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Beyond the Office: Motivations and Influences of Remote Work



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Beyond the Office: Motivations and Influences of Remote Work

The goal of this master's thesis was to understand the employee experience of remote workers in company X. The research was needed due to increased remote work and organizational changes.

The research questions of the thesis were: How does remote work affect the work experience? What are the motivations for doing remote work? How can the company influence the work experience when employees are working remotely?

The research follows the Double Diamond design process, which includes four steps: discover, define, develop, and deliver. With the help of design thinking and service design methods, an understanding of remote employees' motivations and challenges was gathered. The methods and tools used during the process are desk research, survey, interview, affinity diagram, SWOT, employee personas, and employee experience map.

The study showed that the effects of remote work are individual. Flexibility, commuting, concentration, efficiency, and work-life balance were motivational for remote work. The challenges related to social and well-being include a low sense of community and camaraderie, reduced movement, and fewer breaks during the working day.

Keywords:

Employee experience, Remote work, Design Thinking, Service Design

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Toimiston ulkopuolella: Etätyön motivaatiot ja vaikutukset

Tämän ylemmän ammattikorkeakoulun opinnäytetyön tavoite oli ymmärtää etätyöntekijöiden työntekijäkokemusta. Tutkimusta tarvittiin lisääntyneen etätyön ja organisaation muutosten takia. Palvelumuotoilun menetelmien avulla kerättiin ymmärrystä etätyöntekijöiden motivaatioista ja haasteista.

Opinnäytetyön tutkimuskysymykset olivat: Miten etätyö vaikuttaa työkokemukseen? Mikä motivoi etätyön tekemiseen? Miten yritys voi vaikuttaa työkokemukseen, kun työntekijät työskentelevät etänä?

Tutkimus seuraa Double Diamond -suunnitteluprosessia, joka sisältää neljä vaihetta: löydä, määrittele, kehitä ja toimita. Muotoiluajattelun ja palvelumuotoilun menetelmien avulla kerättiin ymmärrystä etätyöntekijöiden motivaatioista ja haasteista. Prosessin aikana käytetyt menetelmät ja työkalut ovat kirjallisuuskatsaus, kysely, haastattelu, affiniteettikaavio, SWOT, työntekijäpersoonat ja työntekijän kokemuskartta.

Tutkimus osoitti että etätyön vaikutukset ovat yksilöllisiä. Motivaatioita etätyön tekemiseen oli joustavuus, työmatka, keskittyminen, tehokkuus ja työelämä tasapaino. Haasteet liittyivät sosiaalisiin ja hyvinvointiin kuten vähäinen yhteisöllisyyden ja toverillisuuden tunne, sekä liikkuminen ja taukojen pitäminen työpäivän aikana vähenee.

Asiasanat:

Työntekijäkoemus, etätyö, muotoiluajattelu, palvelumuotoilu

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1 Introduction

The modern workplace is developing fast, and more and more employees are choosing remote work instead of a traditional office environment. This change has raised the attention of companies and researchers. In recent years, especially since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, several studies have appeared on remote work and its effect on work experience. Due to the pandemic, since November 2020, many organizations have been forced to work entirely remotely or partially remotely, in other words, as a hybrid. Since 2020, this work style has become the norm, especially among knowledge workers, and as a result, returning to the "old style" is no longer an option for many organizations. (Cisco, 2022.) Various studies show that remote work has several positive effects on the employee experience. According to research by Cisco and the Finnish Terveystalo and Economic Research Center, employees were willing to continue working completely remotely or in a hybrid way, as it has improved work well-being and work-life balance in many factors. (Cisco, 2022; Sweco, 2022.) Despite the many advantages of remote work, there are also unique challenges that companies must address to ensure their remote employees are happy, healthy, and engaged (Varma, 2022).

This thesis gathers an understanding of remote employees' motivations and needs because the working models have changed. Understanding remote work and its employee experience is theoretically studied based on various studies (Chapter 2) and different service design methods in Company X (Chapter 3).

The topic of the thesis is part of a more comprehensive employee experience project implemented at company X. Tommi Muuri is the author of this thesis, and he works for the company as a user experience designer. He works on the project as one of the designers as part of a multidisciplinary team.

1.1 Development area

Company X is a digital business agency focusing on digital development and business transformation. Since the beginning, a goal has been to offer customers and employees an even happier tomorrow than they already have today. The company is known for its good employee experience, having won The Best Place To Work award for several years.

The Best Place To Work wins shows the company's dedication to employee well-being and experience. Company X has always had relatively free remote work practices, but remote work has dramatically increased since the pandemic. Another reason the project is relevant is that the number of personnel increased due to the merger in 2022, and the operating methods of the different companies have mixed. For these reasons, studying the remote employee experience is necessary so that the organization can understand their needs and motivations and keep the employee experience good for everyone.

In the company, employees can choose between office, hybrid, and almost entirely remote work as the best way of working. Few people have a full-time remote work contract, in which case they do not belong to the community of any region. They have their remote work contract community. The purpose of this thesis is not to direct any way of working. The purpose is to clarify the needs of employees so that everyone's work experience is the best, regardless of the way of work. The target group of the study is Company X employees who do remote work occasionally or full-time. This project's primary goal is to recognize remote employees' experiences, motivations, and feelings to develop employee experience. Based on the employees' remote work experiences obtained from the research, development suggestions are made that the organization can use to improve the employees' experience.

The research questions that the thesis answers are:

- How does remote work affect the work experience?
- What are the motivations for doing remote work?

- How can the company influence the work experience when employees are working remotely?

The research gathers an understanding of what factors positively and negatively affect the remote working experience and what motivates employees to do remote work. With the help of knowledge, an overall picture is created to aid the development of how the company can influence the employee's experience when working remotely.

1.2 Process, schedule, frame of reference, and methods

Design Process

Many design projects follow a *Double Diamond* framework. The process of this project also follows that framework. Double diamond is a framework for innovation to tackle complex problems. It brings the project a clear, people-oriented, and problem-solving central approach. Its process involves four steps: Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver. The process starts with understanding the problem, which involves human interaction. In the second step, insights from the first step will be changed into an understandable form to get the clearest possible picture of the challenges. In the third step, different ideas and solutions are created with different stakeholders based on insights from the earlier steps. In the final step, the solutions are verified by testing the product or concept. (Design Council, 2019.) The double diamond design process of the project is shown in Figure 1.

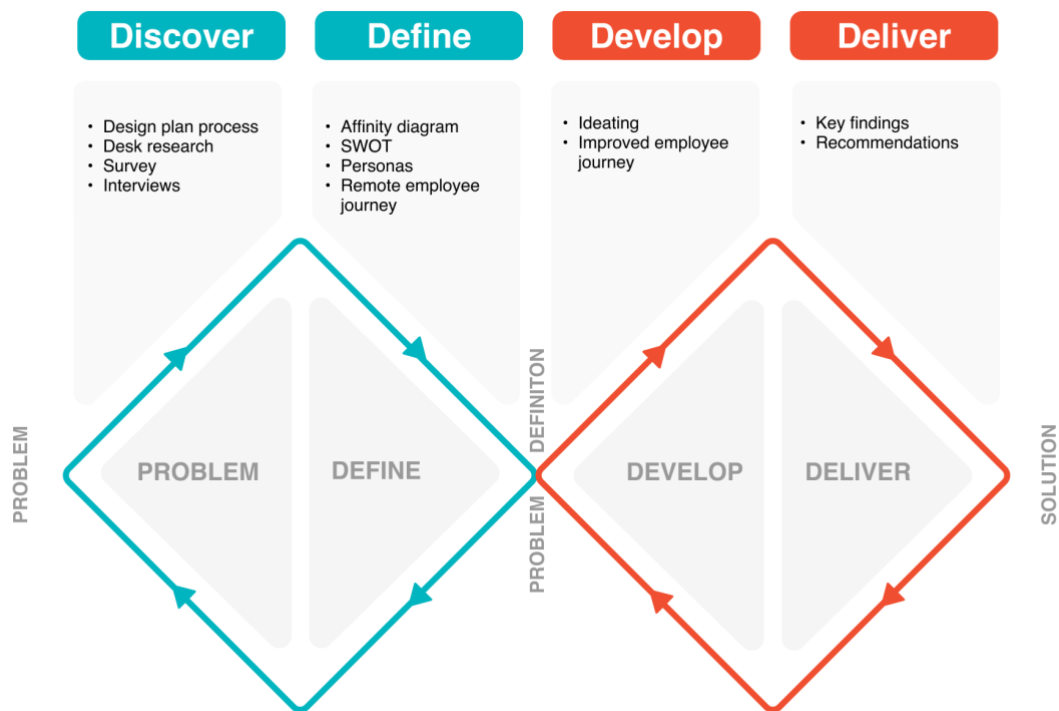


Figure 1. The design process for the project (Adapted from Design Council, 2019).

The idea for the project came up in February 2023, and the project started immediately with creating a design plan. The project progresses according to the design process in different phases, including research and design methods. The discovery phase lasted from February to June 2023. The project continued in August with the define phase, which was worked on until the end of October. Develop and deliver phase from November to December 2023. The study is completed before Christmas 2023. Figure 2 presents a more detailed project schedule.

