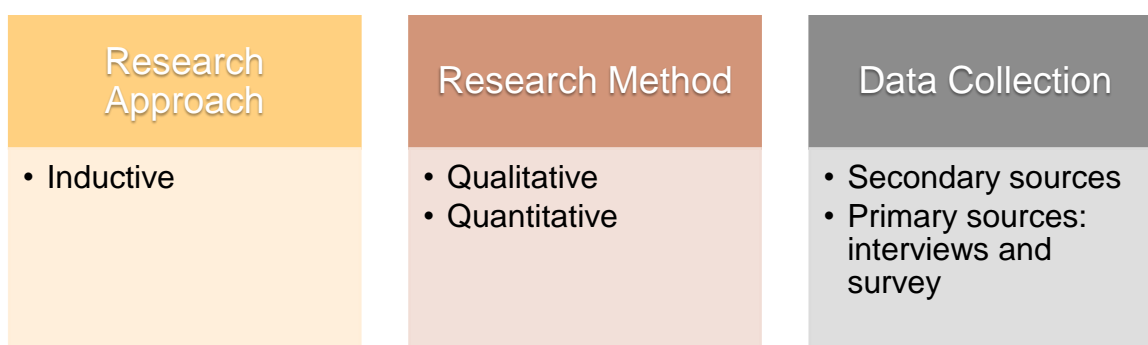


Figure 3. Research methodology of this thesis

Sequential mixed methods research will be administered in this study. This means that there will be more than one phase of data collection and analysis, rather than running qualitative and quantitative data collection in a single phase (Saunders et al. 2019, 182). In this case, interviews will be conducted with senior managers first to gather the initial wave of qualitative data, and some of the questions are designed to collect answers about company values that are to be included in the survey in the second phase. Answers derived from the interviews help design the survey, which will be then sent out to all employees. The survey's main purpose is to collect quantitative data.

In order to analyze the qualitative data gathered for this research, interviews need to be recorded and then transcribed. As a result of the transcriptions, the textual data and answers from each participant can then be compared and have concepts inferred from the data.

Quantitative data will be prepared, conducted, and analyzed with the Webropol service.

1.5 Thesis Structure

The thesis consists of seven chapters. Figure 4 includes a short description of each chapter.

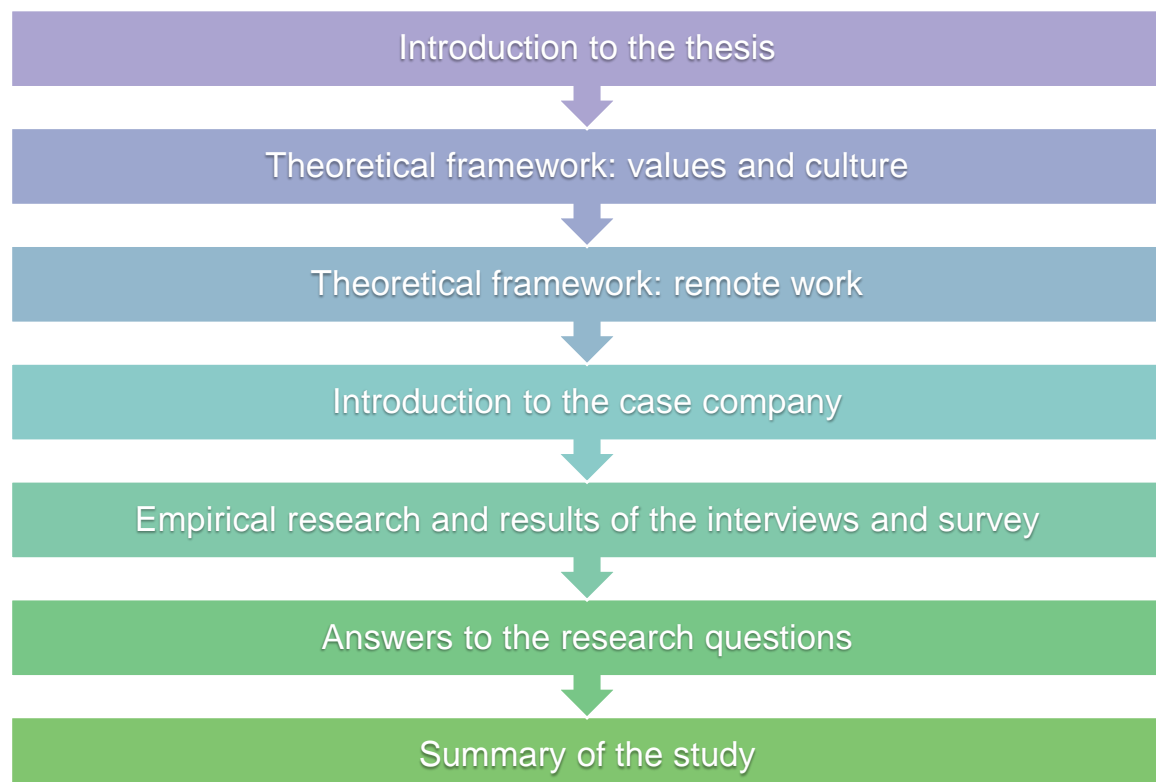


Figure 4. Thesis structure and chapter descriptions

The first chapter is the introduction which provides a background to the topic, the thesis objectives, and the methodology to be used to achieve objectives. The purpose of the introduction is to help the reader become familiar with the topic, realize the direction the research will undertake, and understand of the layout of the thesis.

The second and third chapters discuss the theoretical framework. The concepts of values and culture are introduced in the second chapter while remote work as a concept and its challenges are examined in the third chapter. These concepts are explored through secondary data and serve as the theoretical basis for the thesis as mentioned in section 1.3.

After the theoretical framework, the case company is introduced in chapter four. An overview of Supermetrics is provided here which briefly goes through the industry it operates, the services it offers. Additionally, publicly available data of its financial performance and the size of the organization are presented, and this is to illustrate the growth of the company. A testimony to the company culture is also provided and the company values are listed which will be analyzed and assessed in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter five is where the collected secondary data is presented, and the results of the data are analyzed. This includes qualitative data from the interviews and quantitative data from the survey.

The sixth chapter provides additional findings in the data on top of the previous data analysis to answer the research questions.

The final, seventh chapter concludes and summarizes the research.

2 DEFINING VALUES AND CULTURE

2.1 Individual Values

The concept of values can be defined in many ways, such as the definition by Rokeach (1972, 124), where a value can be considered as “a type of belief, centrally located within one’s total belief system, about how one ought to or not ought to behave, or about a particular end-state of existence worth or not worth attaining.”

However, the Schwartz theory of basic human values gathered multiple definitions by theorists, including Rokeach, and identified the six features of all values (Schwartz 2012):

1. Values are beliefs.
2. Values motivate action to achieve desirable goals.
3. Values transcend specific actions and situations.
4. Values serve as standards or criteria.
5. Values are ordered by importance.
6. The relative importance of multiple values guides action.

Values are characterized by one, two, or three “universal requirements of human existence.” These three requirements are biological needs, needs for social interaction, and needs for group welfare. (Schwartz 2012.)

An important distinction to recognize about values is that personality traits differ from values, even though they are related. Values generally guide people on what to do, but personality traits explain what people naturally tend to do. (McShane & Von Glinow, 2018, 45.) For example, a person may value “health,” but may not always strictly abide by this value by being too lazy to exercise often for a healthy lifestyle or may succumb to peer pressure to drink alcohol in social events.

2.2 Organizational Values

Values exist only within an individual which can be referred to as “personal values,” but groups of people may have the same or similar values which are then “shared values.” Shared values can be applied to any group such as an organization, and in that case, these values are considered as “organizational values.” (McShane & Von Glinow, 2018, 45.) From here on, organizational values can be interchangeably called company values, corporate values, and core values (of a company).

There is a traditional view of organizational values where they are based on the ethical standards of managers and other employees. In “Corporate values and corporate governance,” corporate values are considered as the weight which decision-makers in a company attach to alternative goals in the decision-making process. Alternative goals, for instance, can be profitability, customer value, employee satisfaction, market, share, company growth, corporate social responsibility, and more. It is these variables that help shape the company behavior in achieving its goals and thereby establish the values most important to the organization. (Thomsen 2004, 29–32.)

According to Patrick Lencioni (2002) in an article published by Harvard Business Review, organizational values can be categorized into four types:

- core values
- aspirational values
- permission-to-play values
- accidental values.

Out of the four types, core values are the most important. These are the values that guide all actions in an organization, and they must always be maintained and never compromised.

Aspirational values are also important, but only when needed in the future. These values are necessary for an organization to implement when the need arises so that it may succeed, but at the cost of potentially confusing employees and weakening the existing core values. Examples of key moments to development aspirational values are changes in the market or if new business strategies require additional values.

Permission-to-play values are the minimum standards expected of any employee. These values may vary from one industry to another, but generally they are identical among companies in the same industry. Because of that, a permission-to-play value does not help an organization appear more unique since other organizations most likely agree with the same standards of behavior.

Accidental values are values that form naturally over time without management specifically imposing them to the rest of the organization. This happens when employees share common interests, goals, and personalities. It is possible to confuse these values with the core values as they feel like the norm to the group that shares these values. (Lencioni 2002.)

2.3 Values Congruence

Values congruence is the concept of how similar an individual's values is to the values of another person or group, such as a company (McShane & Von Glinow 2018, 48). Ideally, companies should hire new employees whose values are congruent with the company values to prevent conflicting views and behaviors between employees and the organization.

A study on values congruence between individual employees and organizations reveal that employees with high congruence with the organization's values have the most affirmative feelings about their organization, more so than those with less congruence. Additionally, employees with high value congruency show more commitment and motivation to their organization, feel more successful at work, and exhibit less stress and job anxiety, compared to the low congruency group. (Posner 2010.)

2.4 Culture

Culture is a loaded term that refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give these activities significance. It is a representation of tangible and intangible components where tangible components represent material culture and intangible components represent non-material culture. The former can be observed through physical elements necessary to support human life like clothing, food, tools, and other cultural objects and artifacts, whereas the latter is referred by values, beliefs, attitudes, customs, morality, ethics, spirituality, and traditions. (Reisinger 2009, 86–90.)

When referring to Edgar Schein, a pioneer of cultural studies, he defined culture as a pattern of basic assumptions that were developed by a given group. The group learns to manage its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and its successes are good enough to be considered acceptable for new members of the group to learn. These are taught as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in situations like those problems the group has previously encountered. (Schein 1990.) What has been learned to be okay in a culture can then be acceptable behaviors for new members and future generations of the culture.

However, culture can always be explained differently and specifically to certain contexts depending on which professional is asked. In this work, the term culture will be analyzed from an anthropology perspective. Professor Geert Hofstede described it as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others (Hofstede Insights 2021). Aspects of culture like traditions, customs, norms,

beliefs, values and thought patterns shared by a specific group of people can be one significant part of the collective programming. These attributes can be both tangible and intangible, and both components can be passed by human to human, from one generation to the next. (Liu et al. 2015, 54.) At the same time, the size of the culture can depend on how many people practice and share it. It can be as small as a household and as big as a nation. Nevertheless, culture is a full range of the human patterns which are learnt and obtained by a person during their lifespan.

2.4.1 Levels of Culture and Organizational Culture

As previously mentioned, the size of a culture can be measured by how many people are participating in it. People's behavior and preferences can be affected by several layers of culture when context changes at any point, even occurring multiple times at any given day. For example, there is a set of rules and norms to be followed in a household, but at the workplace there is a different set to adhere to. This process divides culture into several layers, as visualized in Figure 5.

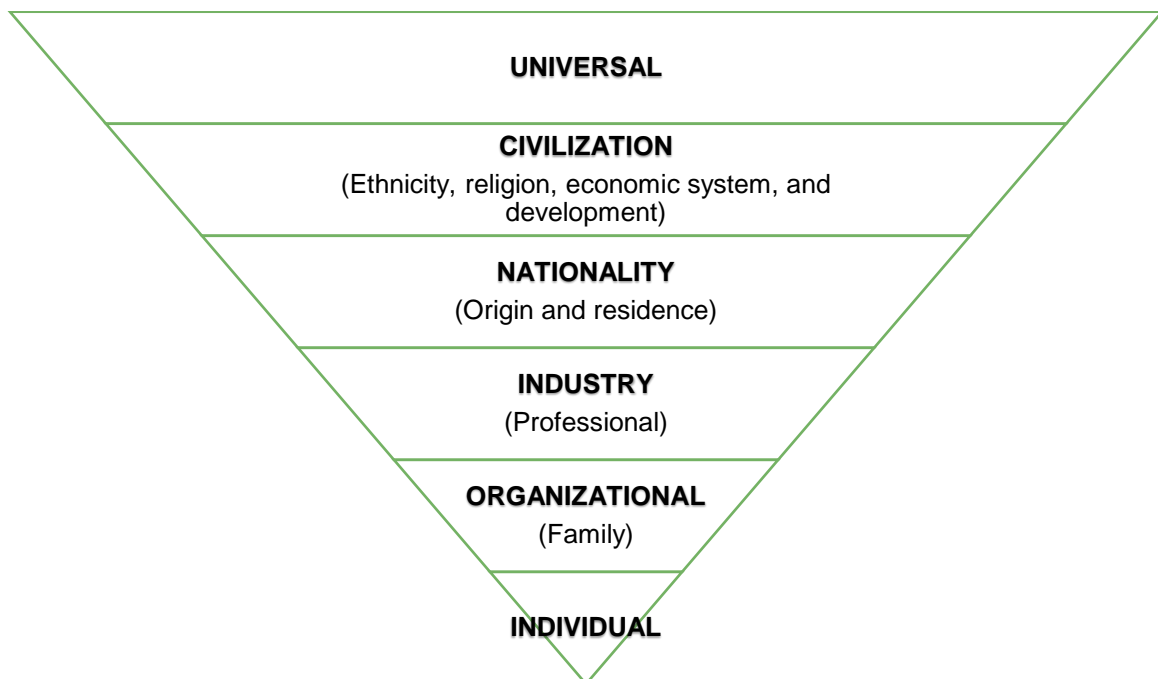


Figure 5. Levels of culture (Reisinger 2009, 100)

The highest level is universal culture which is shared by all nationalities and humans who have their way of life, behaviors, values, ideas, and morals. The next layer represents civilization culture which involves different nationalities with similar political systems, economic stages of development, ethnic roots, and religious values. The third layer is related to nation, origin, or country of residence. It can also be called a “country culture,” but this is not always the case since many countries can have several nations or subnations living inside. The fourth level is industry, and it is linked to the culture of specific organizations or departments relevant to each other within it. This functional culture is shared by a work community or group of communities. It can be influenced by the nature of the industry, businesses, products, or services. Second to last level is organizational, which is formed by the nature of relationships between its members. This set also contains roles and responsibilities, norms, and rules shared under one roof or household, since this layer is shared by a small social group. Finally, the smallest layer is individual culture, which is related to one's value systems, beliefs, ideas, actions, attitudes. These are influenced by demographic characteristics such as age, gender, income, and by personality of the person. Even though all layers are interdependent and influence each other, individual culture is mostly shaped by the dominance of the other cultural levels by impacting personal beliefs, thoughts, and values. (Reisinger 2009, 98–100.)

According to Schein (1990), there are three fundamental levels of culture: artifacts, values, and basic underlying assumptions as seen in Figure 6.