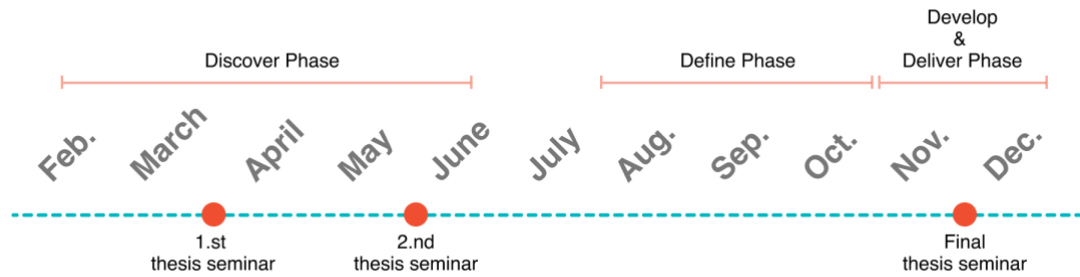


Figure 2. Schedule for the project and thesis.

Frame of reference

Understanding the remote work experience is at the center of the framework of the thesis (Figure 3). A theoretical understanding of the subject takes place through a literature review. It compiles researched information about remote working and the employee's experience. Research and service design methods and tools include desk research, surveys, interviews, affinity diagrams, SWOT, personas, and employee journeys. With the help of these, a deeper understanding of remote work and its effects on stakeholders is gathered.



Figure 3. The frame of reference.

Methods

The project progresses through the double diamond design process in different phases, including research and service design methods. The methods used at different stages are shown in Figure 1. Research methods are desk research, interviews, and surveys. In this work, the literature review is desk research. Desk research consists of secondary data, meaning someone else has already published the data. Desk research is a cheap and fast research method. However, researchers must know where and how to look at and judge data quality. Relevant data can be gathered from external or internal resources. (Housden, 2010, pp. 96, 100.) The interview and survey are described in more detail in Chapter 3, Research Methods and Findings. Service design methods are affinity diagrams, SWOT, personas, and remote employee journeys. These are also described in more detail in Chapter 3.

2 Remote Work and Employee Experience

Remote work is called by different names, like telecommuting and work-from-home (WFH). In this work, the word remote work is used. There are different definitions of remote work, such as *“An arrangement in which an employee, or group of employees, works mainly from an alternate location and communicates with the company via email, telephone, or another digital medium.”* Generally, a comparison is made between working in an office and home. Remote work also has different forms and levels depending on the company, but they can be divided into two general, broader entities. First is a traditional office with a remote option, which means the company has a traditional business model where employees have an office and report there daily. However, employees might have the opportunity to work remotely if needed. For the most part, employees may do it remotely, but on some days, they are required to report to the office physically. The second one is a totally remote individual or team. This means that employees or teams do not have a common physical location, or if they do, they do not have to meet there. The physical location is not crucial for the company. (Bond Collective, n.d.)

In the 1970's, telecommuting work started to grow. As telecommuting work increased, so did the criticism towards it. In 1979, arguments about why it is not a good way of working were reported: How can one know how people are doing or if they are working at all? Working at home cut off the necessary contact with colleagues. There are too many distractions when working at home. These arguments are still in the minds of companies after four decades. However, remote work has grown year by year in the world, but in the big picture, growth has been moderate until 2020. (Flexjobs, n.d.)

Due to the pandemic, since November 2020, many organizations have been forced to work entirely remotely or partially remotely, in other words, as a hybrid. Remote work has quickly become a norm, especially among knowledge workers. (Cisco, 2022.) McKinsey's research shows that remote work has grown significantly since 2019, and organizations' attitude toward remote work

has changed. In an extensive survey answered by more than 25,000 people from the United States, Alaska, and Hawaii, 58 percent of working-age respondents reported that they have the opportunity to work remotely: full-time 35 percent and part-time 23 percent. The research also shows that remote work is popular if employees are offered it. Eighty-seven percent of respondents work remotely one or more days a week. (McKinsey & Company, 2022.) Remote work is also popular in Finland. According to Statistics Finland's labor force survey, in 2022, 11 percent of the employed worked full-time remotely, 13 percent at least half of the working time, 17 percent less than half, and 55 percent not at all. Among knowledge workers, especially remote work is a popular form of work. About 70 percent of those in the information and communication industry work remotely for at least half their time. (Leskinen, 2023.)

Based on research, remote work improves the work experience and well-being, but at the same time, it also challenges work well-being and organizations in some areas. It challenges companies to understand individuals and create a suitable culture for the company that comes with doing remote work. (Työterveyslaitos, 2022.) The following chapters examine the benefits and challenges of remote work and employee experience through several studies.

2.1 Effects of remote work

At the core of modern companies are personnel, which can also be considered the company's most important resource. It also means taking good care of the well-being of the personnel. During the pandemic, the reports on remote work's positive and negative effects have surprised many companies and employees. The employee's worries and problems in remote work may easily go unnoticed. Indeed, it requires self-understanding and activity from the employee to bring the problems to the supervisor's attention. As a result of few face-to-face meetings, it can be more difficult for the work community to notice challenges related to work ability before they become too large. With this, remote work

requires new practices and interaction skills from the supervisor and the employer. (Boijer-Spoof Heikinheimo et al., 2022.)

Productivity

People see productivity differently, and employees and managers may also have different definitions. A Microsoft New Future of Work Report 2022 found differences in the definitions of productivity for employees and managers. In the report, a significantly larger proportion of managers defined productivity according to performance than individual contributors. On the other hand, most individual contributors described productivity according to activity. Other definitions were communications and collaborations as well as efficiency. In both of these, managers had a slightly higher percentage share than individual contributors. The fifth definition was satisfaction and well-being, where the percentage share was the same. (Teevan et al., 2022, p. 10.)

Several studies show that productivity has increased or stayed the same in remote work compared to office work. In the state of remote work-study, Owl Labs reported that 67 percent are more productive, and only 1 percent feel less productive (Owl Labs, 2021, p. 17). Research produced by Cisco shows similar results. About 60 percent have experienced increased productivity when working remotely (Cisco, 2022, p. 5). However, some studies show that productivity decreases in remote work. According to a study by the National Bureau of Economic Research, the productivity of those working remotely full-time was 18 percent less than those working in an office. (Robinson, 2023.)

Similarly, a study by Stanford scientists showed that the productivity of those working full-time decreased by 10 percent. The reasons included challenges in remote communication, culture building, self-motivation, and mentoring. The same study mentioned that productivity depends on the work mode, as hybrid work did not affect productivity. (Robinson, 2023.)

Disruptions are a challenge for the mental endurance of a knowledge worker. One reason for better productivity in remote work is better concentration on work because there are fewer disruptions than in the office. Remote work also

saves time from commuting, which can also affect the employee's productivity when the saved time is added to the working time. (STTK, 2021; Kamouri & Lister, 2020, p. 42.) In remote workers' opinion, other productivity factors are minimal office politics, a more comfortable and personalized environment, and more efficient meetings (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2020, p. 27). According to a study by Owl Labs, remote workers have reported extra working hours, which can be seen as a feeling of increased productivity. Fifty-five percent claim they work more remotely than in the office, and 30 percent of men report about two extra hours per day. (Owl Labs, 2021, p. 18.) However, excessive productivity can also have risks. Working days may turn into just conducting, in which case the working day becomes very tight-paced, meaning that breaks may be missed and the porosity of the working day suffers. This brings the risk of burnout. (Boijer-Spoof Heikinheimo et al., 2022.) In the well-being survey produced by Microsoft 2021, 38 percent of employees who had experienced burnout answered that the reason was excessive workload (Teevan et al., 2022, p. 21).

Flexibility

Flexibility has become important for modern workers. According to Owl Lab's research, the main factors that affect the rejection of a job offer are if the employer does not allow flexible working hours, flexible work location, or requires full-time office work (Owl Labs, 2021, p. 3). Every person is different and experiences work environments differently. Some appreciate the freedom to choose the location and tools that suit them to make the work meaningful. In hybrid work, the nature of the tasks also affects the decision of some in which environment they want to work on any given day. A person may find different environments motivating and productive, for example, creative work and partner work in a different environment than routine work. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2020, p. 30.)

Flexibility enables a balance between working life and free time, reflected in better well-being. For many people, saving time can be significant when they do not have to spend time commuting. They work remotely to reduce commuting,

even if they like working in an office. According to the PGI Global Telework study, most commutes are half an hour to an hour round trip daily. The commute is outside of working hours or some other time that is important to the person. Also, for some, commuting can be stressful because of traffic jams, full public transport, delays, smells and sounds. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2020, p. 26.)

The freedom to choose between remote work and the office can also bring financial savings. For some, the money spent on commuting can be a considerable saving. Also, more money will be spent on food and other entertainment in office work. (Cisco, 2022, p. 9.)

Communication

Technology enables remote work communication. The tools have been in use for a long time, but only during the pandemic did many people have to learn how to use them. According to the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, most employees believe that technologies have made work more efficient and faster. In addition to that, transparency has also increased. (Ranki, 2023, p. 15.) It is also positive that many employees find it easier and less stressful to present remotely than live (Owl Labs, 2021, p. 22).