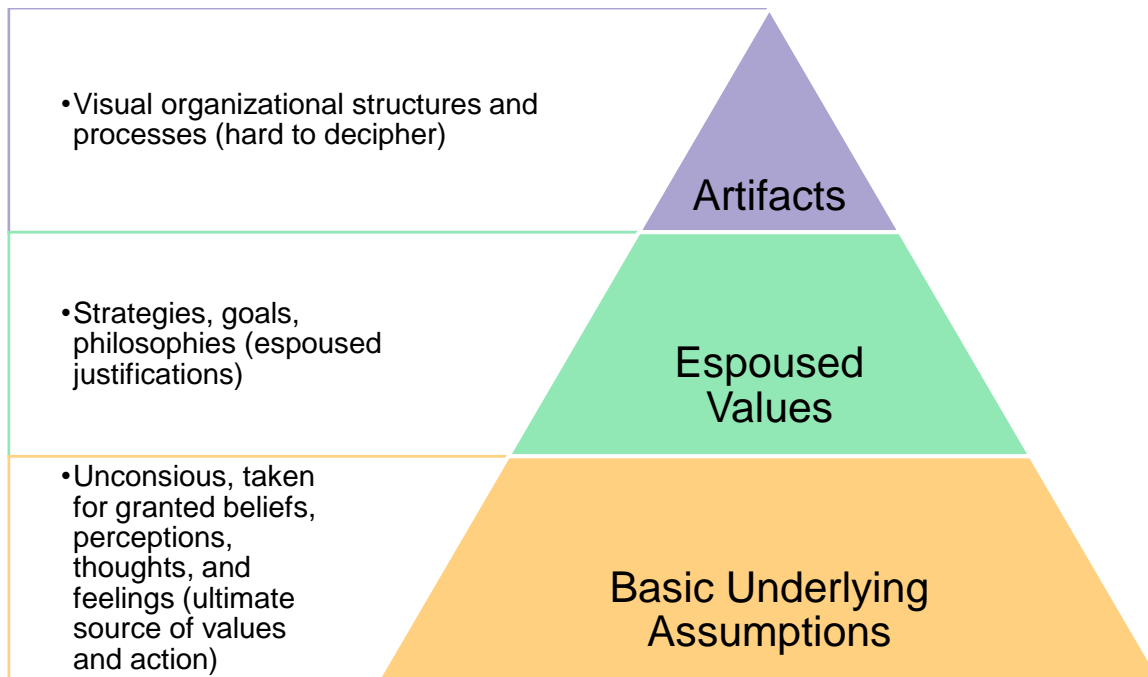


Figure 6. Schein's three levels of culture (Schein 1984)

At the top level, artifacts are what people can see. When a visitor or employee enters an organization, artifacts such as the dress code, degree of formality, people's behaviors, as well as the physical layout of the workplace can all be seen and felt. (Schein 1990.)

When going deeper the Schein model, culture starts to become less visible starting with espoused values. These are the values and norms of the group. This is the level that describes why "things are the way they are and should be" in the group. In the case of an organization, this can be the company's values, philosophy, and justifications for the way it acts. (Schein 1990.)

Basic underlying assumptions are at the deepest and most invisible level of the Schein model. This level represents what the group deeply believes in and therefore acts accordingly unconsciously. Most of the time employees may not realize the beliefs and purpose of the organization even if they act on it. (Schein 1990.)

2.4.2 Concepts of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be deemed as "the single most powerful force for cohesion in the modern organization." Since culture includes a common way of thinking, it implies that there is a common way of performing a job at an organization. These shared assumptions, beliefs, and values are usually unspoken in the company. The culture of an organization

has the potential to bring forth success or failure. (Goffee & Jones 1998.) It represents “how things are around here,” and it refers to the values, underlying assumptions, expectations, collective memories, and definitions set in an organization (Cameron & Quinn 1990).

According to Kotter & Heskett (1992), organizational culture has two levels in terms of visibility and resistance to change. The deeper and less visible level refers to values that are shared by employees and these values can withstand over time even when employees leave and when new ones join the organization. Since this level of culture is less visible, employees are unaware of the values that unite them, and it would be difficult to change because of that. The other level, however, is more visible and it refers to the behavior patterns that new employees engage in automatically due to the encouragement by their fellow employees. It is easier to see how others work, dress, and behave that are all deemed appropriate in the workplace. Unlike the deeper level, this one can be changed to some extent, but it will still be difficult to do so. (Kotter & Heskett 1992, 5–6.)

3 WORKING FROM HOME

3.1 Definitions of Remote Work

The terms for remote work are essentially the same, and these include telework and telecommuting. Generally, remote work is organizational work done outside of the typical organizational boundaries of space and time (Olson 1983, 182). On the other hand, telework and telecommuting have been defined as working outside the conventional workplace with the ability for employees to gain access to it using computer-based technology (Bailey & Kurland 2002, 384). By these definitions, the employee does not need to physically reach a workplace to work, but rather the workplace must be accessible to the employee through tools, like with a computer and a smartphone, so that work can be performed virtually anywhere.

More recently, work-from-home has been quite synonymous with remote work although it has one distinction. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, remote employees are expected to work specifically from home as a measure to prevent the disease from spreading. Even though some employees may have the chance to work in public spaces such as libraries and coffee shops, telecommuting from home is the expectation during the pandemic which is why “working from home” has been prevalent in use when referring to remote work since 2020.

3.2 Maintaining Organization Culture

As briefly discussed in the first chapter, the COVID-19 pandemic can potentially weaken organizational culture (Chatman & Gino 2020). Experts in sociology and business organization studies have noticed the intensified need for maintaining organizational culture as businesses operate in remote environments. This is because company culture can be a competitive advantage that can retain and attract talent, but it must be intentionally managed during the pandemic to prevent it from weakening (Brower 2020). In fact, companies with a strong and adaptable culture are 3.7 times more likely to be performance leaders and earn 15 percent more in annual revenue compared to other organizations with weaker cultures (Berman & Thurkow 2020; Chatman & Gino 2020).

Articles from Harvard Business Review, Forbes, and MIT Sloan Management Review have provided advice to employees and management leaders on how to maintain company culture. Some of these tips are:

- Talk about the company values and company culture.

- Demonstrate the expected behaviors and be an example to all in the company.
- Recognize employees who act and perform well in alignment of the company culture.
- Adapt or welcome changes to the culture through new practices.
- Form stronger relationships between employees.
- Communicate regularly and openly.

While some business leaders may find this advice obvious and should already be practiced prior to the pandemic, it is more critical to apply now due to remote work. It takes more effort, but it is not impossible to sustain the company culture from home. (Brower 2020, Howard-Grenville 2020, Chatman & Gino 2020.)

3.3 Previous Studies

There have been a few of studies completed so far regarding the impact of COVID-19 on organizational culture. A study published by the Journal Management of Studies reviewed the challenges of remote work and how this environmental change impacts organizational culture at a theoretical level. According to the study conducted by Spicer (2020), he writes that new practices in an organization when working from home help with preserving deeply held cultural values, even if the visible aspect of organizational culture is no longer present.

Another study has found that their survey respondents overwhelmingly agree that it is crucial to protect and maintain organizational culture when working remotely. The same study also revealed that many respondents feel alienated and socially separated due to prolonged remote work, and about the same portion of respondents felt that there is an increasing communication gap among team members. (Singh & Kumar 2020.)

4 CASE COMPANY: SUPERMETRICS OY

4.1 Case Company Introduction

Supermetrics is a Helsinki-based startup in the marketing technology (martech) industry. The company provides software as a service (SaaS) such as automated web analytics tools for social media and online marketing. Services offered by Supermetrics helps marketers and data analysts retrieve data from various marketing platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and HubSpot to their preferred reporting tools like Google Data Studio, Microsoft Excel, and business intelligence software. More than a tenth of global digital marketing data is already reported through Supermetrics. (Supermetrics 2021.) This allows users to easily consolidate their data, automate reports, and draw actionable insights.

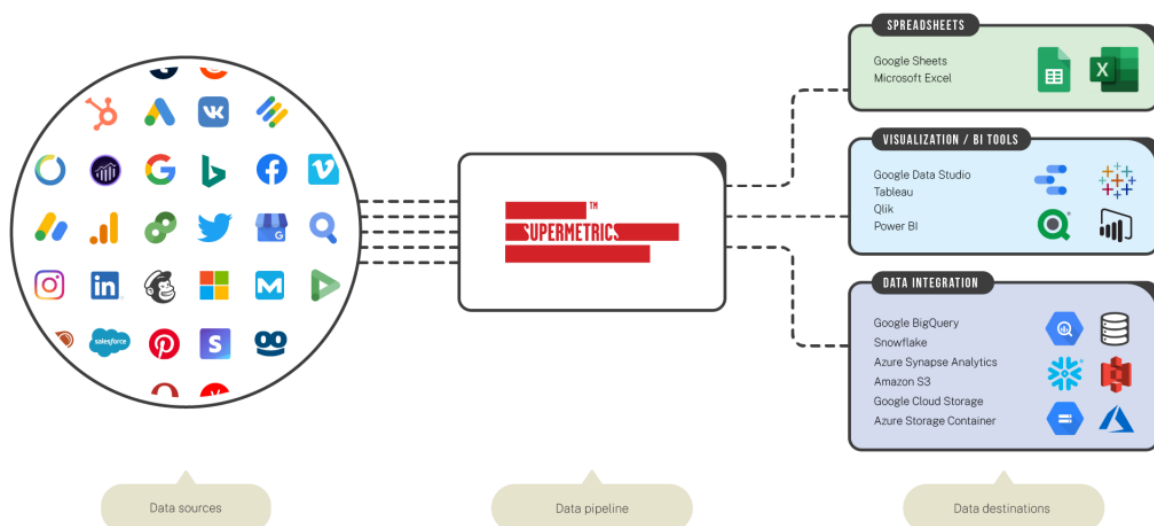


Figure 7. Supermetrics acts a data pipeline between a data source and a data destination (Supermetrics 2021)

As the world leader in marketing data automation, Supermetrics has experienced rapid growth. In a single year, the company grew from ten million euros annual recurring revenue (ARR) in 2019 to twenty million euros ARR in 2020. Thirty million euros ARR was achieved within the same time frame by 2021. (Ford 2020; Thuneberg 2020; Supermetrics 2021.) The Finnish company was also able to close out 40 million euros funding in the summer (IVP 2020).

Supermetrics has received national attention for their growth and business model. By the end of 2020, Supermetrics was recognized the Internationalization Award by Team Finland and the President of Finland (Thuneberg 2020). The CTO also recently won the CTO of the Year Award by CTO Forum and Business Finland (CTO Forum 2021). The company was also a finalist in the “Kasvunrakentaja 2021” Growth Builder competition (Pääomasijoittajat 2021a).

While these numbers and awards sound impressive, the leaders of Supermetrics have always attributed success to its multinational team and the company culture surrounding it. As of May 2021, Supermetrics has over 170 employees representing over 25 nationalities.

4.2 Supermetrics Values and Culture

A description of the organizational culture was described in a Supermetrics blog post (Ford 2020).

As a Finnish company, the Supermetrics culture is very Nordic. Things like modesty, hard work, trust, equality, and respect play a big part in how we work. Days are very flexible so you can fit work around other things going on in life. There are structures, but it's very open and anyone can go to anybody about anything. Everyone takes their shoes off when they get to the office. In addition to no outdoor shoes, there are no egos... There's just a pretty authentic and hardworking team of very smart people who like to get [things] done and have fun.

The CEO is pleased that the team is having fun together and even meeting each other in their free time. This is especially important for those who have moved to Finland from elsewhere, even when Finns make up forty percent of Supermetrics' multicultural personnel. (Pääomasijoittajat 2021b.)

Supermetrics' values appear in pairs, and they are

- Drive & Growth
- Communication & Transparency
- Proactivity & Innovation
- Respect & Team Play
- Competence & Background.

The CEO remarked that it is important for the team to be aligned with these values.

5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Data Collection

The process for this thesis began in December 2020 after consulting with the Human Resources team at Supermetrics due to their familiarity on the subject matter. Since then, the authors had full control of the research design and data collection process. As noted in chapter one, two phases of data collection were conducted – interviews for qualitative data and a survey for quantitative data.

The purpose of the interviews in this study is to first gather how managers in the company define the core values at Supermetrics and find answers to the research questions through qualitative data. Their responses will mainly represent those who have been at the company for at least two years and are currently in a managerial role, both of which will partially answer the sub-questions. Furthermore, the findings of the semi-structured interviews serve as the background for the survey questionnaire in the second round of data collection.

Once all interviews were completed and transcribed, a preliminary analysis of the responses was used to design the questionnaire. The questions of the interview and the answers by the volunteers heavily influenced the survey design which helped formulate specific questions that can be used to answer the research questions.

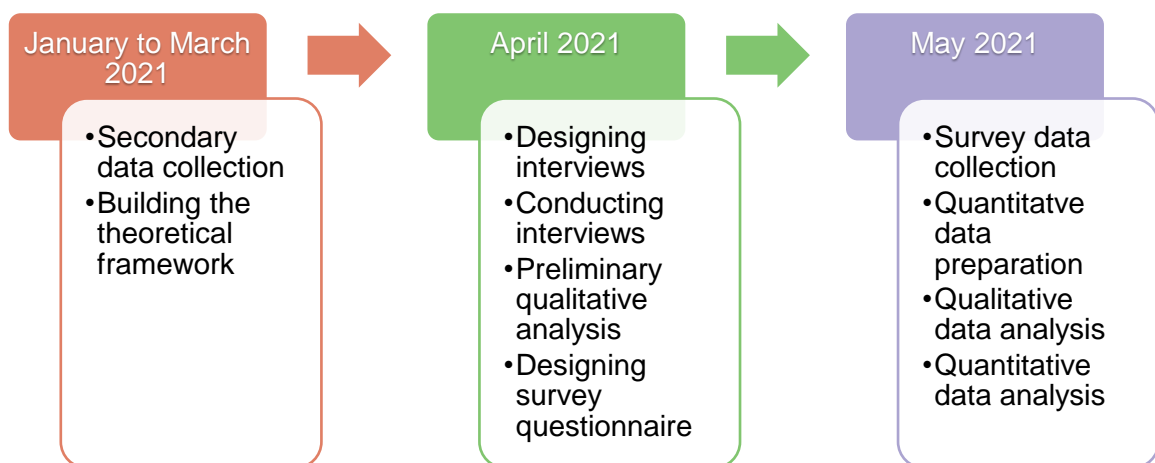


Figure 8. Timeline and process of the data collection

The intent of the survey is to collect quantitative data from any employee at Supermetrics and find how everyone differs in values and remote work.

A link to the online survey was sent to all employees during the last week of April 2021. Due to time constraints, the survey was open for one week. Anyone in the company could participate in the survey, including those who completed the interview beforehand.

5.2 Interview Results

Five managers from different departments of the company volunteered in the semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted separately for each individual. The requirement for participation in the interview is that a manager must have been at Supermetrics for at least two years and is currently in a managerial role. They do not necessarily need to be a manager for two years. Some of the participants have been at the company for much longer, and male and female genders are represented in this group. Anonymity will be maintained in the analysis, and each participant will be referred to as Manager 1, Manager 2, and so on without references to their specific role, their team, and their gender pronoun.

The aim of the interview is to collect the managers' opinions about corporate values, how they are applied in team management and day-to-day work situations, and to see what has changed since the pandemic hit. Each interview was recorded and then transcribed into separate text documents. After that, an analysis was conducted to find patterns, key ideas and thoughts, and themes among all participants.

Company values are a set of behaviors and reactions

In the first part of the interview, participants were asked about their thoughts on values and what they mean to them. All five managers have mentioned that values are in some way a set of guidelines which are used for defining appropriate behaviors and reactions for certain situations and with certain people. Most of the explanations were related to ideas of what values mean in a corporate culture, so the idea of values was highly associated to Supermetrics' culture and its employees rather than just the managers' personal understanding of this term. Nevertheless, all of them have mentioned that during the hiring process they understand the importance of company values and how the candidate should share them in order to be a perfect fit in the company.

Supermetrics values and their meaning from a manager's point of view

The purpose of this part was to identify how managers see Supermetrics core values that is why they were asked to define each pair of them. For Drive & Growth, all five managers have mentioned thoughts about the employee's personal desire and motivation to improve and succeed at their work. Managers 3 and 4 have also revealed a connection between an employee's development and their influence on the company's growth.

When the participants discussed Communication & Transparency, these were described as being open to all strategies, decisions, challenges and issues that are happening at the moment. It does not matter whether it is on a department level or at the entire company level. This openness gives a concrete understanding of what is going on in the company and leaves a small room for uncertainty, while providing possibilities for suggestions or comments from any employee.