Although technology enables smooth remote communication, there are also challenges. With the help of technology, a conversation can be held in real-time, which creates the illusion of a face-to-face meeting. Tones of voice, facial expressions, and gestures are not transmitted in the same way virtually, so the brain has to work harder for interpretations. (Boijer-Spoof Heikinheimo et al., 2022.) Participants in a virtual meeting may have challenges recognizing who is speaking, not seeing faces, difficulty participating, feeling disengaged or left out, and difficulty seeing the whiteboard or presentation (Owl Labs, 2021, p. 22).

If the company has not invested in systems suitable for the working community and the systems work poorly, it can cause an increase in workload. It is also helpful to set aside time to learn the systems. Real-time also increases the pressure to respond to messages; in some situations, there may be an

impossibly large number of messages. The feeling of pressure can cause messages to be read outside of working hours, which can be linked to burnout. (Ranki, 2023, p. 16.)

Full calendars cause a threshold for booking a meeting to ask an opinion or a small matter, which could be done quickly if both were in the same place (Boijer-Spoof Heikinheimo et al., 2022). One option is to implement meeting-free days. It could help employees reduce the stress caused by meetings and increase concentration on important work tasks. In a study organized by Microsoft 2021, which investigated ways to increase productivity, it was noticed that concentration on work tasks improved by 22 percent on meeting-free days. (Teevan et al., 2022, p. 18.) In remote communication, it has also been noticed that empathy decreases when feelings and expressions are transmitted less. In this case, the risk of misunderstandings may increase, and the interaction narrows down to a very matter- and task-oriented one. (Boijer-Spoof Heikinheimo et al., 2022.)

Work community

It has been studied that social connections affect better health and reduce the symptoms of depression, stress, anxiety, and loneliness (Brown & Leite, 2023). However, it has been noticed that the effects in working life are very individual. Some miss meetings, while others enjoy being alone. This is a challenge for organizations: how to match the culture and working methods so everyone feels it works. Supervisors and coworkers should understand how everyone experiences remote work as part of the community. Finding a balance of social habits also needs self-management skills so that the person understands what kind of social needs there are. (Boijer-Spoof Heikinheimo et al., 2022.)

Social well-being is the least grown area compared to the physical, mental, financial, or emotional well-being (Cisco, 2022, p. 8). According to Microsoft research, social work relationships and support improve the work experience. In the study, 42 percent felt that remote work has a weaker connection with colleagues, which is the main obstacle to remote work. Also, 41 percent who

have experienced burnout answered that they feel separated from their colleagues as the reason. (Teevan et al., 2022, p. 21, 56.) The sense of community and culture building may weaken in remote work because it is more challenging to maintain a sense of belonging and integrate new employees (Vuorela et al., 2022). Face-to-face meetings naturally decrease in remote work when communication takes place virtually. The work community may feel smaller, and colleagues may be forgotten more easily when working remotely. Coworkers who met face-to-face may feel closer than those who only met virtually. (Boijer-Spoof Heikinheimo et al., 2022.)

The company should, therefore, actively develop and maintain social practices so that important factors for the team, such as getting to know each other, free-form interaction, and a sense of togetherness, are created. Socializing and belonging together may be easier face-to-face, but remote work does not have to prevent it. Physical closeness is not a prerequisite for strengthening human relationships, but psychological closeness is more important. (Vilkman, 2023.) Psychological safety is crucial for team functioning. Lack of communication, weak communication with the work community and supervisor, and the threat of losing one's job increase insecurity. In a psychologically safe workplace, asking questions, asking for help, and making mistakes are safe. (Virolainen, 2010.)

By increasing social support, the feeling of belonging increases. Social support includes appreciation, caring, trust, listening, and feedback. Remote work may make feeling a sense of belonging more difficult, but according to research by Ernst & Young, 2019, 40 percent of office workers felt isolated in the workplace. (Vilkman, 2023.)

Cognitive Ergonomy

When talking about ergonomics, physical functions come to mind first. However, the most essential tool for knowledge workers is the brain, the health of which can be examined through cognitive ergonomics. Cognitive ergonomics refers to functions related to information processing, such as perceiving, thinking, and remembering. (Huotarinen, 2021.) According to the Finnish Institute of

Occupational Health, the most common areas of brain work in office work are multitasking, language (reading, typing, and listening), memory (details, order, and use of systems), distractions, and time pressure. The same areas of brain work are also the most burdensome, while the more inspiring areas are ideation, learning, interaction, and participation. (Työterveyslaitos, 2021.) Weak cognitive ergonomics can be seen as mistakes, stress, and feeling rushed. The brain has limitations, so overloading may cause problems affecting well-being, such as memory problems, work exhaustion, and mood and sleep problems. (Huotarinen, 2021.)

Remote work has pros and cons in terms of cognitive ergonomics. Many feel that remote work reduces interruptions, distractions, and urgency, which reduces brain strain. On the other hand, cognitively inspiring areas such as interaction may be left to a lesser extent, which has a weakening effect on cognitive ergonomics. (Boijer-Spoof Heikinheimo et al., 2022.) It is, therefore, essential for the individual and the employer to identify the factors that strain cognitive ergonomics and to change work and conditions to support smooth and healthy brain work. (Työterveyslaitos, 2021.) Routines also play an essential role in maintaining brain function. By developing routines, workflow and efficiency can be improved, as well as well-being. (Puhti, 2023.)

Physical Ergonomy

Body health and fitness are essential for brain health. Also, physical ergonomics has two sides. The physical inactivity of an information worker during work is a challenge for the body. On the other hand, remote work enables more physically active free time. (Boijer-Spoof Heikinheimo et al., 2022.) Sixty-eight percent of respondents to Cisco's research believe that remote work has positively affected physical ergonomics due to increased fitness and improved eating habits (Cisco, 2022, p. 10). However, reducing breaks and physical activity during the working day are challenges in remote work. Sitting still for too long has been observed to have health effects such as musculoskeletal disorders, visual fatigue, obesity, heart disease, et cetera. Also, the ergonomics of the home office are not optimal for everyone, and work may be done in bad

positions, for example, from the sofa. The ergonomics of the workstation can prevent some discomfort, but it does not help in itself. The body requires movement. Employers should inform remote workers about the risks of physical ergonomics and train them if necessary. (International Labour Organization, 2020, p. 13; Boijer-Spoof Heikinheimo et al., 2022.)

2.2 Remote work management

Remote and multi-location work challenges supervisors in managing teams, requiring adaptation and new skills from supervisors and team leaders. It is good for managers to consider how remote work affects them when employees are not seen in the offices. When the company has employees who work only in the office, as a hybrid, or entirely remotely, the managers must strive to be equal so that those who are present do not have more attention and responsibility than those who are remote. Managers must think about how to maintain and develop communication, community, inclusion, well-being, creativity, and employee development in remote work. (Kurttila & Aalto, 2021, pp. 44-47.)

Self-management

Remote work requires not only good leadership but also individual self-management. Good team management, however, can positively affect self-managing employees. The employee's self-management can be supported by enabling autonomy, supporting skills and abilities, and maintaining motivation. (Björkstén, 2021, p. 119.)

Remote work affects the employee in many ways and requires different self-management skills.

- **Independence:** Requires organizational ability and work management skills. Setting goals and monitoring is essential. There is also a need to ensure one's development and efficiency. The nature of remote work can be lonely, so the worker must recognize its effects.

- Self-discipline: Remote work requires self-discipline and work rhythm from the employee. Concentrating on work and staying in work mode can be more difficult. Creating routines and identifying energizing things can strengthen work performance.
- Lack of community: Remote work requires the employee to be active to maintain sociality and communication.
- Confidence: Recognizing own value, strengths, and weaknesses.
(Björkstén, 2021, p. 105.)

Autonomy

Remote workers value flexibility and trust. Team leaders should, therefore, support autonomy instead of micromanaging and monitoring. Excessive control can lead to a decrease in engagement and creativity. Remote work requires mutual communication, flexibility, and trust. (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020.)

Communication and trust are key factors for successful remote work management (Harrington & Ruppel, 1999, p. 226). Employees' activities can be strengthened by increasing freedom of choice and making one's voice heard. It is also important for employees to create a feeling that they have ownership of their work, the opportunity to choose how things are done, and to be involved in decision-making. These actions can increase motivation and productivity. (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020.)

Structure and guidance

The team leaders also have the challenge of finding a balance between autonomy and creating the necessary structures and guidance. Structures, schedules, goals, and boundaries are also needed in remote work. These can support the employee's working hours, the development of skills, and a sense of self-efficacy. Overloading and underloading work must be avoided, as both are associated with stress and burnout. It is good for team leaders to know the weaknesses and strengths of employees in remote work and work tasks to support them as needed. Giving timely and constructive feedback is essential both in the office and in remote work, but in remote work, leaders must find a

suitable way and structure for feedback when there are no face-to-face meetings. (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020.) In remote work, it is easier for team leaders to forget to give feedback, which leads to the employees not feeling that their work is adequate and valued. Even small actions, such as thanking and appreciating, can have meaning for employees, which supports well-being at work. (White, 2020.)

Guidance is also needed in other remote work areas, such as ergonomics, communication, technology, and routines. Employers can take steps to help employees do their jobs well and perform well. It is important to create channels for employees where they can talk about their problems and offer help to them. It is the employer's responsibility to provide suitable training for the team leaders so that they can also provide their subordinates with suitable guidance and practices. Employees can be helped with, for example, social hours, work tools, movement exercises, routine guides, and programs to support employee mental health. (White, 2020.)