With the next pair, Productivity & Innovation, four managers out of five have mentioned that it goes hand-in-hand with the first pair of values, Drive & Growth, in a way. The four managers said that if there is a chance to contribute and improve something, the opportunity should not be missed.

Manager 4: If there are issues or even ideas, that you think may help the company, like striving to have a place where it's okay to say these things out loud, you can tell your manager, you can tell the company through online chat or whatever works, and then using that to help drive innovation. So, it's not just like saying, "Yes, sir!" to your boss all the time. It's about thinking more how you can contribute to the company's growth.

The idea behind a pair of Respect & Team Play is equal treatment of every single employee no matter which position, years of experience, gender, education, background they have. Manager 3 and Manager 5 both have similar thoughts that equality can be described as a possibility to give everyone a right, or a voice, to a space for discussions. When it comes to Team Play, Manager 1 stated that there is a "no [expletive] policy" in the company. The idea of putting your team first and working together towards common goals is a baseline for this policy.

Regarding the last pair of values, Background & Competence, there was some hesitance and confusion in defining these values, but all five managers agreed on the fact that in order to be successful at your job, there are certain characteristics, key skills and knowledge which are essential. In addition, with the martech industry changing and updating often, employees need to develop their knowledge about updates or changes and at the same time show interest in learning from their co-workers if their confidence in certain topics is not good enough. At same time, Manager 1 and Manager 2 have mentioned that during the hiring process the attitude towards a candidate's selection can be much flexible from the initial requirements, depending on his experience and background.

Manager 1: For your position, you need to have certain competencies. It doesn't mean necessarily a degree in something, so it's not tied to formal education but having that kind of qualification in some way to be successful to

be able to take care of your role properly. So that's something we look for from our people. But it can be a multitude of things and we don't have a hard-fixed set of competencies or skills that you need generally, so it varies from role to role and by having some other competencies, you can make up for missing requirements.

Manager 2: We are not picky with the background of candidates because we have seen in many cases that even with different kinds of backgrounds than what we expect, we can see that a person with some completely different kind of background can also be very, very suitable for the role that we are searching for.

This difference in opinions regarding Background & Competence depends mostly on the department and the nature of one's work. However, the overall idea behind this pair of values is described as having workers who are willing to learn as long as they have the underlying skill set to propel themselves as competent, successful employees.

Alignment of Supermetrics values with individual values

Participants were asked whether a case company's core values are congruent with their personal values. Manager 1 and Manager 3 both agreed that they would not be working in a workplace which has values different from their own, so they agreed that all values of the company aligned with their own values. The other managers have said that only some of the company values do not align with their own values, notably Team Play and Competence & Background. Manager 4 noted that Team Play was not a personal value, but the way it was described was more of a personality trait where they preferred working alone. Some of the managers were unsure of claiming Competence & Background as personal values since they were more difficult to define. It may have been a moment of modesty where they did not want to explicitly say that they are competent and have sufficient background, but they were fine with these values as company values. Out of all the values, all five managers agreed that Communication & Transparency are the top values in both personal and professional settings.

Challenge of core values during switch to remote work

When the switch to remote work occurred, all managers have mentioned that communication has been affected. Some of these changes were in a positive way, while at the same time some managers see a negative impact. The bright side was that the amount of information shared on Slack (a business communication platform) increased, so information became much more diverse and accessible. Employees could choose which channels they

want to follow, and this was a way of staying updated about major changes or processes relevant to them, or in general to see what is happening in the company. All the conversations and brainstorming processes which would normally happen offline and only in certain groups moved over to digital format. It takes less time to spread news and gives equal access to everyone no matter which team or office an employee belongs to.

Manager 3: Ever since we started working from home, communication has increased drastically, because when we were in the office you share all the information during coffee breaks or some type of casual meetings. Some people did not like that communication can be scattered around and it depends on which groups of people you are talking with day to day. Now you must write all the info in the public channels or your team channels. Everyone knows everything. It is harder, but I think it brings even more communication this way. Maybe sometimes it can be too much to track everything, but you can choose which topics are crucial for you and which channels are important to follow personally for you.

In addition, Manager 1 has noticed that since the switch to remote work, communication between headquarters and other offices has become much more efficient and faster. However, the drawback of this change is lack of casual or spontaneous interactions, small visibility of real-time activity, and entirely different perceptions of communication between employees.

Manager 4: I think the only one that I think is probably growing the most has been Communication & Transparency. It suddenly became very difficult without being able to roll over to somebody's desk and ask, "Hey, can you help me for a moment?" It isn't possible so I feel like there have been a lot of changes to both policy and how people were acting to try post more in the public [Slack] channels. Or trying to talk to people more about stuff because the in-person conversations have just vanished overnight, so I think having more of this focus of being clear about what you're working on, communicating openly with the team and with the rest of the company I think is absolutely imperative for this time because it's hard to get it any other way. Otherwise, you're an island isolated.

Manager 1: It makes it more difficult to see the stuff that you would see in a person, for example certain types of teamwork. I have no idea what some teams are doing, who is collaborating with whom if I am not in the channel

where this collaboration is happening, so I absolutely believe that a lot of collaboration is happening right now, a lot of innovation is still happening, but it is not as visible. So, I don't know if it has gotten any worse, but I guess there is a little bit less of spontaneous collaboration or innovation as a result.

Manager 3: It's a completely different thing to work in a team when you can sit around the table and talk compared to attending remote meetings with discussions. This is not the same. Obviously, you are talking, but person-to-person communication is a completely different world.

Apart from communication, all managers have mentioned the influence of telework on team play. Some of the points highlighted in the interviews expressed positive change. For example, Manager 5 has shared that team members started to miss each other due to the absence, so when COVID-19 restrictions were not so strict, they would try to connect outside of work hours by visiting each other or going out for lunch. This would give a sense of community and increase the team building spirit. In contrast, several managers said that remote work has affected team play in a negative way, since people would feel more constrained in isolation. Before the switch to remote work, spending time with fellow employees after work and during occasional company events were instrumental in forming team spirit, where employees had the chance to get to know each other. So, the value of team play has been affected by the lack of in-person activities, as some of the managers have pointed out. Another drawback for team play is the online onboarding process that new hires must go through. Consequently, team members do not have a chance to get to know each other and this can affect the team atmosphere.

Manager 4: You're not in close contact with people so we don't see how they are like you would in the office. I wouldn't know if someone is a jerk or not. You're not seeing any of that. And there are new hires where you're like, "I'm not sure how I feel about this person." I haven't really gotten to interacting with them other than seeing them at online meetings or posting greetings into Slack. Are they really respectful or team player kind of people? It's hard to tell because you only just have these online meetings every once in a while.

Overall, almost every manager has noticed a change in the application of values into daily work both for themselves as well as for team members of their teams.

Accidental values emerged during remote work

In the last part of the interview, all managers were asked if they have observed any values that have emerged within their team or the entire company since the switch to remote work.

These values are not from top management, but rather from a team or some work communities, and these will be referred to as accidental values based on the theoretical framework. For starters, three out of five managers mentioned that such things as being able to support your team members and show compassion and empathy became crucial since the pandemic began. There were many uncertainties and challenges in each employee's life which could lead them to work burnout or an imbalance between work and life.

Manager 4: Work-life balance has been really thrown off because my work is now in my regular life, in my home. I struggled with trying to escape it because it's here and I'd think, "I'm already sitting here, and I'm already home. I might as well just work for a couple more hours." I wouldn't do that if I was going to the office and it's something I've been thinking about more. I know that other people have struggled with that.

Manager 3: We have become more supportive of each other because many people faced burnouts from working remotely. A lot of them had problems with working a lot and burned out completely, so we had to take care of employees and help them to return to normal. We became more supportive from a health perspective, and now we are trying to understand how people are feeling, how they are reacting to these environment changes and what we need to change in the company.

Manager 5: I think different people have struggled with this whole pandemic differently and what I have seen within the team is that whenever someone is struggling, they rally around that person. I'm not saying that this would be different, but it's an exceptional situation where we're all remote. We try it to make them feel included to make sure that they are fine to share anything that they can with this person to encourage them.

However, these values might be formed not only due to remote work, but rather due to all the consequences caused by pandemic and the uncertainties caused by it. Nonetheless, Manager 3 has also brought up a valued skill of being an efficient worker and manager in a remote environment. The initial thought was that employees who are successful and productive in an offline environment, might not have the same result in a remote environment. So, Manager 3 valued online leadership skills which help with overall productivity for everyone involved.

5.3 Survey Results

The survey received 59 responses, a participation rate of about 35 percent of all employees in the company at the time the survey was sent out.

5.3.1 Background of Respondents

In the first part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to record the time they have been working at Supermetrics, the team they work for, their role level, their main work office domicile, and their gender identity. Specific to those who work in the Helsinki region, participants were also asked if they were a Finnish citizen or not.

Question 1

The first question of the survey asked for the length of time one has been working for Supermetrics. The respondents of this survey overwhelmingly represent new employees with 43 percent of the employees who have been at the company for less than a year and another 37 percent who have been at the company for at least a year, but no longer than two years. The remaining 20 percent of respondents have at least two years of work experience at Supermetrics. These results do not reflect the staff of Supermetrics in terms of work experience at the company, because the company has doubled in size since the start of the pandemic. Ideally, the results should have respondents with at least two years spent at Supermetrics to account for half of the responses rather than the eighty-twenty percent split between new and old employees. For this research, the survey will mostly reflect the opinions of new employees due to their high participation rate whereas the interview data will mainly reflect the opinions of old employees.

All groups, except those with less than one year of experience, have worked at the office prior to the pandemic. Considering that the survey was conducted at the end of April 2021, it is important to note that some employees within the “1-2 years” group may have joined the company when work-from-home was in full effect, which started in March 2020.

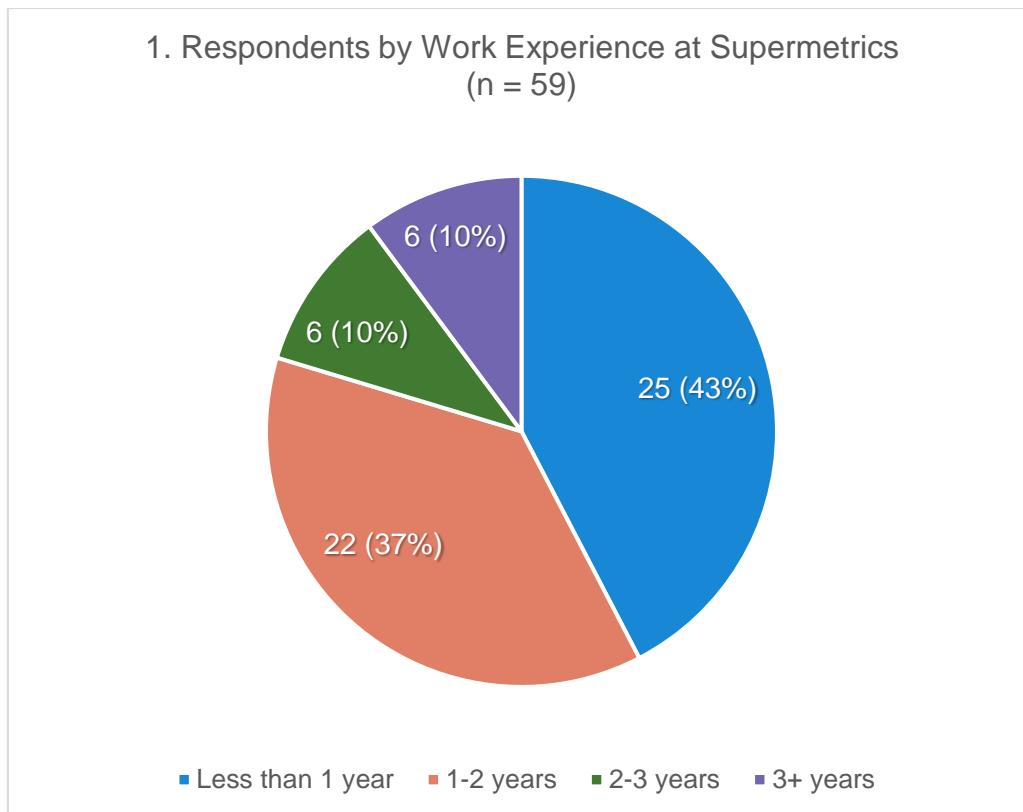


Figure 9. Respondents' work experience

Question 2

The second question asked for the team or department that the participant currently belongs to in the company. The results for this question represent all major departments for the company and there is a fair share of respondents for most departments. While some teams are underrepresented in the survey, the actual team sizes in the company are somewhat proportional to the number of respondents by department in the survey. The engineering team has the largest share of respondents at 37 percent, whereas there are a few respondents from the design, finance, human resources, and product teams. The remaining departments marketing, customer support, and sales and customer success respectively account for 14, 17, and 17 percent of all respondents.

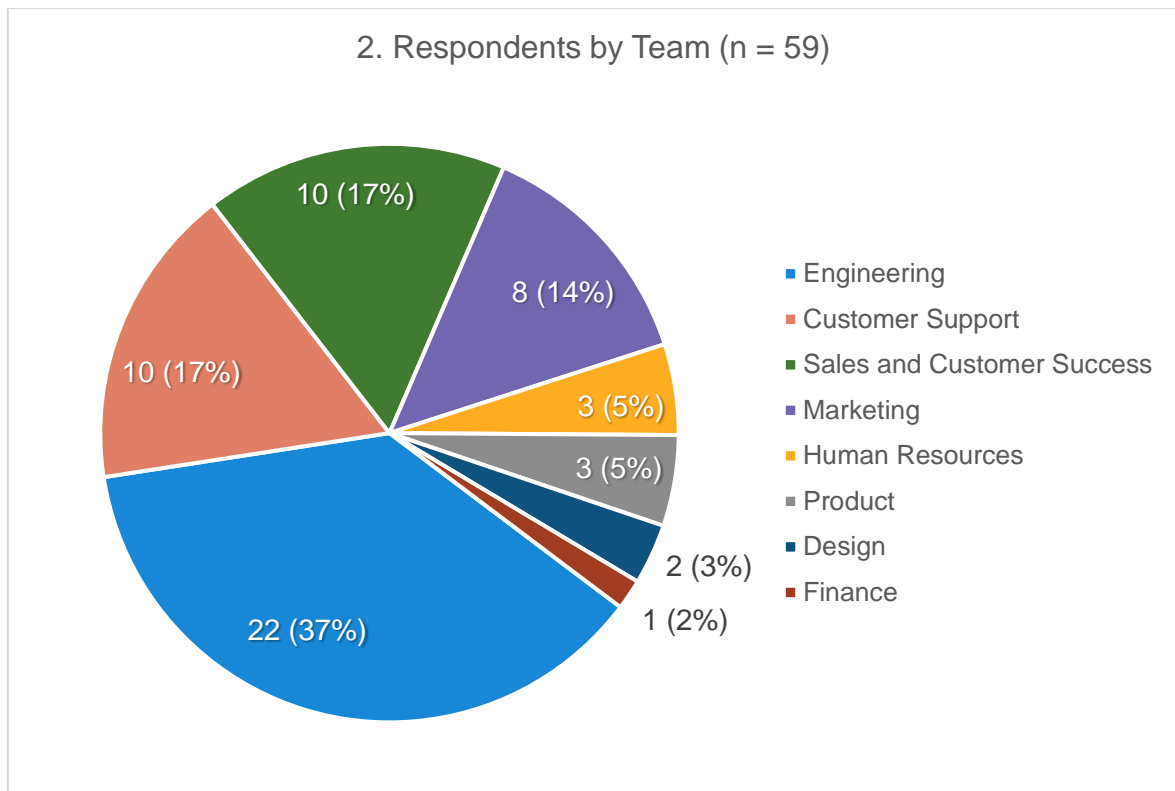


Figure 10. Respondents' team

Question 3

The third question of the survey is concerned with the role level of the participant's job title. Possible answers for this question had levels in groups, which were "Interns and trainees," "Entry or associate level," "Mid or senior level," and "Director, Head, Vice President, or Executive." Options for "Mid or senior level" was also split between managers and non-managers, with the latter group being the majority at 61% percent of all respondents. A little less than a quarter of the respondents have entry level and associate level roles. The remaining five percent correspond to top senior managers such as directors and C-level executives. No interns or trainees participated in the survey.

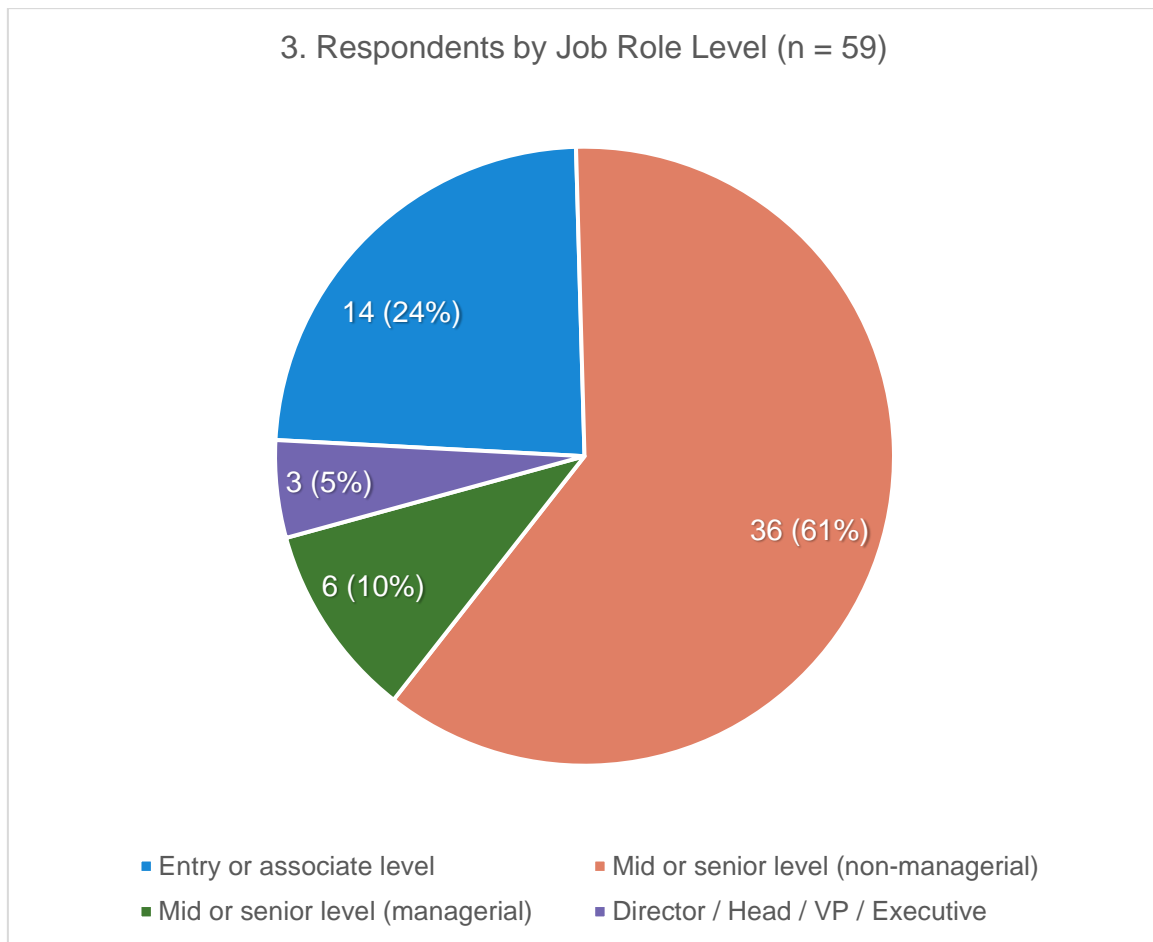


Figure 11. Respondents' job role level

Question 4

The fourth question in the survey asked for the participant's main office location. Employees of the Helsinki office account for a whopping 90 percent of all respondents. Only one employee from the Vilnius office and three employees from the Atlanta office completed the survey, and the remaining two responses were from employees outside of the three main offices. Since the offices are in different countries, differences in national cultural values may influence company values and how employees perceive them, which is the main reason for asking this question in the survey. Alas, the low participation rate outside of the Helsinki region establishes a large bias for the Helsinki group in the analysis.

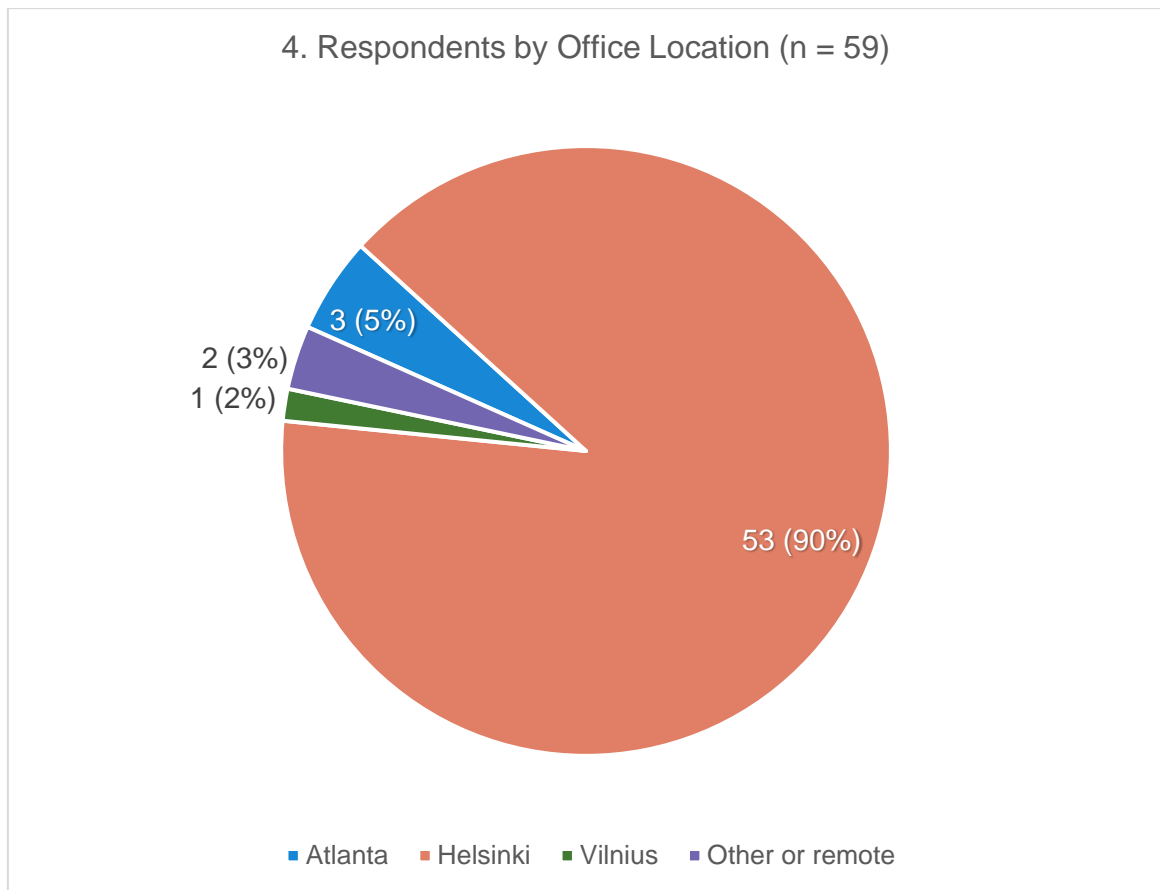


Figure 12. Respondents' main office location

Question 5

The next question was only visible to participants who have selected Helsinki as their work office domicile, and it asked whether they have Finnish citizenship or not. The intent for asking this question is to avoid asking for nationality directly, but to instead ask for Finnish citizenship since it is not exclusive to native Finns. The original answer options to this question were

- Yes, by birth or Finnish citizenship
- Yes, by naturalization
- No, but planning to naturalize
- No, and not planning to naturalize.

However, the breakdown of the survey data by those answers were insignificant, so the following figure simply tallies “yes” and “no” answers for this question. By doing so, 55 percent of Helsinki employees are Finnish citizens, and the other 45 percent are not.

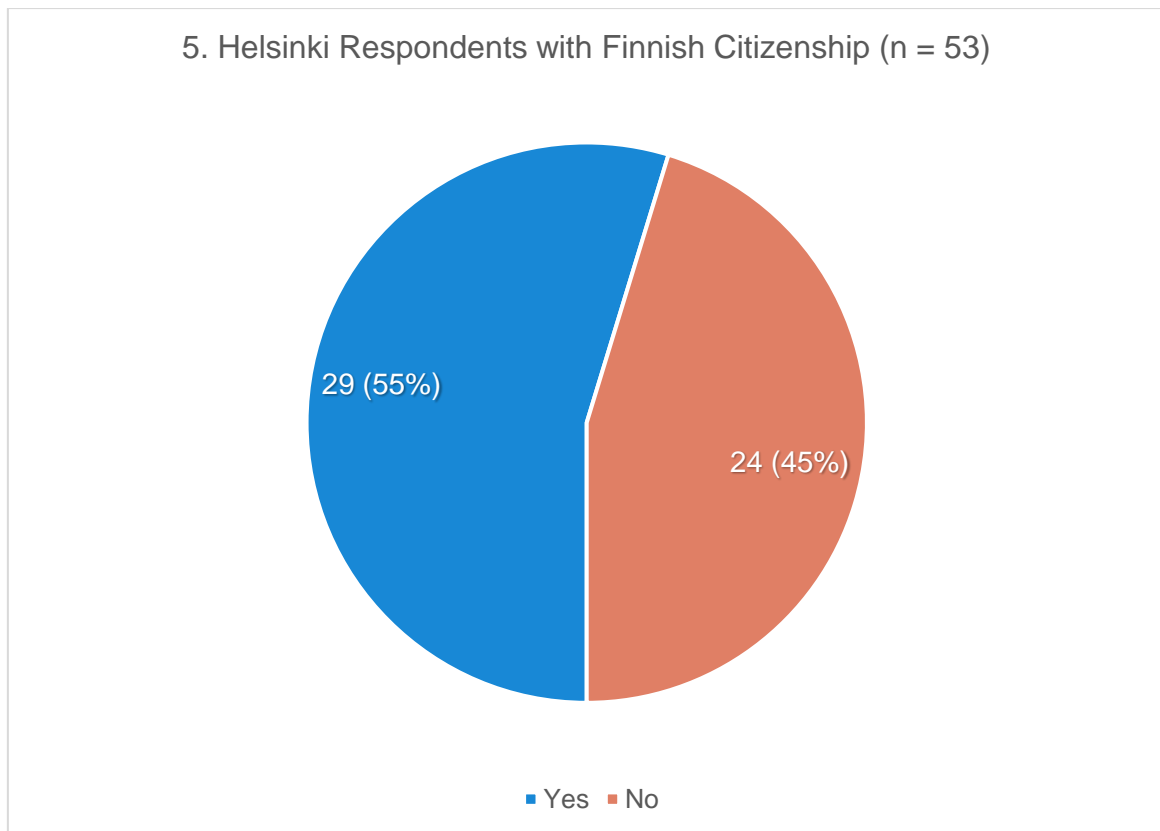


Figure 13. Finnish citizenship of respondents in Helsinki

Question 6

The last question regarding the participant's background was gender identity. This question was initially not part of the survey design, but gender was mentioned in the interview data, so this became of interest to the authors to see if gender played a role in practicing and perceiving values. More than half of the respondents are male, and 41 percent are female. Just one respondent identified as "other" while the remaining five percent of respondents did not reveal their gender identity.

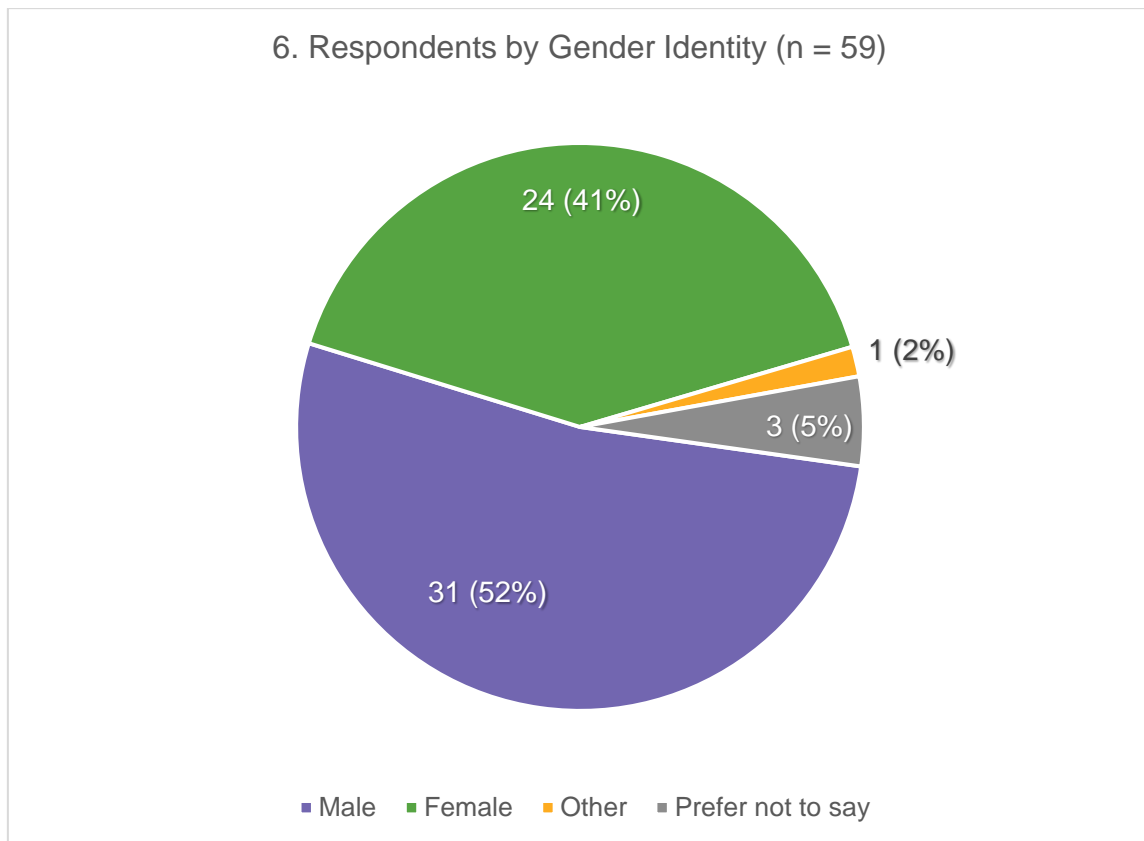


Figure 14. Respondents' gender

5.3.2 Assessing Value Congruency

The next part of the survey, up to question 19, was intended to assess how in tune employees are with the core company values and to find any inconsistencies between different groups in the organization. Nearly all questions in this section were measured on a four-point scale with the answers ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.” Only questions seven and 18 differed with a binary scale and a five-point scale, respectively. The responses gathered from these questions are aimed to answer these two sub-questions:

- Which values are most consistent within all levels of the organization?
- How do the values compare between different groups of employees?

Question 7

This section of the questionnaire started with asking participants if Supermetrics values align with their personal values or not. Instead of a wide range of answers, participants were only able to choose between “yes” or “no.”