Community

As stated, the most challenging thing in remote work is the sense of community and its creation. In the hybrid work study published by Microsoft in 2022, 43 percent of managers stated that building and maintaining social capital is the biggest challenge in remote work (Teevan et al., 2022, p. 59). When people are physically apart and communicate less verbally, there is a risk of feelings of being outside. It also brings significant challenges to management. One challenge is equality, so remote workers are not given less attention, and the necessary and up-to-date information also flows outside the office. (Kurttila & Aalto, 2021, p. 46.) Team leaders should consider suitable ways to support meaningful connections and communication between team members. Team communication can be developed with, for example, weekly video calls, social media, and collaboration platforms. It is important, however, that the meetings are meaningful and that there is an opportunity to get to know each other or share information. (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020.)

2.3 Employee experience

With employee experience (EX), companies strive to improve customer experience, employee dedication, commitment, and employer brand (Huhta & Myllytaus, 2021, p. 30). EX combines experiences, perceptions, and expectations when an employee interacts with the organization. The term is often confused with Human Resource Management, employee engagement, or Employee Life Cycle, but EX is a broader concept. However, it is strongly connected to these areas. For example, two employees can have almost the same events and functions in the Employee Life Cycle, but their EX can differ significantly. (Maylett & Wride, 2017, pp. 29-31.) The experience is individual and affects the individual's feelings through achievement, action, matter, and interaction. Experiences also create memories and consequences that are meaningful to the individual. (Huhta & Myllytaus, 2021, p. 87.)

The EX can be viewed from three perspectives: the employer, the employee, and the interaction. The organization's interaction with the employee affects the employee's experience. It is good for the organization to think about the processes, structures, communication, work tools, and work environment in terms of the employee experience. It is also essential to think about what kind of experiences the interaction between the employer and the employee creates and the feelings, actions, and memories caused by the encounters. In addition to the above, the employee's perspective is influenced by the job and interaction with colleagues, customers, and related stakeholders. (Huhta & Myllytaus, 2021.) In EX, a deeper understanding of a person can be important, such as the person's life stage, personal circumstances, and even personality type (Emmett et al., 2021).

Employee experience varies from organization to organization, and the encounter points are different. Building the employee experience requires research, development, and constant communication to achieve the company's unique employee experience. (Huhta & Myllytaus, 2021, p. 31.) By utilizing design thinking in the design and development of EX, employees can be put in

the center and understand what is important to them and what is not (Emmett et al., 2021).

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, expectations about the nature of work and organization have changed. For example, not all organizations successfully support remote work, and the return to offices causes differing views between the company and the employee. According to a McKinsey study, employees value trust, togetherness, collaboration, learning, growth, and purpose even more. For employees, it is important to have flexibility between the digital and physical environment to find a suitable balance between work and free time. Employees also appreciate if their values and thoughts align with the organization. The study also shows that employees with a positive employee experience are 16 times more committed than those with a negative one. Similarly, staying with the company is eight times more likely when the employee's experience is positive. (Emmett et al., 2021.)

3 Research methods and findings

In the discovery phase, in addition to the literature review, interviews and surveys were used to find out the remote work experience of company X. The research has been carried out as qualitative research but is also a combination of quantitative research. Quantitative research aims to gather an understanding of the research topic based on previous knowledge and make generalizations (Tuulaniemi, 2011). Quantitative research requires asking the right questions, in which case the survey author must already know about the topic to be able to formulate the questions (Kananen, 2017, p. 32). The object of the research is people and their experiences, and remote work as a phenomenon is still young, so qualitative research is well suited to solving research problems. Qualitative research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic based on words and feelings and to create new theories and hypotheses on the topic (Kananen, 2017, p. 33).

The affinity diagram is used to help organize a large amount of data gathered from surveys and interviews. Miro is a platform for grouping data and ideas into relevant groups. Affinity Diagram is a design method used to gather much-fragmented data into an understandable form. After the research, the data can be extensive and collected from many sources. The information is grouped into similar groups. With the help of grouping, a large amount of data becomes comprehensible, making it easier to refine the information. (Interaction Design Foundation, 2022.)

This study examines the remote work experiences of the employees of the commissioning company. The target group is, therefore, employees who work remotely, even one day a week. This way, a versatile understanding of research questions from different personalities is obtained.

As stated, the research used surveys, interviews, and desk research. These methods were used in the study because they support each other well and improve the credibility of the research. The following sections present the

survey and interview studies in more detail.

3.1 Survey

A survey is used for both quantitative and qualitative data collection from individuals. Using a survey, it is possible to collect large amounts of information quickly. In a business context, the goal of data collection is to gain an understanding of concepts, customer segments, and people's attitudes and satisfaction. (Business Research Methodology, n.d.)

The questions were comprehensively prepared based on the desk research. The survey was used to get answers from a large group of people, so most of the questions were closed questions. In closed questions, the researcher has already set the answer options, from which the respondent must choose the most suitable option. The advantage is that a large amount of data is already categorized before being collected, which reduces the analysis time. (Best, 2012, p. 79.)

In quantitative research, data is described numerically, and often, the dependencies between different things or the changes that have occurred in the investigated phenomenon are also investigated. With the help of quantitative numerical data, it is usually possible to find out the existing situation, but it is not possible to sufficiently find out the causes of things. (Heikkilä, 2014.) However, the research problem also requires a deeper understanding of the subject, so some survey questions were open questions. Qualitative research is often limited to a smaller number of subjects if compared to quantitative research. Qualitative research helps to understand the research object more deeply—the reasons for its behavior and decisions. So, the goal is understanding instead of quantities. (Heikkilä, 2014.)

The survey platform generated visual bar graphs of numerical results. By looking at these, conclusions could be made about the results. Numerical data was also examined based on Kendall-tau correlation analysis (Appendix 3). The

correlation analysis examined whether some of the results of the questions correlated with each other. The affinity diagram method was used to analyze the data of open questions. All the answers were transferred to the Miro application on digital Post-it notes, which were used to group the responses into meaningful entities.

The survey was divided into five sections: general, motivation, well-being and self-management, communication, and environment. The survey consisted of 31 questions, of which 10 were open questions. 21 were closed questions, and the answer choices varied depending on the question. All closed questions were mandatory so that the response rate was the same in all of them and they could be analyzed reliably. Figure 4 shows the questions and type of answers in more detail. Figure 6 shows the summary answers.

Survey questions			
Topic	Question	Answer quantity	Type of answer
General	Which community do you belong to?	149	Selection based on location
	I have work tasks that require leading people	149	Yes / No
	How much did you work remotely before Covid-19?	149	1-10 (0-100%)
	How much do you do remote work these days?	149	1-10 (0-100%)
	Do you need clearer instructions for working remotely?	149	Yes / No
Motivation	What are the reasons you work remotely?	147	Open
	How does remote work affect your work motivation?	141	Open
	What do you like the most about working remotely?	143	Open
	What do you like the least about working remotely?	145	Open
	Are you struggling with anything regarding remote work?	120	Open
Well-being & Self-management	When working remotely, it is easy to turn on work mode at the beginning of the day?	149	1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
	When working remotely, it is easy to turn off work mode at the end of the day?	149	1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
	I feel more productive when working remotely	149	1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
	I feel that my working days get longer due to remote work	149	1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
	I regularly take breaks when working remotely	149	Yes / No
	I feel like I do not walk during the day as much when remote working	149	1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
	I feel that camaraderie has decreased with remote work	149	1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
	I feel like an outsider in my organization	149	1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
	I feel lonely when I work remotely	149	1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
I feel that I am committed to the company	149	1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)	
Communication	Who do you connect with most often when working remotely?	149	Multiple selection
	I feel that I get enough interaction with people when I work remotely	149	1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
	I feel it is easy to reach my colleagues when I need them when working remotely	149	1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
	I feel it is easy to reach my supervisor when I need help/support when working remotely	149	1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
	Has the number of meeting increased when remote work has increased?	149	Yes / No
	I feel that our meetings are remote-friendly	149	1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
Environment	What would make our meetings more remote-friendly?	93	Open
	Do the working spaces in the office support your needs?	136	Open
	Is there anything that would increase the desire to visit the office more?	127	Open
	Is the ergonomics of your home office ideal in terms of work ability?	146	Open
	In general, what are your suggestions on what could be done differently or improved right now?	86	Open

Figure 4. Summary of survey questions, answer quantity and type.

The survey was implemented using Google Forms. The link was sent to the commissioner's internal Slack channel, where the entire company's staff (+700 employees) can be reached. All employees who work remotely occasionally or full-time were asked to answer the survey. The survey was completely anonymous, and the questions were formed so no one could be led based on the answers. GDPR-related issues were announced in the accompanying message. The raw survey data was stored in the company's Google environment, to which only the survey author had access. The raw data is stored until the final work is completed. The survey was open from March 22 to April 9, 2023. The survey achieved 149 responses. Therefore, the number of respondents was about 20 percent of the employees. There is no exact data on how many employees work remotely. However, the number of respondents was large enough that the research gained a reliable basis and material for further measures.