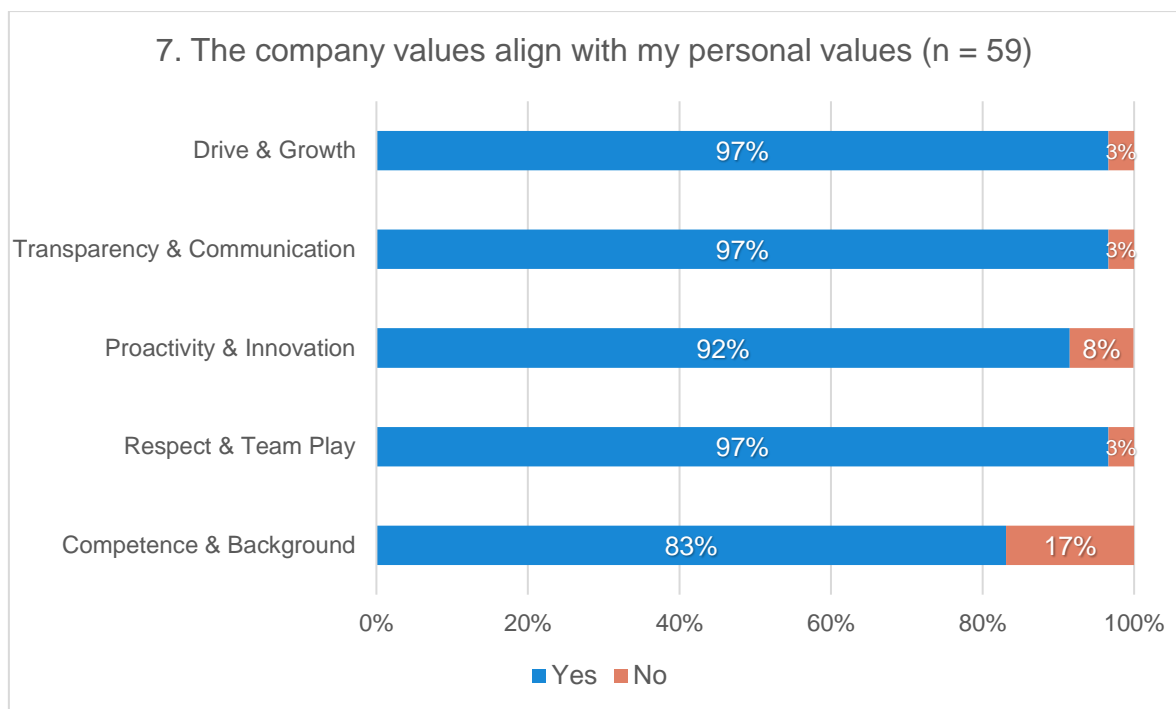


Figure 15. Respondents' value congruency

The results of this question confirm that almost all employees already had the qualities of the company's core values. As discovered in the interview data, the managers mentioned that the company values align with their own and would not work at the company if it did not. The managers also noted that for the values that did not initially align with their own, they had to adapt to the company values and thus counted it as personal values. On the contrary, the only exception here is Competence & Background where 10 respondents (17 percent) claimed that this value pair did not align with their values on a personal level. This is most likely due to the lack of predetermined definitions by the company, especially for Competence & Background, and this was also explained by one of the managers from the interviews. Because this value pair did not make sense to them as values, it was more difficult to claim it as a personal value. Moreover, there may be unknown reasons why Competence & Background are not as highly valued as the others.

Question 8

In question eight, survey participants were asked if the company's core values guide them in their work. The purpose for this question is to see how actively employees consider the values of their workplace. Starting from this question and up to question 17, respondents had four choices: "Strongly agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly disagree."

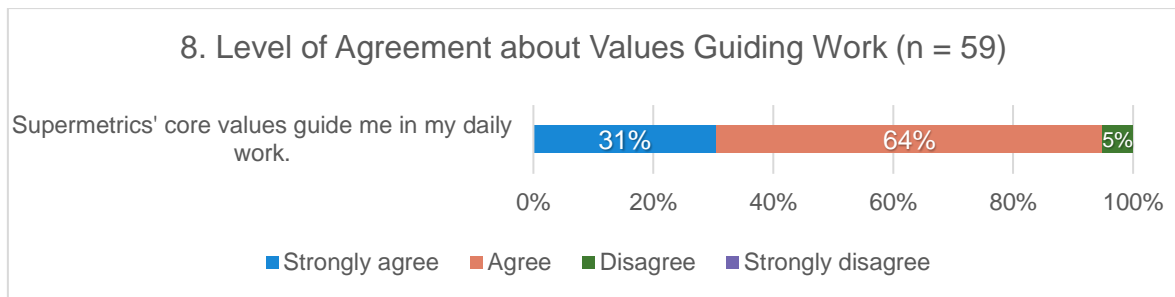


Figure 16. Values guiding work

Results of question eight show that 38 respondents (64 percent) agree to some extent about the company values guiding their daily work. Eighteen respondents (31 percent) agreed the strongest, suggesting that they consider the company values often and try to apply the values in their work. Only a few respondents (five percent) said that they disagree with this, but no one strongly disagreed. These three respondents are less conscious about the company values; however, this does not mean that they do not possess the characteristics of the values.

Questions 9–18

The following set of questions contain statements tied to one of the values each. The value statements serve as a definition to each individual value and were mostly taken from the managers' own definitions and explanations in the interview results. These statements were expected to gauge how each respondent felt or practiced about each unpaired value in the survey.

Question number	Corresponding value	Action or feeling	Value statement
9	Drive	Action	I am motivated to learn and try new things at work.
10	Growth	Feeling	I am optimistic about the company's future growth.
11	Communication	Feeling	I feel comfortable expressing my ideas and opinions at work.

12	Transpar- ency	Action	I understand the direction the company is taking.
13	Proactivity	Action	If I see something that needs improvement, I contribute by suggesting or making changes.
14	Innovation	Feeling	I believe we are doing interesting things at work.
15	Team Play	Action	I put effort in getting to know my teammates more.
16	Respect	Action	I am conscious about my tone of voice, demeanor, and expression in my interactions at work.
17	Background	Feeling	Supermetrics would not be where it is today without the various experience and backgrounds in the company.
18	Competence	Action	Outside of work hours, I consume content or take courses related to my job to improve my performance at work.

Table 2. Value statements by action or feeling

The ordering of the questions does not strictly follow the official order of the value pairs, but the corresponding values can be seen in Table 2.

The statement in question nine refers to value Drive and the interviewed managers expected employees with drive to try different, yet beneficial, tasks or ways of working in the company. Thirty-seven of the respondents (63 percent) strongly agreed that they are motivated to learn and try new things work, and another eighteen respondents (30 percent) agreed to a lesser extent indicating that they have less drive, in terms of motivation to try different tasks. The four respondents (seven percent) that disagreed with this statement either have less drive or generally have less of a need to change or obtain new responsibilities at work.

Question 10 regarding growth had the most positive result among all the value statements since no one disagreed. Based on the qualitative data, growth as a value can be seen as

internal growth within an individual, whether it be professional or personal, and it can also be for a positive trajectory the company can take in terms of financial performance and competitiveness in the market. The results of this question tell that a majority of the respondents at 43 responses (73 percent) strongly agreed about being optimistic of the company's future growth whereas the other 16 respondents (27 percent) are slightly less optimistic. It must be pointed out that this statement is a feeling about growth in the case company rather than an actionable item to produce growth. Therefore, these results suggest that the respondents may feel that employees at Supermetrics work to drive growth in the company and that everyone, if not all, put this value into practice the most.

The actionable statement about communication in question 11 is more about one's comfort in expressing ideas and opinions at work. Instead of the routine communication that occurs every day in working matters between colleagues, this focuses on how comfortable a respondent feels when they should or need to speak up to their team and to the company. The most comfortable are those who strongly agreed, represented by 26 respondents (44 percent), and another 28 respondents (47 percent) somewhat agreed. The last five respondents (nine percent) were not as comfortable as the rest. The factors that lead to less comfort in speaking up can be attributed to a variety of reasons. During the interviews, gender was brought up which can make communication more intimidating for teams that make up mostly of another gender. In this case, the quantitative data suggests otherwise, and this point will be expanded in chapter six. Discomfort in speaking up can simply just be a personality trait or that the move in communication to digital channels may be less than ideal for some, but this does not imply that they do not value communication.

The twelfth question involves a value statement of feeling for transparency. The intention of the statement, "I understand the direction the company is taking," is to draw out how transparent the company and its teams are as seen by the respondents. This had the least number of responses for "Strongly agree" (25 percent) compared to all other value statements. The largest share of 39 responses (66 percent) agrees with this statement, and the minority of five responses (nine percent) disagrees. Despite the practical increase in communication and transparency when working from home, the respondents felt that the company is not as transparent as it can be when considering the future of the company. Based on the managers' opinions from the interviews, the increase in communication means that more information is available on what teams are working on and what employees are sharing in Slack. However, the increase in communication makes it difficult to track and keep up with all the information, which in turn does not effectively increase transparency if information is dismissed or forgotten. This is usually solved by the monthly company meetings which makes the relevant information by all teams more digestible for everyone, but even then

that can have limitations based on time, amount of information, and the attendance of employees.

The thirteenth question aimed to evaluate one's proactivity in the company. In a growing company, it is critical that employees attempt to be more involved at work, because processes are changing rapidly, new roles and tasks are quickly being implemented, and the martech industry is constantly evolving. As a result of the fast changes, there may be inefficiencies or unprepared circumstances, so proactive employees are highly valued at Supermetrics. Twenty-four respondents (41 percent) strongly agreed with this statement, and a little more than half of all respondents agreed. Four respondents (seven percent) disagreed, and three of these four respondents also disagreed with the statement in question 11, "I feel comfortable expressing my ideas and opinions at work." Again, this may be due to personality or one adhering to their predefined job responsibilities without doing extra tasks. In fact, two of these four respondents said that "Proactivity and Innovation" are not part of their personal values.

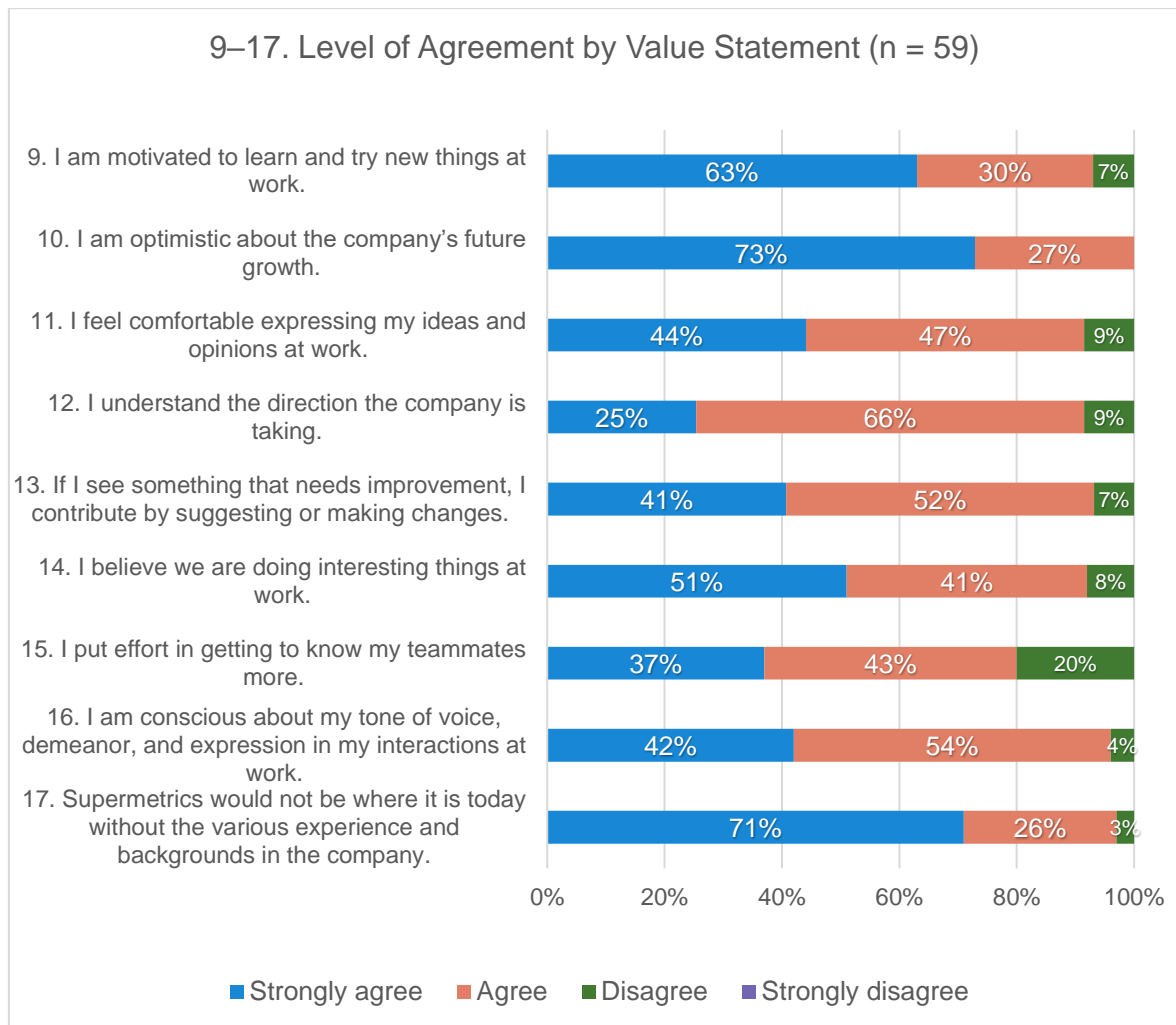


Figure 17. Respondents' agreement for questions 9–17

Value statement “I believe we are doing interesting things at work” in question 14 corresponds with the Innovation value. This is another feeling-based statement, and it was meant to measure if employees find the company innovative enough. The drawback to this question is that innovation may not be interesting to everyone, since it is entirely subjective from one person to the next. Furthermore, innovation can be unique from one team to another. About half of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement, and 24 respondents (41 percent) agreed. The other five respondents (eight percent) disagreed. Like the previous value statement, two of the five disagreeing respondents also said that they do not value “Proactivity and Innovation” at a personal level.

In the fifteenth question, participants were asked how they fared with the value Team Play on basis of getting to know other employees. This value simply means a cooperative effort among employees and team members with a common goal. For many people, the definition

stops there at a professional level, but the value statement provided in this question targets the development of interpersonal relationships with other colleagues. Because team play can be strictly professional for some, this value statement received the most answers for disagree with 12 responses (20 percent) as a result. Two of 12 responses also indicated that Respect & Team Play do not align with their personal values. As for the rest, twenty-two responses (37 percent) and 25 responses (43 percent) accounted for strongly agree and agree answers, respectively.

Question 16 is tied to respect and asked participants if they are cognizant of the respect they try to exhibit to other colleagues. This value statement was provided for its specificity in one's awareness of respect because communication styles and respect can be interpreted differently from one culture to another, so it may require additional effort in showing respect to each individual in the company depending on their background and origins. It is important to recognize and respect differences in intercultural relations, and to interpret behavior in terms of its intended expectations (Liu et al. 2015, 69, 266). In this situation, 25 respondents (42 percent) strongly agreed with being aware of their interactions at work. The larger share of 32 respondents (54 percent) agrees. The last two (four percent) disagree, and it appears that one of them noted that "Respect & Team Play" are not personal values based on their answers for question seven.

In question 17, participants were asked a potentially sensitive statement about the standing of Supermetrics and if it is credited to the various backgrounds in the company. This statement avoided the term "diversity," and instead the words "background" and "experience" were used generically. Had it included controversial terms like "diversity" and "inclusiveness," participants would be confused or raise hesitation on the intent of the question. Subsequently, the value statement shown for this question resulted in the second most positive result in this section of the questionnaire. Accounting for 71 percent of all respondents, 42 answered strongly agree and another 15 respondents (26 percent) agree with the statement. Just two responses (three percent) disagreed with this value statement, but only one of them stated that "Competence & Background" are not personal values in question seven.

The last value statement is related to competence which asks participants to state how often they learn new skills or improve existing ones. This question is measured on a five-point scale of frequency, and the answers range from "always" to "practically never." It is a given that new employees are hired for their competency but working for a SaaS company in the martech industry requires that most employees should continuously learn and stay up to date with the latest trends and technologies as part of their competency. For this reason, the value statement for competence was formed to see if employees are active learners.

Most participants answered with “sometimes,” representing 24 respondents (41 percent), and another 19 respondents (32 percent) said they are frequently learning. Eight respondents (14 percent) are the most studious claiming that they are always consuming content or taking courses to perform better at work. On the opposite side of the spectrum, two respondents (three percent) responded to studying job-related material rarely, and the remaining six respondents (ten percent) responded to practically never studying additional material for their job. It is also worth noting that these last eight respondents do not imply that they are incompetent at their job, since they may already have the experience and knowledge necessary for their roles.

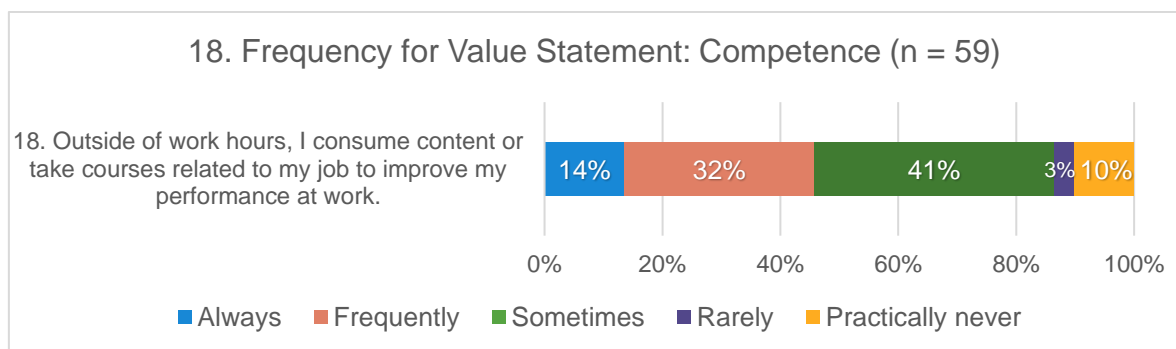


Figure 18. Respondents' frequency for question 18

Question 19

The final question of this questionnaire section asked participants to evaluate how well fellow teammates represent the company values. As usual, the respondents were very positive and answered that their teammates embody the company values. The only value pair that did not receive any disagrees was Drive & Growth. The value pair that received the most “Strongly agree” answers was Respect & Team Play accounting for 46 responses (78 percent), but three respondents (five percent) disagreed. Overall, each value pair scored more than 50 percent for “Strongly agree,” signifying that more than half of the employees confidently feel the core values are held among fellow colleagues.

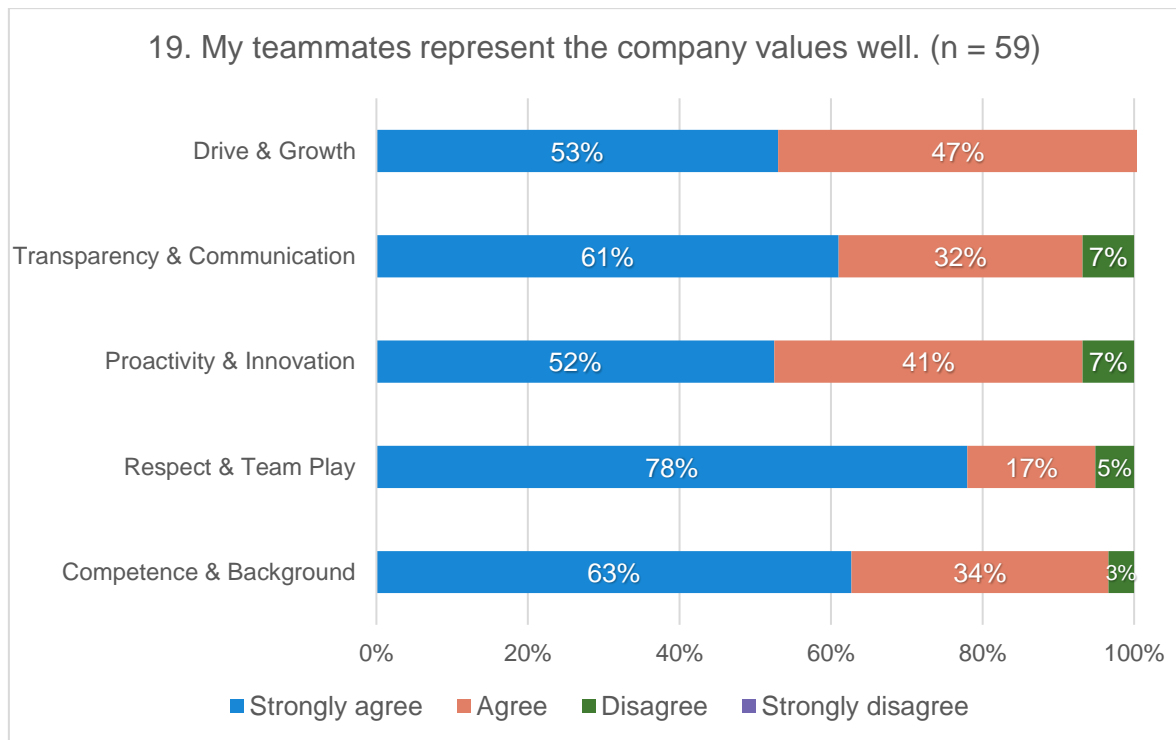


Figure 19. Respondents' perception of teammates' values

5.3.3 Values in a Remote Environment

The last section of the questionnaire is related to remote work and ties that to the company values. The questions of this section were aimed to directly answer the main research questions.

Question 20

The first question related to remote work asked which challenges of remote work may have affected company values and company culture. The answers were given as short descriptions based on the key challenges of remote work (Mulki et al. 2009). Despite having the order of the answers randomized for each participant, more than half of the participants chose "Lack of work-based social support" anyway. Even though the descriptions of each remote work challenge were succinct, respondents felt that a shortage of work-based social support during the pandemic may have affected the values and culture of the company the most. This does not mean that there was an absence of social support, however. The type of social support provided in a remote environment, despite increased efforts, is not the same as receiving support in the workplace which could explain the large share of responses. All other options had a fair number of responses for each, so they should not be dismissed as valid factors.

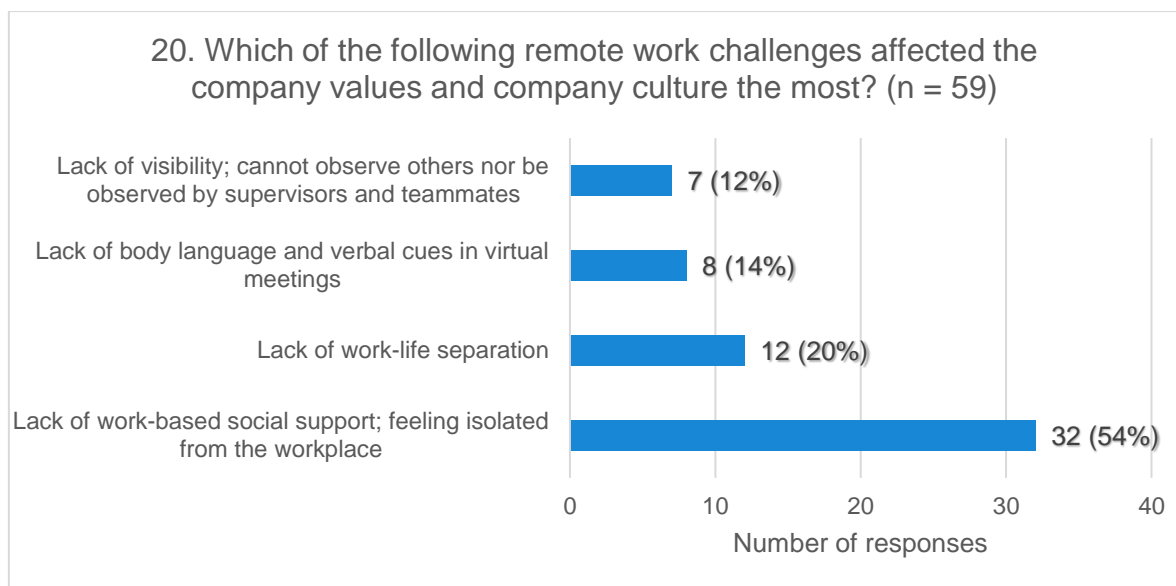


Figure 20. Remote work challenges affecting organizational values

Note that the results for this question are skewed due to the assumption of change in company values and culture. Since there is no option for “The company culture was not affected,” this data is skewed. Because of that, the results for this question must be reframed under the presumption of any culture changes within the company. These answers are better suited when the question is rephrased as, “Assuming change in the company culture, which of the following remote work challenges affected the company values and company culture the most?” Otherwise, there is inherent bias in these results without acknowledging and reframing it.

Question 21

Like the previous question, question 21 also assumes change and does not provide an answer for participants to say so. The answers were also binary and does provide a range to let participants give a score rather than one extreme or the other. For similar reasons stated above, this question is analyzed as if it was rephrased as, “Assuming change in the company culture, which of the following values are more important since the pandemic started?”

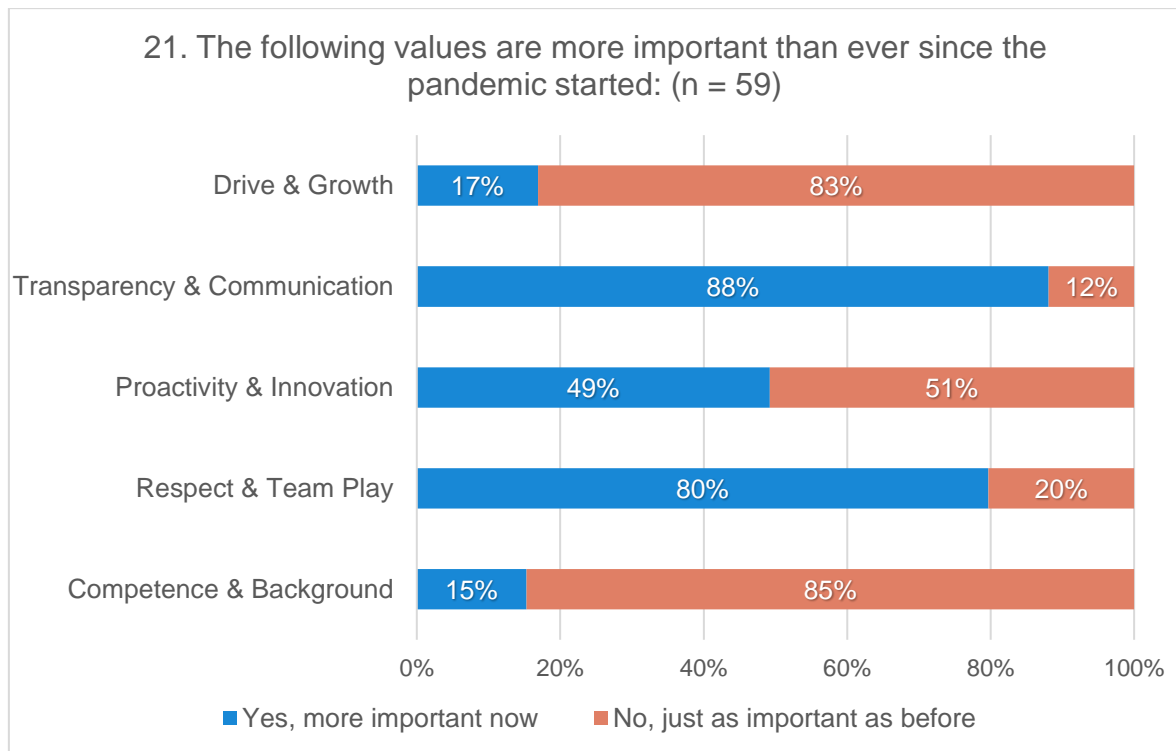


Figure 21. Respondents' perception of value importance during remote work

The results of this question have been mixed despite the possible bias. Most respondents felt that Transparency & Communication and Respect & Team Play to be more important since remote working. This roughly matches what the managers have said in the interview where Transparency & Communication have been prioritized and regarded more important, but Respect & Team Play have been more difficult to practice and recognize so it can be understood as more important now. Moving in the opposite direction are Drive & Growth and Competence & Background where most respondents said that these values are just as important prior to the pandemic. The value pair with an almost equal division is Proactivity & Innovation. Respondents were divided as to whether this value pair is more important now or not.

Question 22

In question 22, participants were asked which values are more difficult to see and recognize values when working remotely. Most responses fall under “Disagree” for each value pair, meaning that most respondents did not find these values harder to observe and recognize during the pandemic. When tallying up “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” responses, more than half of respondents have said that all value pairs are not that more difficult to see, apart from Respect & Team Play. Seven responses (12 percent) and 23 responses (39 percent)

account for “Strongly agree” and “Agree” for Respect & Team Play, so slightly more than half of the respondents found Respect & Team Play tougher to see during remote work.

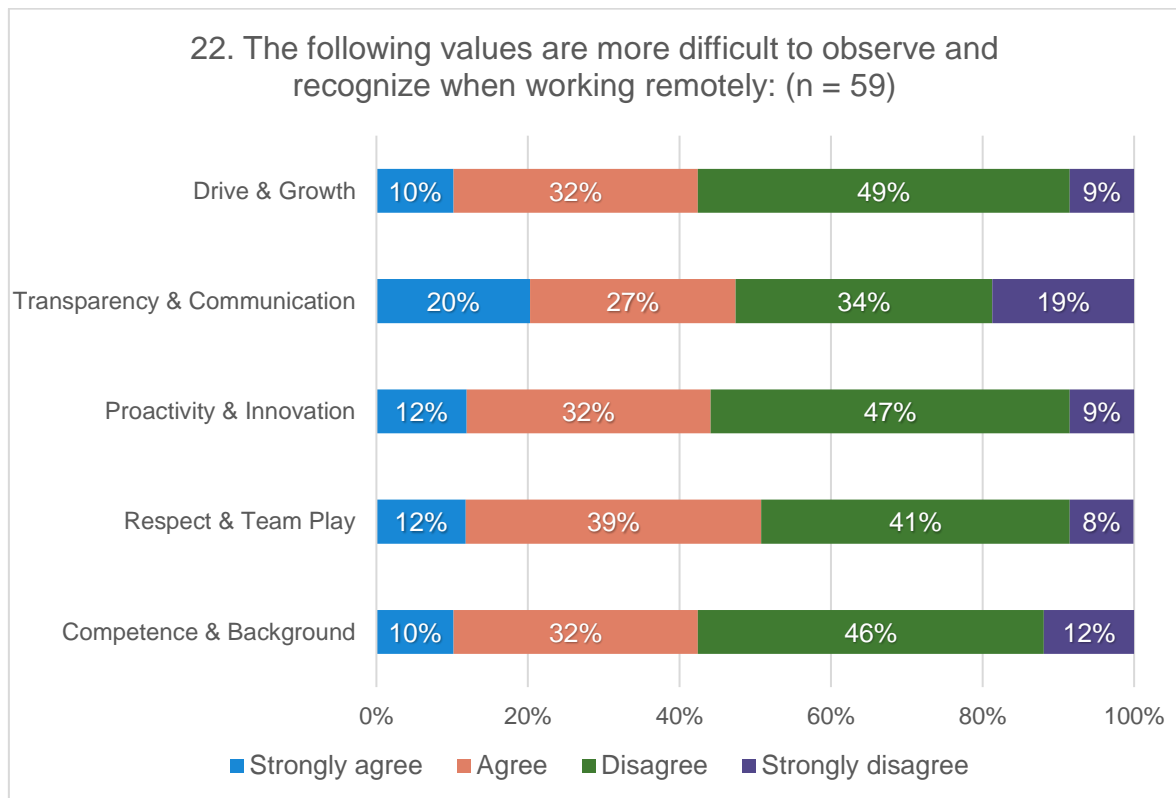


Figure 22. Respondents' perception of value recognition during remote work

While most value pairs see a similar pattern of answers for this question, Transparency & Communication was more varied between the answer choices. It received the most “Strongly agree” and “Strongly disagree” compared to other value pairs, and thus the answers are more spread out for this value pair. This also matches the interview data where the managers felt that the increase in communication and transparency in the company could be interpreted as better or worse depending on how the individual sees it.