General questions

The general questions included background questions about the respondent, such as which community (location) the respondent works in and whether the duties include leading people. With the help of these, the purpose was to investigate whether there is a difference in remote work experience in different communities. It also studied whether there is a difference in the remote work experience of employees who perform leadership tasks compared to those who do not lead people. General questions related to a single person were kept to a minimum to maintain anonymity.

Responses came from all communities. The three largest communities naturally received the most responses, about 70% of all responses. About 65% of the respondents stated that their work does not include managing people, and about 35% answered that it includes managing people. According to the correlation analyses, community, management work, or the amount of remote work did not affect the factors in the remote worker experience.

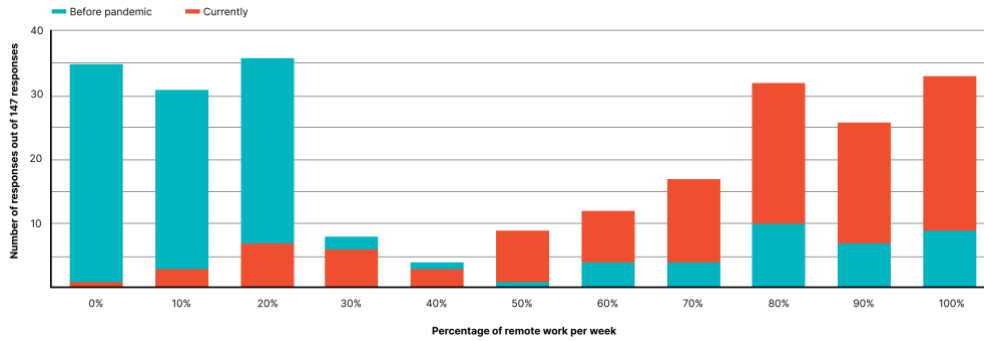


Figure 5. Amount of remote work before and after a pandemic.

The general questions also asked how much the respondents did remote work before the pandemic and how much they do now. Based on the answers, the change is huge. In Figure 5, blue shows how much the respondents worked remotely before the pandemic, and red shows the situation among the respondents in April 2023. Before the pandemic, 68% of respondents worked remotely only 0-20% of the week. Whereas nowadays, 61% of the respondents work remotely 80-100% of the week. 86.5% of respondents currently work remotely half the week or more.

The last general question was whether the respondent needed clearer instructions for remote work. Based on the question, the result was clear. This can be seen as a positive thing, as only one respondent answered yes, so the employees feel there is no need for instructions to do remote work. On the other hand, the respondents may have thought that the instructions would limit their freedom to work remotely, so they do not want more instructions.

Survey findings summary		
Question	Findings summary	
Motivation	What are the reasons you work remotely?	Flexibility, commuting, focus, people, productivity
	How does remote work affect your work motivation?	Mostly neutral, but for some it is boosting it, more energy, better work-life balance, and efficiency. To some negatively like lower energy, distractions and less interaction
	What do you like the most about working remotely?	Freedom, time saving, peace, ergonomics, efficiency
	What do you like the least about working remotely?	Lack of human interaction, loneliness
	Are you struggling with anything regarding remote work?	Some are struggling with ergonomics, breaks, lack of interactions, length of workday
Well-being & Self-management	When working remotely, it is easy to turn on work mode at the beginning of the day?	Over 80% agrees that it is easy to turn on work mode at the beginning of the day
	When working remotely, it is easy to turn off work mode at the end of the day?	25.5% disagrees that it is easy to turn off work mode at the end of the day
	I feel more productive when working remotely	66.5% feel more productive when working remotely
	I feel that my working days get longer due to remote work	31% feels that working days get longer when working remotely
	I regularly take breaks when working remotely	Yes 59.7% / No 40.3%
	I feel like I do not walk during the day as much when remote working	60.4% feel that there is less movement on remote work days
	I feel that camaraderie has decreased with remote work	62.5% feel that camaraderie has decreased with remote work
	I feel like an outsider in my organization	24.2% feel like an outsider
	I feel lonely when I work remotely	29.5% feel lonely when working remotely
	I feel that I am committed to the company	Only 10% feel not committed to the company
Communication	Who do you connect with most often when working remotely?	Project members, customer, family, friends
	I feel that I get enough interaction with people when I work remotely	34.9% feel that they do not get enough interaction when working remotely
	I feel it is easy to reach my colleagues when I need them when working remotely	75 % feel that it is easy to reach colleagues and 12.8% disagrees
	I feel it is easy to reach my supervisor when I need help/support when working remotely	80% feel that it is easy to reach supervisors
	Has the number of meeting increased when remote work has increased?	Yes 43.6% / No 56.4%
	I feel that our meetings are remote-friendly	83%% feel that meetings are remote-friendly
Environment	What would make our meetings more remote-friendly?	Cameras on and professional planning and usage of online tools
	Do the working spaces in the office support your needs?	70% feel that working spaces in the office supports their needs. Some respondents hope more meeting rooms and better ergonomics
	Is there anything that would increase the desire to visit the office more?	More people, private spaces, food, beverages, activities, better location
	Is the ergonomics of your home office ideal in terms of work ability?	70% have good ergonomics at home, but the rest answered that it could be better

Figure 6. Survey findings summary.

Motivation

Based on the open answers to the survey, flexibility is the most significant factor in why remote work is done. Flexibility and freedom refer to an easier reconciliation of private and work life. Based on the answers, flexibility is also strongly connected to commuting. Commuting is the second most significant factor. When the commute is eliminated, it helps many balance work and life because time is not spent commuting. Many have more time for family and leisure activities, can sleep longer, and have more time for work. Time-saving is also seen as an increase in productivity. Some also feel that they save money and the environment when they leave out commuting.

Many also work remotely because they can focus on work better. Many respondents find it easier to concentrate at home when there are no distractions, like in offices, and can better influence the work environment. For people who have a lot of online meetings, it seems more accessible and more

reasonable to work at home because offices have a limited number of meeting rooms and distractions in open office areas. For many, the nature of the projects is also such that the team and clients are spread over several locations or different countries, so in any case, the meetings are held online. In this case, many feel it is pointless to go to the office and sit alone in an online meeting.

Remote work affects motivation both positively and negatively. Some feel that remote work increases motivation because flexibility makes life easier and increases energy. Increasing focus and efficiency is also perceived as a factor that increases motivation. For some employees, remote work increases commitment to the employer.

The most significant factor that has a negative effect on motivation in remote work is little human contact. From the answers of about 90 people, it became clear that the lack of human contact and related issues negatively affect work motivation in remote work. Many experience less community and lack of support and discussions. These factors also lead to feelings of loneliness. Also, disconnecting from work is more challenging for some in remote work, and not everyone can work at home in peace or with good ergonomics.

Well-being and self-management

The first questions related to well-being and self-management were related to the work mode and the length of the working day. Based on the answers, remote working is easier to start than to stop. Over 80% agree that turning on work mode at the beginning of the day is easy. In contrast, 55% agree that turning off work mode at the end of the day is easy. However, 25.5% find it challenging to end work mode. Also, 31% of the respondents feel that working days get longer when working remotely. Based on correlation analyses, there is a correlation between turning off work mode at the end of the day and turning on work mode at the beginning. The easier employees find it to turn off work mode at the end of the day, the easier they find it to start the next day.

Over 66% feel more productive when working remotely, and 25.5% answered neither agree nor disagree. Based on correlation analyses, the feeling of

productivity is also connected to other factors. Like, the greater the feeling of turning on work mode at the beginning of the day, the more productive workers feel when working remotely. Also, the more interaction employees get and the easier they feel to reach their colleagues, the more productive they feel when working remotely.

Almost 60% take regular breaks when working remotely, but the remaining 40% feel they do not. According to the open-ended answers to the survey, the reasons for taking little breaks from work are busy working days and the fact that there are no natural breaks from conversations with colleagues and shared breaks. Also, over 60% of the respondents feel they have less movement on remote work days. According to the open answers, the reason for less movement is that remote work does not have everyday commuting, lunch, and break transitions. Walking easily remains small for people with no hobbies in their free time.

As stated in the motivation section, lack of human contact is perceived as challenging in remote work. This is also evident based on closed questions. Over 62% feel that camaraderie has decreased with remote work. 24% of the respondents feel like outsiders in the organization, and almost 30% feel loneliness when working remotely. Based on correlation analyses, loneliness correlated with several other factors. There was a very significant correlation between loneliness and the feeling of getting enough interaction, which means that the feeling of loneliness is more significant when the interactions with colleagues are reduced. In addition, loneliness correlates with the amount of movement, camaraderie, and feeling of being an outsider. When loneliness increases, employees feel that they move less, the feeling of camaraderie decreases, and the feeling of being outside increases. Also, productivity increases when the feeling of loneliness decreases.

Communication

Based on the survey, the most significant part of communication during remote work is in projects (84%), and the second largest is with customers (64%). Being in contact with family is also common during remote work (49%). In remote work, little is communicated about things not related to work. For example, free-form conversations with colleagues are less than 30%.

Many employees do not feel that they get enough interaction while working remotely. About 35% feel that they do not get enough interaction, and almost 19% answered neither agree nor disagree. However, most find it easy to reach colleagues (75%) and supervisors (80%) when needed.

Remote work often requires meetings to communicate, and some stated in the open answers that work is just consecutive meetings nowadays. Almost 44% feel that the number of meetings has increased when remote work has increased. It is very positive that the employees feel that online meetings are remote-friendly, so remote meetings do not burden them too much.

However, based on the survey's open answers, there is something to develop in remote meetings. The consistent use of cameras by all meeting participants is seen as important, as it fosters a sense of engagement and connection. Furthermore, effective remote meetings hinge upon meticulous planning and adept utilization of digital tools such as Figma and Miro, enabling seamless collaboration and visual communication. Hybrid meetings are the most difficult to manage and require special attention to engage remote participants to prevent feelings of neglect. It is also important that the recordings and materials of the meetings are remembered to be shared so that the key insights remain and are available to everyone.

3.2 Interview

The interview is one of the most used qualitative research methods in the human-centered design process. The interview is a conversation between

people where one asks questions and the other provides answers. The advantage of an interview is that the interviewer has direct control over the process and the opportunity to refine the questions. It can be held in structured, unstructured, and semi-structured formats. The difference is that structured interviews have pre-determined questions, and unstructured interviews have no prepared questions. Semi-structured is a mix of them. (Business Research Methodology, n.d.)

The content analysis method was used to analyze the data collected from the interviews. Data analysis proceeds in three stages. First, the material is reduced so that what is irrelevant to the research is eliminated. Next, the material is grouped and combined into different categories and subcategories, which are named descriptively. The third step is abstraction, where the information needed for the research is separated, and abstracts and conclusions are formed. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018.)

Semi-structured interviews (Figure 7) were conducted with 11 people willing to participate in the study. Those willing to be interviewed were asked via the company's hybrid work Slack channel and by the author directly from suitable people. The interviews were conducted remotely on Google Meet from April 11 to May 4, 2023, and the interviews were recorded. The interviewer acted as the author, asked everyone the same questions, and continued with follow-up questions when necessary. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed. Only the interviewer had access to the recordings and transcription. The videos were deleted within a week of the interview. In the interview, anonymity was emphasized so that no responses could be attributed to the interviewed person. It was also the interviewer's responsibility to anonymize the responses as needed so that they could be analyzed using the content analysis and affinity diagram method in the Miro application. Due to the high level of anonymity, the background information of the interviewees is not shared in this study. The interviews gathered deeper information on the same subject areas as in the survey, with the help of which the survey results can be confirmed and used to support the creation of personas and experience maps.

The interview questions were:

Interview questions	
Topic	Question
General	Which regional and professional community do you belong to? How long have you been working at Company X?
Earlier experience	Did you work remotely before the pandemic, and how much? Why and in what situations did you work remotely before the pandemic?
Present & Motivation	How much do you work these days remotely? Describe what kind of remote work culture/practices Company X has Why do you work remotely, and what is the best thing about it? Are there any downsides to working remotely?
Well-being & Self-management	Is it easy to recognise when to go to the office and when to work remotely? Does remote work affect the implementation of tasks in any way? Has remote working affected commitment to the company? Can you keep work and free time separate? How do you take care of your well-being when you work remotely? Do you ever feel lonely when you work remotely?
Communication	Who do you communicate with the most when you work remotely? Is communication sufficient when you work remotely? Do you have different practices in different teams for remote communication? Have you identified situations at which point in the team it would be good to have f-2-f?
Office	What kind of office serves your needs, and are there any attraction factors?

Figure 7. Interview Questions.

General questions

The interviewees were from six different communities. In addition to Finland, participants were from Sweden and Poland. Seven interviewees started working at the company during the pandemic, and four have worked for several years. This study reports only a few detailed background information about the individual interviewees.

Half of the interviewees had not done much remote work (maximum one day a week) before the pandemic. For five persons, the reason was that the previous workplace did not allow remote work more than one day per week. They used the opportunity to work remotely if they needed to focus or for family reasons. Remote work was allowed for two people before the pandemic, but they worked remotely at most one day a week. They liked to work in the office, but about one day a week, they worked remotely for concentration or time management.

The other half of the interviewees had worked remotely for more than 50-100% of their working time before the pandemic. For them, working remotely was

normal even before the pandemic. All of them had time management as a reason for working remotely, which was strongly related to not having to spend time commuting. The nature of the projects was also another reason.

The number of remote work days among the participants has increased compared to before the pandemic. Persons who did a maximum of one day a week of remote work before the pandemic now do 60-80% remote work. For people who have mostly worked remotely even before the pandemic, their remote days remained the same.

“Remote work is a supported self-service that has to be learned and is born from the employee's point of view. The company enables a lot, but the person has to build it himself.” – Participant 2

According to the participants, the company's remote work culture and practices have formed themselves over the years on behalf of the employees. Remote work practices have not been directly formed on behalf of the company. However, the company supports freedom and enables smooth remote working with the help of technology. Of course, the pandemic also significantly impacted the increase in remote work when everyone had to do full-time remote work. Almost everyone mentioned that they value the freedom to choose their working method.

Reasons for remote work

Among those who participated in the interviews, flexibility is a clear, unified reason and motivation factor for remote work. For everyone, it meant at least that they did not have to spend time commuting. It is made possible by the flexibility enabled by the company. For two persons with a full-time remote work contract, it is natural that the main reason for doing remote work is commuting because they live far from the offices. For people with a family, hectic family life becomes more manageable when days can be planned more flexibly. A few also see the time savings brought by flexibility as making their working days more efficient because time is not spent commuting.

“Remote work makes my life easier because I can do a work day during normal working hours and pick up the children from kindergarten. In the past, I have had

to work in the evenings because commuting has taken up almost 2 hours of the day. I feel that these have a positive effect on my well-being.” – Participant 1

The project team is in different locations for many employees, so most meetings are always remote. Half of the participants mentioned the number of online meetings as one of the reasons for remote work. Working remotely seems more reasonable to them when the days are filled with online meetings. A few also feel that focus is better at home than at the office in an open space. At the same time, a few also brought up the purpose of the office. For them, the purpose of going to the office is to see people and socialize. If this need is unmet, working in the office seems pointless.

“The idea of coming to the office is to see people. If you come to the office and sit alone in a phone booth, the point is lost there.” – Participant 4

Participants who did not work remotely before the pandemic recognize that remote work has become a habit during the pandemic, which is difficult to change, especially when remote work has many positive aspects. Almost all participants feel it is very important that the company accepts and enables remote work. They feel that they are trusted, which adds a sense of commitment. For some, the freedom to decide where to work is so vital that they could think about changing jobs if working in an office became mandatory.

Well-being and self-management

Remote workers take care of their well-being differently, but movement comes up most often when discussing well-being. Almost everyone emphasizes the importance of movement during the working day and in free time. For some, when working at home, movement during working hours is minimal, but the flexibility of remote work gives more time for leisure activities. The company also enables movement in different hobby groups, which is an excellent way to encourage the staff to move. On the other hand, some take advantage of the flexible working time so that they run during the workday, for example. One participant has an exercise bike at home, which can be pedaled during meetings. Also, the company provides a bicycle benefit, which some use for commuting and leisure time exercise.

“I try to go to the gym and play ball games so I can see my friends and not be at home all day because it gets boring.” – Participant 9

“In my free time, I cycle and actually use the bicycle benefit. I also have an exercise bike at home that I use during meetings if I do not have to be presenting or doing something on the computer.” – Participant 5

Remote work requires self-management skills so that work can be done successfully and well-being remains good. Many feel self-management skills are needed to balance work time with free time and take a break from work. Almost all participants feel that they can keep their working hours under control most of the time. However, the couple feels it is easier to work outside of regular working hours in remote work, and Slack is also easy to follow in the evening. It is more challenging for one participant to keep the rhythm during the dark season, especially in winter.

“Over the years, I have gotten used to mixing work and free time. For example, I might do a workout in the middle of the day and continue working. I also work in the evenings, but it has never bothered me.” – Participant 6

“Remote work seems much more exhausting, so longer days will not be done. However, if you are bored, you might do some jobs here and there.” – Participant 8

“Before there were problems to balance, but now I have a clear border between work and free time” – Participant 10

Taking a break from work is more difficult for many than balancing working hours and free time. When discussing well-being, more than half mentioned that taking a break from work is more difficult when working remotely. The reason is that taking breaks is forgotten because there are no agreed break times or other people asking for a break. However, some have created a suitable break schedule for themselves. To help, one uses the Pomodoro application, and a few have set break times in the calendar. Everyone's work tasks and days are so different that finding a style of taking breaks that suits you is crucial.

“I have noticed that it is easy to forget to take breaks. That is why I have been using the Pomodoro app. 25 min work and 5 min break.” – Participant 3

The company offers home office supplies to people who have a full-time remote work contract because they do not have the opportunity to visit the office. These

people greatly appreciate this because it makes remote work easy, and the ergonomics are in order. Many people without a full-time remote work contract also have good ergonomics in their home office. They have invested in it because of their well-being. Some feel that they need better ergonomics in their home office. The reason is that there is no space, you have not invested in ergonomics, or you are just used to working from a sofa, for example.

Communication and community

In remote work, communication mainly occurs via Slack, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams. Most communication is with the project team and the customer; that is how it should be because it is part of the job description. Many feel that communication is sufficient and effective at the project and customer level. However, in remote work, many commented that communication is almost exclusively related to work tasks. There are fewer unplanned (ad-hoc) and informal conversations during remote work compared to office work.