Question 23

Question 23 is about activities and events other than work that help employees see the company values more. Respondents had the option to check as many activities as possible that they agree with but selecting “none” would prevent them from answering anything else. As a result, this question received 187 responses among the different choices from the 59 respondents. The most helpful event for Supermetrics employees would be the top scoring event “Monthly info sessions.” This is a monthly event where leaders of the company gather

and share their teams' progress in the past month as well as plans going. Managers in the interview data said that this was the most impactful event in seeing Supermetrics values effectively.

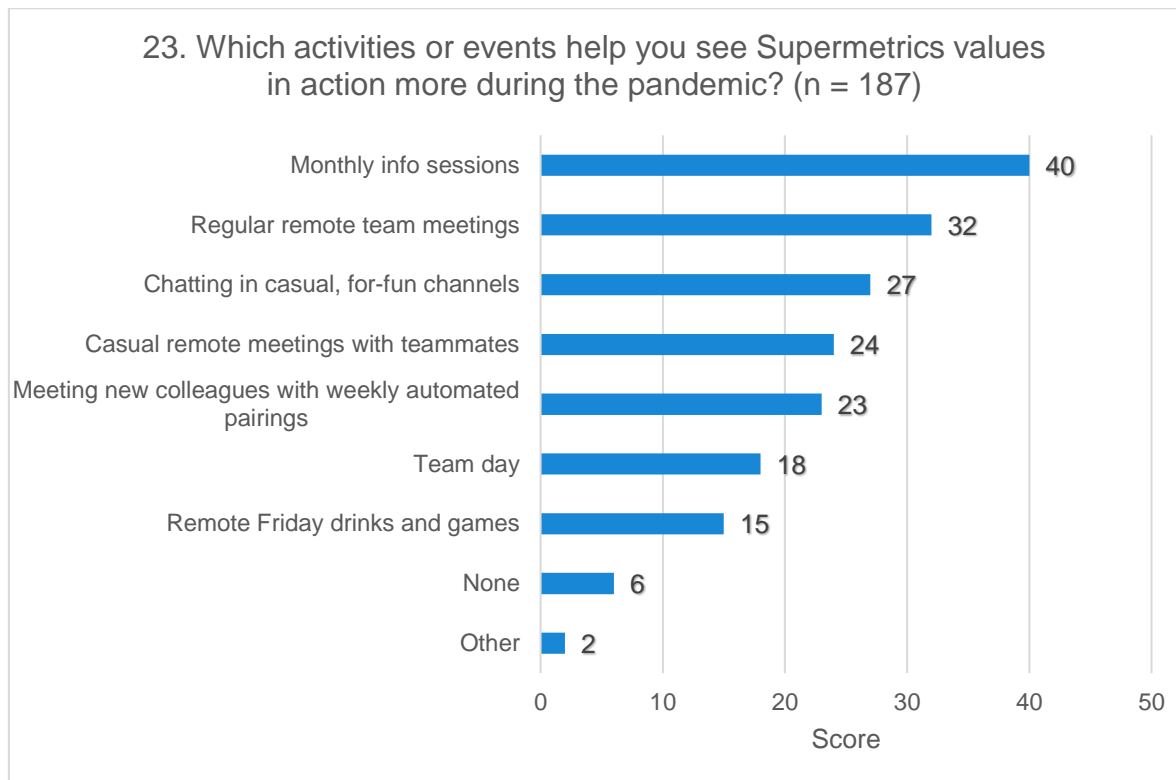


Figure 23. Respondents' choice of activity embodying company values

The next top scoring activities and events are “Regular remote team meetings,” “Chatting in casual, for-fun channels [in Slack],” “Casual remote meetings with teammates,” and “Meeting new colleagues with weekly automated pairings.” These scored well, and they involve gathering and meeting other colleagues, whether it is regularly for work or for fun. “Team day” also scored relatively well, but not as much as the others since this event usually requires team members to physically gather which is ill advised to do during the pandemic. Without counting “Other” and “None,” “Remote Friday drinks and games” is the least popular option. As pointed out by one of the managers during the interviews, this waned in activity as the pandemic continued and the interest for remote fun at the end of the work week dropped. However, some teams still manage to do keep it up regularly, as mentioned by another interviewee. The answers under “Other” were inputted by respondents and they are “One on one meetings” (meetings between an employee and their manager) and “Surprises provided by the company.” The six remaining respondents answered none.

Question 24

The second to last question of the questionnaire is about accidental values, and participants were asked to select up to three values that may have become an “accidental value.” This question received 148 responses among the different value answers from the 59 respondents. Flexibility as a value was scored the highest suggesting that employees at Supermetrics understand the need to be flexible around remote work, personal life, and any tasks or projects that may arise. The next three similarly scored values are support, empathy, and work-life balance. According to the managers during the interviews, support and empathy were highly valued during work-from-home, while a few mentioned that work-life balance was difficult to achieve in practice but still valued as respondents have shown. Following work-life balance is recognition as a value. Recognition, for instance, could be interpreted as the need to feel either appreciated at work or simply recognized more often as an employee, as a human in the virtual workspace. Further down the list are organization, control, and leadership which are quite similar to values favored by one of the interviewees. The remaining low-scoring values are quality and leadership, but none for “Other.”

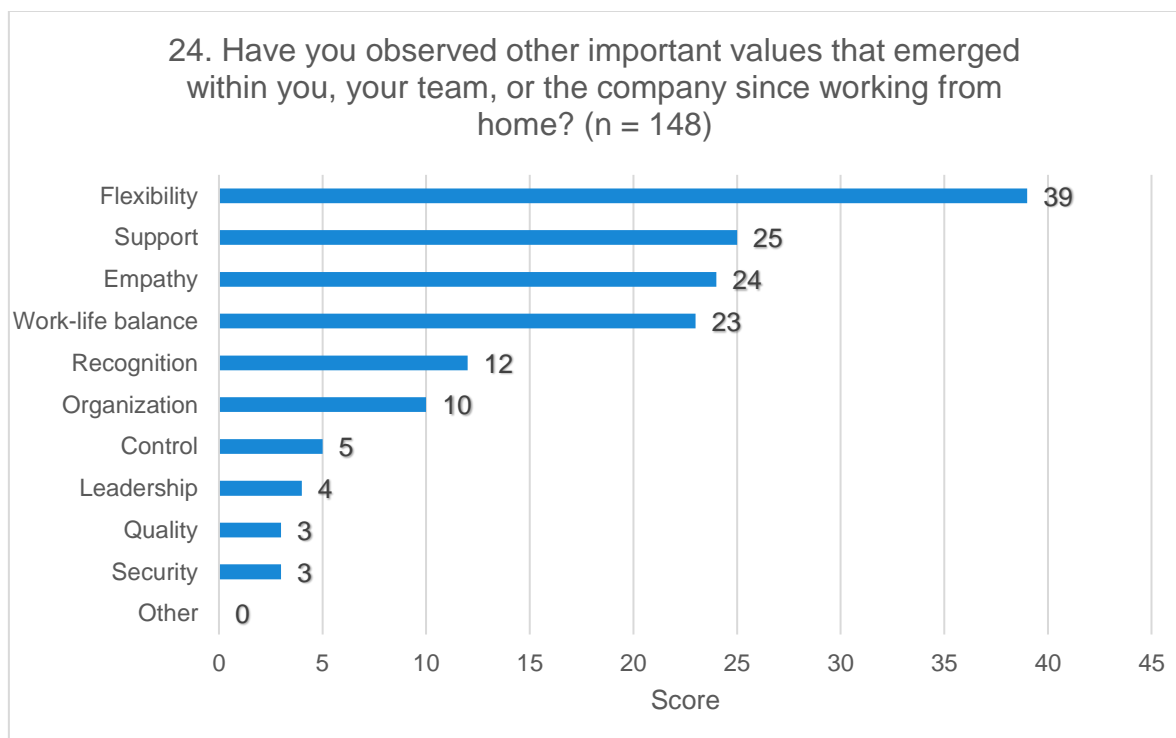


Figure 24. Accidental values during remote work

Question 25

Finally, the last question of the survey simply asked whether the company values and company culture need to be revisited when work-from-home is no longer mandatory. Twenty-four respondents (41 percent) were unsure about this, but the decisive majority answered “No” accounting for 22 responses (37 percent), whereas the last 13 responses (22 percent) answered “Yes.”

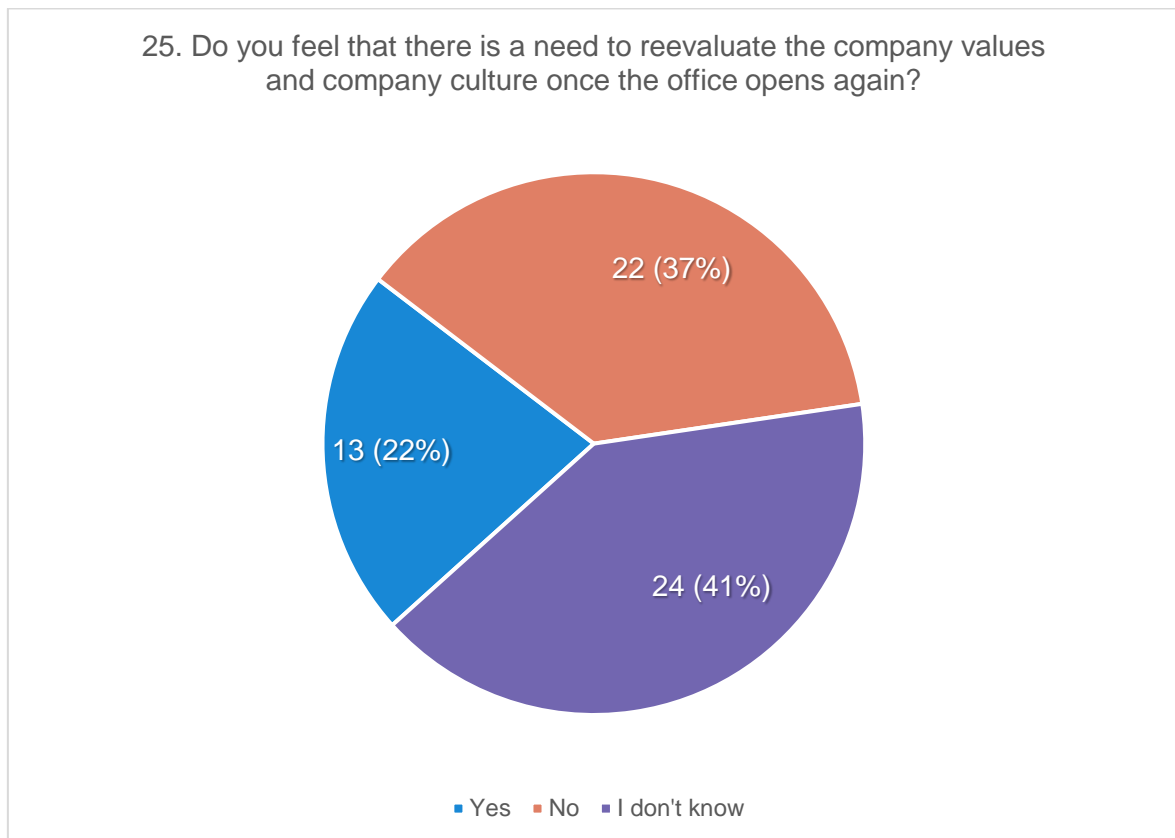


Figure 25. Respondents' thoughts on revisiting company values

6 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Answers to Research Questions

The objective of the thesis is to find how working from home affected the importance and perception of company values. To achieve this goal, research questions were established and answers to the questions are provided here. First, the three sub-questions will be discussed, and then the main research question will be addressed last. The results of the qualitative data and the quantitative data, as well as correlations found in the survey, are used to answer the research questions. All the relevant correlation data can be found in Appendix 4.

Which values are most consistent within all levels of the organization?

Based on the survey results, essentially all values are consistently practiced and appreciated among all employees.

However, an exception can be made for innovation as a standalone value. When looking at value statement, “I believe we are doing interesting things at work,” by team, the five respondents that disagreed with it are only from three teams: Support, Engineering, and Sales and Customer Success teams. Since what one finds interesting is subjective as mentioned in section 5.3.2 for question 14, this exception can be disregarded. Otherwise, an alternative answer for this sub-question can be that all values, except Innovation, are consistently practiced and appreciated among all employees.

How do the value perceptions compare between different groups of employees?

To answer this question, the survey data needs to be split by either work experience, by team, by job role level, by office location, by citizenship (Helsinki only), or by gender identity. These are backgrounds provided by the first six questions of the questionnaire.

By work experience at Supermetrics:

According to the correlation revealed between question one and question 13, two out of the six respondents that have been at company for three years or more disagreed with value statement “I am motivated to learn and try new things at work.” The only other two had less than one year of experience and one-to-two years of experience. Four out of the six respondents with two-to-three years of experience also deviated closer to “Agree” instead of “Strongly agree” even though most answers from other respondents were “Strongly agree.” Based on the value statement and this data, employees that have been at the company

longer tend to demonstrate the value Drive less compared to other employees who are newer at the company.

Also, respondents with at least two years of experience in Supermetrics were more likely to say “No, just as important” to Proactivity & Innovation in question 21. In other words, nine out of 12 respondents with at least two years of experience found Proactivity & Innovation to be as important now as before.

By team:

As discussed in the answer for the first sub-question, only five respondents from the Support, Engineering, and Sales and Customer Success teams do not find the company to be as innovative as other colleagues believe. However, seven of the eight respondents from the marketing team strongly believed that the company is innovative.

There are three teams that stand out in terms of Competence & Background being more difficult to observe and recognize. Respondents from the Engineering, Marketing, and Sales and Customer Success teams favored more in answering “Strongly agree” and “Agree” in the difficulty of observing and recognizing Competence & Background in other employees.

By job role level:

The only major correlation found by job role level is that respondents not in managerial positions were more likely to answer “I don’t know” for question 25. Although answers were mixed among all job role levels, the top group representing directors, team heads, vice presidents, and executives favored in answering “Yes.” Groups “Entry or associate level” and “Mid or senior level (non-managerial)” had mixed answers but were still more likely to answer, “I don’t know” whereas groups “Mid or senior level (managerial)” and “Director / Head / VP / Executive” were more decisive in their answers.

By office location:

Even though there are limited responses from locations other than Helsinki, there are still considerable findings here. For question 22, Helsinki respondents were almost evenly split between finding Drive & Growth, Proactive & Innovation, and Competence & Background easier or harder to see during remote work. For the same value pairs, respondents from Atlanta strongly agreed or somewhat agreed in these values being more difficult to observe and recognize whereas Vilnius and other locations strongly disagreed or somewhat disagreed.

The same pattern is found for question 21. Again, respondents from Helsinki were nearly split half in agreement in Proactivity & Innovation being more important or not during remote

work. Respondents from Atlanta agreed and respondents from the remaining offices disagreed.

By citizenship:

There are several correlations regarding those with Finnish citizenship. First, those with Finnish citizenship enthusiastically agree with the value statement, “Supermetrics would not be where it is today without the various experience and backgrounds in the company,” more than any other group. Second, Respect & Team Play are more important now to this group compared to other groups. Third, this group strongly agrees with the value statement, “I am optimistic about the company’s future growth,” indicating that this group highly values and recognizes Growth within the company.

By gender identity:

When considering gender identity, not many correlations are derived from this data point in the survey data despite what was found in the interview data. The only significant correlation is that males generally find it more difficult observe and recognize Drive & Growth, since this group had the highest share of “Strongly agree” and “Agree” answers for this value pair in question 22.

What strategies or activities are used to promote the company values?

In the survey results for question 23, the highest scoring event is the monthly information sessions. This was also the top answer from the interviewees. For the remaining activities that match between the surveys and interviews, those are chatting in casual Slack channels, casually meeting with teammates remotely, and purposely meeting new colleagues every week. These are the four most impactful activities outside of working.

However, for new employees since the pandemic, they receive additional support in the onboarding process, extra information of the company and its teams through customized welcome guides and handbooks, and a session with the CEO.

How have the employees’ perceptions of the company values changed due to the impact of COVID-19 and remote work?