“In projects, communication is good and sufficient, but communication feels more like information transfer. There is very little joking and free conversation on remote working days.” – Participant 3

The company offers good platforms for communication, and for a few people who have been working remotely for a long time, remote communication is very natural and functional. However, they also see benefits in face-to-face communication, for example, when getting to know a new colleague or team at the beginning of a project. Almost everyone commented that it would be good to meet face-to-face at the beginning of the project. It helps remote communication because then you feel like you know the person better and his/her behavior and know better how to communicate with them.

“I see that face-to-face communication is beneficial at the beginning of the project. In my opinion, then we talk more openly when we get to know each other.” – Participant 10

A few find it particularly important to get to know people face to face, especially when there are changes in the company and most employees work remotely. Communicating with a "stranger" adds a sense of uncertainty to communicating

at a distance when a person does not know how the other party behaves. For example, you do not know when sending messages or meeting invitations is okay and how long it takes to get a response. The number of misunderstandings may increase. Also, some feel that remote communication is easily declarative and more easily negative in tone. It requires many people to learn how to communicate remotely.

“Everyone's calendars are full nowadays, and then I need to think about when it is okay to contact people. Everyone does not like if writes a lot of messages.” – Participant 1

“Online communication involves the possibility of misunderstandings because of motionlessness and lack of expressions.” – participant 2

Many respondents miss interacting with their colleagues, but the need for interaction is very individual. Some want to see certain people or project members, some want to talk about things outside of work, and others want to talk about work-related things. For some, face-to-face communication in work life is not essential regarding socialization.

“I went to the office earlier because there was a nice group of people. We went to lunch and were able to handle things more easily. Now, you do not know who is there, so the same reason is no longer valid, and there are no relevant people.” – Participant 8

“I personally have a social focus on family and friends, so there is no need to get those contacts through work.” – Participant 6

Some think remote work reduces the feeling of belonging together, which was previously an essential part of the company. Feelings of loneliness have also been experienced because social interaction has decreased. The feeling of loneliness has also been experienced in remote work because it is easier to be left alone with work tasks when the threshold for asking for help increases.

3.3 SWOT

SWOT analysis stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The analysis was developed in the 1960s, and since then, it has been one of the most popular strategy tools. SWOT is an analysis tool that compares a

company's strengths and weaknesses with the threats and opportunities created by the competitive environment. (Vuorinen & Huikkola, 2023, p. 97.)

Strengths (S) are internal attributes and resources that give an organization a competitive advantage. The company should make good use of them and strengthen them. **Weaknesses** (W) represent internal factors that prevent an organization's performance. The company should strive to eliminate, mitigate, or avoid these factors. **Opportunities** (O) are external factors in the business environment with which the organization can benefit. The company must think about how to utilize these factors. **Threats** (T) are external factors that can negatively impact the organization. The company should, therefore, think about how to remove, mitigate, or turn these factors into opportunities. The SWOT analysis goal is to create a clear overall picture supporting the strategy. Analysis requires research to do well because if the organization and its operations are not well understood, the analysis cannot be successful either. (Vuorinen & Huikkola, 2023, pp 98-100.)

This work uses SWOT analysis (Figure 8) to analyze the research results. The analysis focuses on the employee's point of view on the remote work experience by listing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of remote work. These factors affect the employee experience, which is connected to the organization's success.

- S: What strengths does remote work bring to the remote worker?
- W: What weaknesses does remote work bring to the remote worker?
- O: What opportunities can an employee benefit from working remotely when the remote work experience is invested?
- T: What are the threats to remote workers if no investment is made in the remote employee's experience?

<p style="text-align: center;">Strenghts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility • Time saving from commuting • Better focus • A sense of higher productivity • Better work-life balance • The work environment can be influenced 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sense of community • A decrease in the sense of camaraderie • Less interaction and communication • Little movement during the working day • Taking a break from work is more difficult
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilization of technology • Learning how to use online meeting and collaboration tools • Improve the employee experience • Improve well-being • Development of self-management skills • Keep talent in the company 	<p style="text-align: center;">Treaths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing feelings of loneliness • Increasing feelings of outsider • Too many meetings • Length of working day • Poor ergonomics

Figure 8. SWOT analysis.

Based on the research, the strengths of remote work were flexibility, time-saving, concentration, efficiency, work-life balance, and influencing the work environment. These factors motivate remote working, and the company should maintain these to ensure the remote working experience.

Weaknesses were a low sense of community, camaraderie, interaction, communication, movement, and taking breaks from work. These factors have a negative effect on the remote worker's sociality, work, and well-being. The organization should reduce or eliminate their effects to improve the work experience.

The opportunities were utilizing technology and tools, developing work experience and well-being, developing self-management skills, and commitment to the workplace. Remote work requires technology and self-management skills. With remote work, employees are forced to learn how to use them, which is also helpful in customer and office work. Remote work improves some employees' experience, well-being, and commitment to the company, which helps professionals stay in the company.

The threats are increased loneliness, outsiders, meetings, the length of the working day, and poor ergonomics. These factors have increased alarmingly in remote work, which is already affecting some employees' well-being and work performance. Solutions should be found for these factors so that the problems do not increase.

3.4 Personas

Personas represent a fictional person's story that reflects a group of people with shared interests and behavior patterns. The Persona is based on research but, in some cases, assumptions. It highlights the target groups important to the service and their behavior. (Stickdorn et al, 2018.)

In the project, personas are created based on research and analyzed data. Employee personas created in the employee experience project workshop in April 2023 have also been used as help. Remote employee personas represent a group of remote employees with similar characteristics, needs, and behaviors. They are used to help understand the motivations and needs of different employees in the following stages of the project and future development.

Based on the research, four Personas were created:

Figure 9 shows the first Persona, the **Experienced remoter named Mika**. Remote work comes naturally to this person, who is motivated by productivity and concentration. Office work does not bring any value, and socializing during work is unimportant because socializing outside work is more important to Mika.

Figure 10 shows the second Persona, the **Fully remote contract Michelle**. Engaged under a remote work contract, Michelle lacks a local office presence. Remote working is very smooth for this person, but the challenges are related to the work community, such as low communication and weak community spirit.

Figure 11 shows the third Persona, the **Hybrid worker Samppa**. Embracing the flexibility of remote work, Samppa engages in remote work for a few days each week. The option to have remote days holds significance for him. However, socializing is so important that working remotely for long periods of time is not pleasant. Samppa's challenges in remote work are especially communication and ergonomics.

Figure 12 shows the fourth Persona, which is the **New remoter Saara**. This person does a lot of remote work, even though office work was daily before the pandemic. Eliminating commuting and deciding on schedules is important. On the other hand, Saara misses the office because of the people, but remote work has become a habit that is difficult to change. The challenges are a reduced sense of community and a feeling of being outside and alone.