According to the interview data, the managers admitted that seeing and experiencing the company values became more difficult during remote work, especially for Transparency & Communication. The positive side to this is that employees started sharing most updates and news via Slack, so most of the updates and changes in any department could be accessed by anyone. At the same time, the communication speed between offices increased.

In contrast, the negative effect of having no physical communication became the main challenge for employees and thus perceiving this value less. Based on the managers' input of this topic, their perception of all the values was not affected so much by COVID-19, but the survey data shows otherwise and tells more.

The last questions of the survey except for question 23 answer the main research question. According to the survey data, most respondents noted that a lack of work-based social support affected the company values, assuming that there is change. While lack of visibility, lack of body language, and lack of work-life separation did not score as much, they had a fair number of responses each, so they are not completely disregarded, but lack of work-based social support is the biggest factor.

Most respondents think that Transparency & Communication and Respect & Team Play to be more important now, and almost half of respondents believe that Proactivity & Innovation to be more important now.

A little more than half of respondents find it harder to observe and recognize Respect & Team Play from teammates, and Transparency & Communication was varied the most in this regard. Generally, more than half of respondents for all value pairs other than Respect & Team Play do not find it more difficult to see the values among teammates.

According to question 24 of the survey, the top four values that emerged during the pandemic are flexibility, support, empathy, and work-life balance.

Most respondents are unsure of the need to reevaluate the company values, but the second largest share said no, even though a little over one-fifth said yes.

Research Questions	Summary of Answers
Sub-question: Which values are most consistent within all levels of the organization?	All values, except possibly Innovation, are practiced and valued consistently at all levels of the company.
Sub-question: How do the value perceptions compare between different groups of employees?	Employees that have been at the company longer than others tend to exhibit less Drive than others, and they also tend to believe that Proactivity & Innovation to be just as important as before the pandemic.

	<p>Results for value statement related to Innovation show that some respondents from Support, Engineering, and Sales and Customer Success teams do not find the company to be interestingly innovative, but nearly all respondents from the Marketing team believe the opposite.</p> <p>Generally, no meaningful data connections by job role level were made, but those in higher positions were more decisive in their answers about value and culture reevaluation.</p> <p>Drive & Growth, Proactivity & Innovation, and Competence & Background are difficult to observe and recognize by Atlanta respondents, but Vilnius and Other respondents do not think this. Respondents from Helsinki were almost evenly split.</p> <p>Proactivity & Innovation are more important now according to Atlanta respondents, but Vilnius and Other respondents believe they are just as important as before. Respondents from Helsinki were almost evenly split.</p> <p>Holders of Finnish citizenship soundly agree with the Background value statement, “Supermetrics would not be where it is today without the various experience and backgrounds in the company.” They also firmly believe that Respect & Team Play are more important than before. This group is very optimistic about Growth.</p> <p>Males, for the most part, find it more difficult to observe Drive & Growth compared to other groups.</p>
Sub-question: What strategies or activities are used to promote the company values?	The top four activities are monthly information sessions, chatting in casual Slack channels, casually meeting with teammates remotely, and purposely meeting new colleagues every week.
Main research question: How have the employees’ perceptions of the company values	Survey respondents mostly picked “Lack of work-based social support” as the main remote work challenge for changes in company values, assuming that there is change.

<p>changed due to the impact of COVID-19 and remote work?</p>	<p>Transparency & Communication and Respect & Team Play are perceived to be the most varied among manager interviewees and survey respondents. It can be a net positive or a net negative depending on how an individual weighs the pros and cons of remote work.</p> <p>Almost everyone agrees that Transparency & Communication and Respect & Team Play are more important now. Almost half of survey respondents think the same for Proactivity & Innovation.</p> <p>The top four values that employees demonstrated during the pandemic are flexibility, support, empathy, and work-life balance.</p> <p>Most respondents are indecisive about the need to reassess the company values, but many others said that it is not necessary.</p>
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Table 3. Answers to the research questions

All answers to the research questions are formatted and concisely presented in Table 3.

6.2 Validity and Reliability

Now that the data collection and data analysis have concluded, it is essential to evaluate the quality of the research by its validity and reliability. Reliability is about the replication and consistency of a research, so if an earlier research is replicated and it achieves the same results, then it is reliable. Validity, on the other hand, is about the appropriateness of the measures used, accuracy of the data analysis, and how the results can be used in other settings. (Saunders et al. 2019, 213–214.)

The central purpose of this thesis was to answer the research questions regarding company values and its ties to remote work. Due to the scarcity of similar topics during the COVID-19 pandemic, a sound theoretical framework had to be formed and have it connected to remote work. This was established through the collected secondary data and can be repeated by another researcher, and there is a plethora of material regarding organizational

culture and values. New and relevant studies should be published as the pandemic progresses and ends, so there will be more information related to this space. Therefore, the research conducted in this thesis are reliable.

Based on the primary data collection and analysis, the study is considered valid after considering the overall results and certain threats to validity. One threat to validity, researcher bias, has been addressed in chapter five since the context of some questions in the survey had bias and the affected data had to be reframed contextually to be included in the results. However, the data was rich as retrieved from the interviews, which quickly reached a saturation point after five interviews. The number of responses collected from the survey was 59 which represented 35 percent of all employees in the company at that time. The sample size could be bigger for more accurate results, but as mentioned, the data was mostly from Helsinki employees so there was not enough representation in other offices. With the enrichment and validation between the qualitative data and quantitative data, this research is valid.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

The topic of this thesis calls for further research in this study area. Because company culture can be affected by remote work, similar studies can be repeated, and the scope can be expanded to include more aspects of company culture. This topic can be done for other companies in Finland or elsewhere if remote work became commonplace in the organization during the pandemic.

With the year 2021 looking more positive in terms of employees returning to the office, further research can also investigate the impact of company culture once employees congregate to offices again.

Additional suggestions for further research include studying the relationship between company culture and financial performance or the relationship between company culture and work efficiency during the pandemic.

7 SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to discover a connection between remote work and company values. The research questions were designed to help better understand how employees feel about company values during the pandemic and how remote work may have impacted their perception on those values. Employees of the case company are interested in how company culture overall is affected but results of this study presents context to this connection from a values-perspective.

In the theoretical part of the thesis, theories for values, culture, and remote work were gathered through secondary data. The compilation of secondary data formed the theoretical backbone of the topic. These are found in the second and third chapters, but the fourth chapter also includes a brief overview of the case company which is an extension of the theoretical framework.

The empirical part of the thesis includes qualitative data from interviews and quantitative data from a survey questionnaire. The participants of the interviews are managers who have at least two years of work experience in the case company, and each manager belong to different teams. Managers volunteered to participate, and the interview stopped after five interviews. The questionnaire was sent to everyone in the company through Slack, where anyone can anonymously participate and respond to the survey. The results of the data are then presented, and the findings provided answers to the research questions.

The results of the study revealed that there are difficulties in seeing and feeling values during remote work, but overall, the company core values are highly appreciated, with some employees feeling more so than others.

In summary, the thesis has achieved its objectives by answering all research questions, and insight can be given to the case company.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Introduction message to interviewees

Hi,

Thank you for your interest in our study! We are Mark Penaranda and Aleksandra Shapalova, final year students at LAB University of Applied Sciences, and we are writing our thesis about organizational values at Supermetrics.

Thesis background:

While searching for a potential thesis topic, several Supermetrics employees raised concerns about maintaining company culture during the pandemic. A possible shift in company culture is one of many business implications at a growing company, especially when everyone has been instructed to work from home.

This study, however, will conceptually focus on organizational values. Values are one aspect of culture, and we are particularly interested in how new and old employees perceive the core company values at Supermetrics.

The questions in the interview will be about your opinion on values and how remote work has affected you and your team.

Please note that by participating in the interview, you agree and consent to the following:

- I confirm that I have read and understand the information for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving reason.
- I agree to take part in the study.
- I agree to the interview being audio recorded.
- I agree to the use of anonymized quotes in publications.

As a reminder and for reference, these are the core values at Supermetrics:

- Drive & Growth
- Communication & Transparency
- Proactivity & Innovation

- Respect & Team Play
- Competence & Background

Interview Questions:

- How would you define and explain the meaning of each pair of Supermetrics' core values?
- Do Supermetrics organizational values align with your own (individual) values? To which extent?
- How do you apply the company values in your daily work? Give examples related to each pair of values.
- Give examples where you recognize yourself or your team members demonstrating these values in action since working from home.
- Does working from home make it more difficult to see values in action? Why or why not?
- Before the switch to remote work, what events, activities, or strategies helped team members be more aware or be reminded about the company values? How is it different now during the pandemic?
- How do new employees who join your team internalize and familiarize themselves more with the company values?
- Do you believe these values are more important now because of remote work? Why or why not?
- Have you observed any new values within you or your team that have emerged due to working remotely?

Thanks,

Mark Penaranda & Aleksandra Shapalova

Appendix 2. All interview questions

Interview Questions:

1. What are your first thoughts when considering company values/organizational values/corporate values?
2. In general, what are values? What do they mean to you?
3. How would you define and explain the meaning of each pair of Supermetrics' core values?
4. Do Supermetrics organizational values align with your own (individual) values? To which extent?
5. How do you apply the company values in your daily work? Give examples related to each pair of values.
6. Give examples where you recognize yourself or your team members demonstrating these values in action since working from home.
7. Does working from home make it more difficult to see values in action? How so?
8. Before the switch to remote work, what events, activities, or strategies helped team members be more aware or be reminded about the company values? How is it different now during the pandemic?
9. How do new employees who join your team internalize and familiarize themselves more with the company values?
10. Do you believe these values are more important now because of remote work? Why or why not?
11. Have you observed any new values within you or your team that have emerged due to working remotely?
12. We have now asked all the questions we had. Do you want to add something that relates to this topic?

Appendix 3. Survey questionnaire

Company Values and Remote Work Questionnaire

 Mandatory fields are marked with an asterisk (*) and must be filled in to complete the form.

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in our study! We are writing our thesis on organizational values for our BBA in International Business.

We are particularly interested in how the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to remote work have impacted each employee's perception of Supermetrics' values. This thesis project was inspired by several employees who have expressed concerns of the company culture changing while everyone is working from home. This is just one of many business implications at a growing company during a pandemic. This study, however, will conceptually focus on company values which is one aspect of company culture.

We would really appreciate it if you could take a moment of your time to answer our questionnaire which should take about 10–15 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is strictly voluntary. All responses are collected anonymously and will be kept in strict confidence.

Thank you,

Mark Penaranda
Aleksandra Shapalova

Background Information

Please answer the following questions about your background.

1. How long have you been working for Supermetrics? *

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than 1 year | <input type="radio"/> 2-3 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 1-2 years | <input type="radio"/> 3+ years |

2. Which team or department are you most associated with? *

☐ Customer Support

☐ Marketing

☐ Design

☐ Sales and Customer Success

☐ Engineering

☐ Other (please specify)

☐ Finance

☐ Product

☐ Human Resources

3. What is the experience level of your role? *

☐ Intern / Trainee

☐ Entry or associate level

☐ Mid or senior level (non-managerial)

☐ Mid or senior level (managerial)

☐ Director / Head / VP / Executive

4. Which office location do you work for? *

☐ Atlanta

☐ Vilnius

☐ Helsinki

☐ Other or remote

5. Do you have Finnish citizenship? *

☐ Yes, by birth or by Finnish ancestry

☐ Yes, by naturalization

☐ No, but planning to naturalize

☐ No, and not planning to naturalize

6. What is your gender identity? *

- ☐ Male
 ☐ Other
- ☐ Female
 ☐ Prefer not to say

Perception of Values (1/2)

The value statements below are in first-person. Please answer accordingly.

7. The company values align with my personal values. *

	Yes	No
Drive & Growth *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transparency & Communication *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactivity & Innovation *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respect & Team Play *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Competence & Background *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Supermetrics' core values guide me in my daily work. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

9. I am motivated to learn and try new things at work. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

10. I am optimistic about the company's future growth. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

11. I feel comfortable expressing my ideas and opinions at work. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

12. I understand the direction the company is taking. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

13. If I see something that needs improvement, I contribute by suggesting or making changes. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Perception of Values (2/2)

The value statements below are in first-person. Please answer accordingly.

14. I believe we are doing interesting things at work. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

15. I put effort in getting to know my teammates more. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

16. I am conscious about my tone of voice, demeanor, and expression in my interactions at work. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

17. Supermetrics would not be where it is today without the various experience and backgrounds in the company. *

- ☐ Strongly agree

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

18. Outside of work hours, I consume content or take courses related to my job to improve my performance at work. *

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Practically never

19. My teammates represent the company values well. *

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Drive & Growth *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transparency & Communication *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactivity & Innovation *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respect & Team Play *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Competence & Background *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Working from Home

20. Which of the following remote work challenges affected the company values and company culture the most? *

- ☐ Lack of visibility; cannot observe others nor be observed by supervisors and teammates
- ☐ Lack of work-based social support; feeling isolated from the workplace
- ☐ Lack of body language and verbal cues in virtual meetings

☐ Lack of work-life separation

21. The following values are more important than ever since the pandemic started: *

	Yes, more important now	No, just as important as before
Drive & Growth *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transparency & Communication *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactivity & Innovation *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respect & Team Play *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Competence & Background *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. The following values are more difficult to observe and recognize when working remotely: *

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Drive & Growth *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transparency & Communication *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactivity & Innovation *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respect & Team Play *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Competence & Background *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. Which activities or events help you see Supermetrics values in action more during the pandemic? Select all that apply. *

- ☐ None
- ☐ Meeting new colleagues with #coffee_buddies
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ Team day
- ☐ Friday drinks and games

- ☐ Monthly Super info sessions
- ☐ Chatting in for-fun channels (e.g. #kitchen, #gamers, #super_pets, etc.)
- ☐ Casual remote meetings with teammates / "Virtual lunch" / "Chitchats"
- ☐ Regular remote team meetings

24. Have you observed other important values that emerged within you, your team, or the company since working from home? If yes, select up to three values.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recognition | <input type="checkbox"/> Support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quality | <input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) <input type="text"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Work-life balance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Security | <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | |

25. Do you feel that there is a need to reevaluate the company values and company culture once the office opens up again? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

Appendix 4. Correlation data

The most correlating data are listed at the top of each table. Correlations that are not statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) are excluded.

Correlations based on Question 1: "How long have you been working for Supermetrics?"

Question/Value Statement	R ²	P-value
I am motivated to learn and try new things at work.	0.345828	0.006951
What is the experience level of your role?	0.330912	0.010078
The following values are more important than ever since the pandemic started: Proactivity & Innovation	0.267468	0.040224

Correlations based on Question 2: "Which team or department are you most associated with?"

Question/Value Statement	R ²	P-value
I believe we are doing interesting things at work.	-0.26761	0.040111
The following values are more difficult to observe and recognize when working remotely: Competence & Background	-0.26259	0.044204

Correlations based on Question 3: "What is the experience level of your role?"

Question/Value Statement	R ²	P-value
Do you feel that there is a need to reevaluate the company values and company culture once the office opens again?	-0.37798	0.002919
How long have you been working for Supermetrics?	0.330912	0.010078

Correlations based on Question 4: "Which office location do you work for?"

Question/Value Statement	R ²	P-value
The following values are more difficult to observe and recognize when working remotely: Proactivity & Innovation	0.369861	0.003667
The following values are more difficult to observe and recognize when working remotely: Drive & Growth	0.329545	0.010417
The following values are more difficult to observe and recognize when working remotely: Competence & Background	0.310956	0.016099

Correlations based on Question 5: "Do you have Finnish citizenship?"

Question/Value Statement	R ²	P-value
Supermetrics would not be where it is today without the various experience and backgrounds in the company.	0.393958	0.00323
The following values are more important than ever since the pandemic started: Respect & Team Play	0.304081	0.026392
I am optimistic about the company's future growth.	0.272759	0.04784

Correlations based on Question 6: "What is your gender identity?"

Question/Value Statement	R ²	P-value
The following values are more difficult to observe and recognize when working remotely: Drive & Growth	0.294697	0.023045