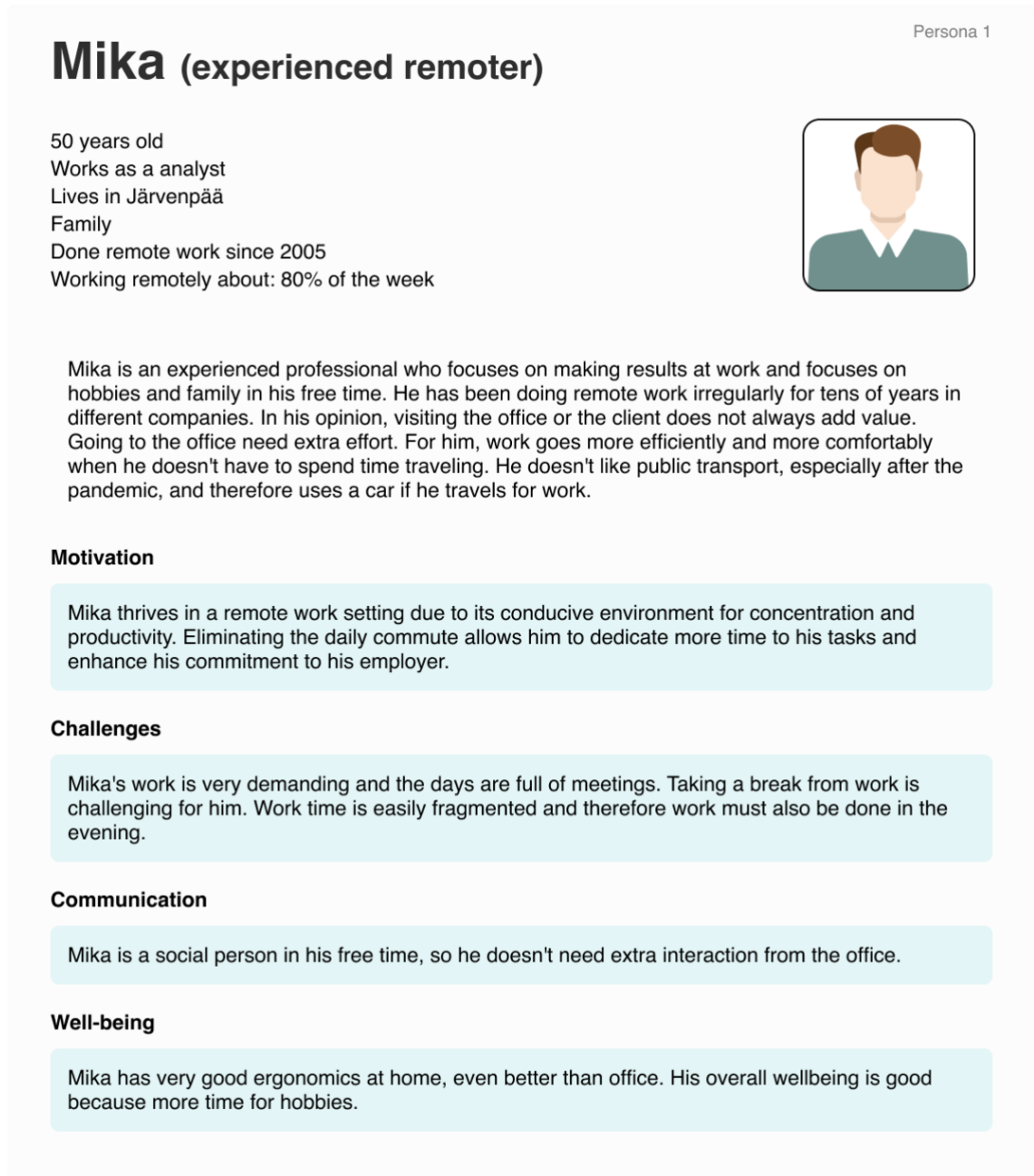


Figure 9. Persona 1. Experienced remoter Mika.

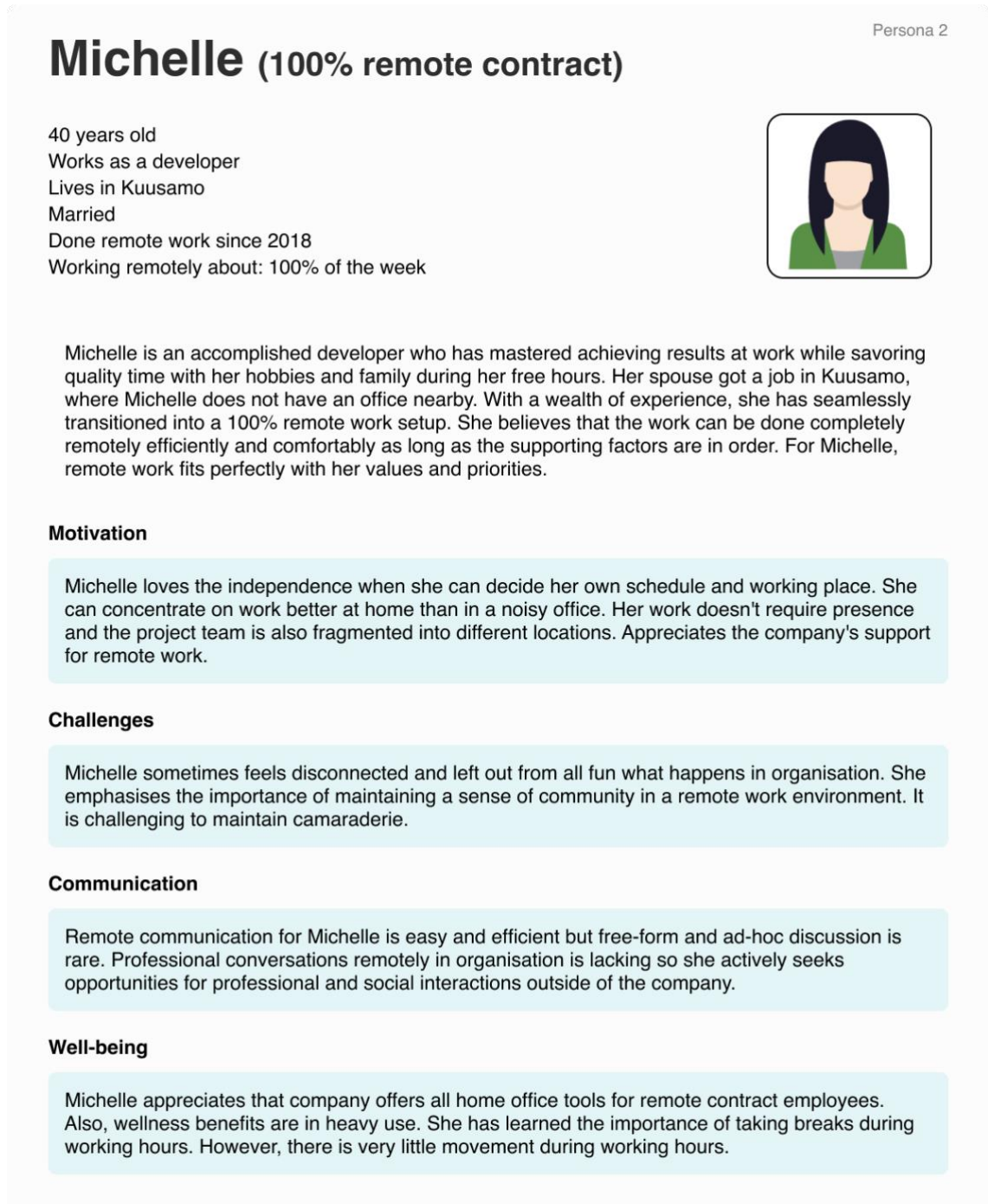


Figure 10. Persona 2. Fully remote contract Michelle.

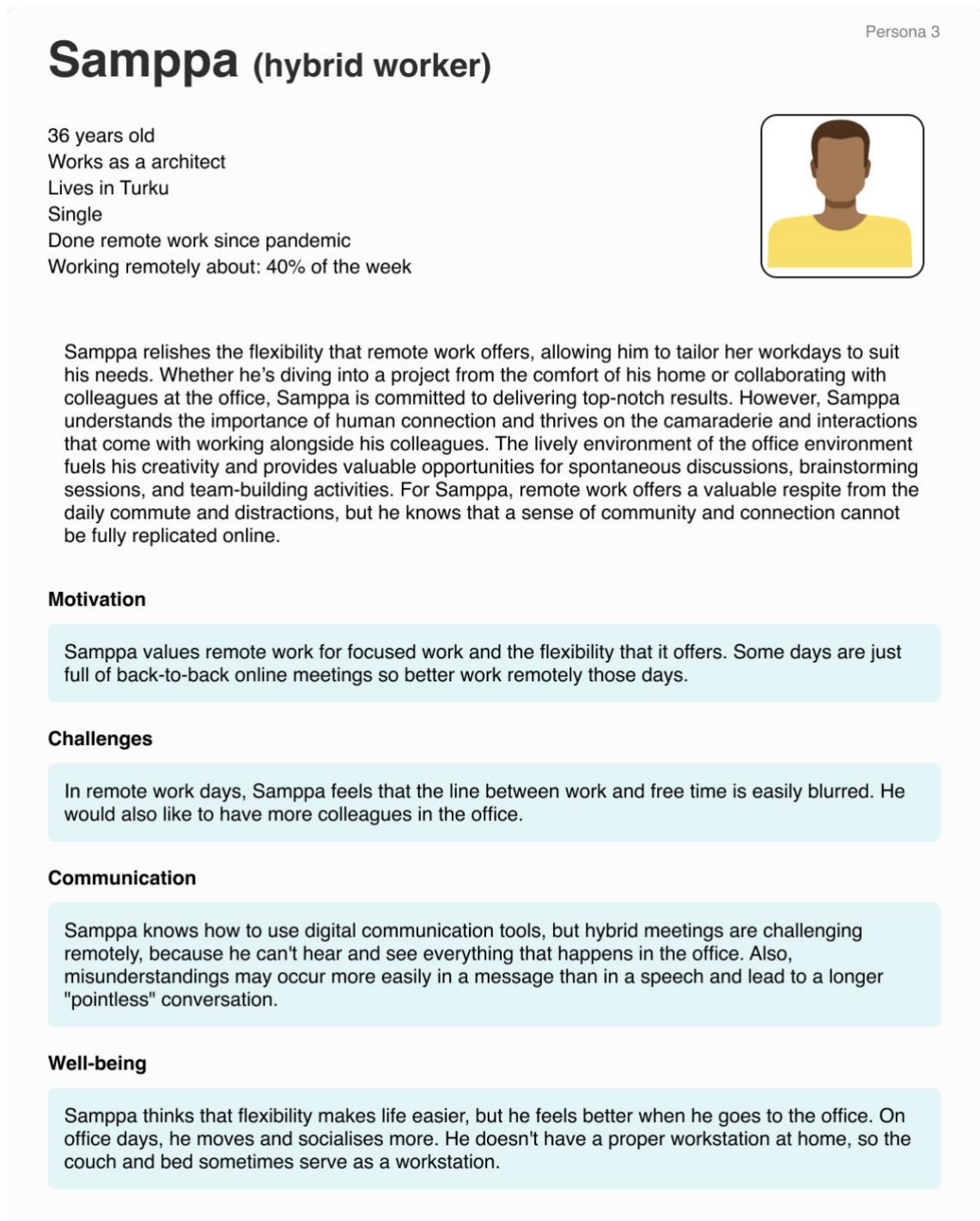


Figure 11. Persona 3. Hybrid worker Samppa.

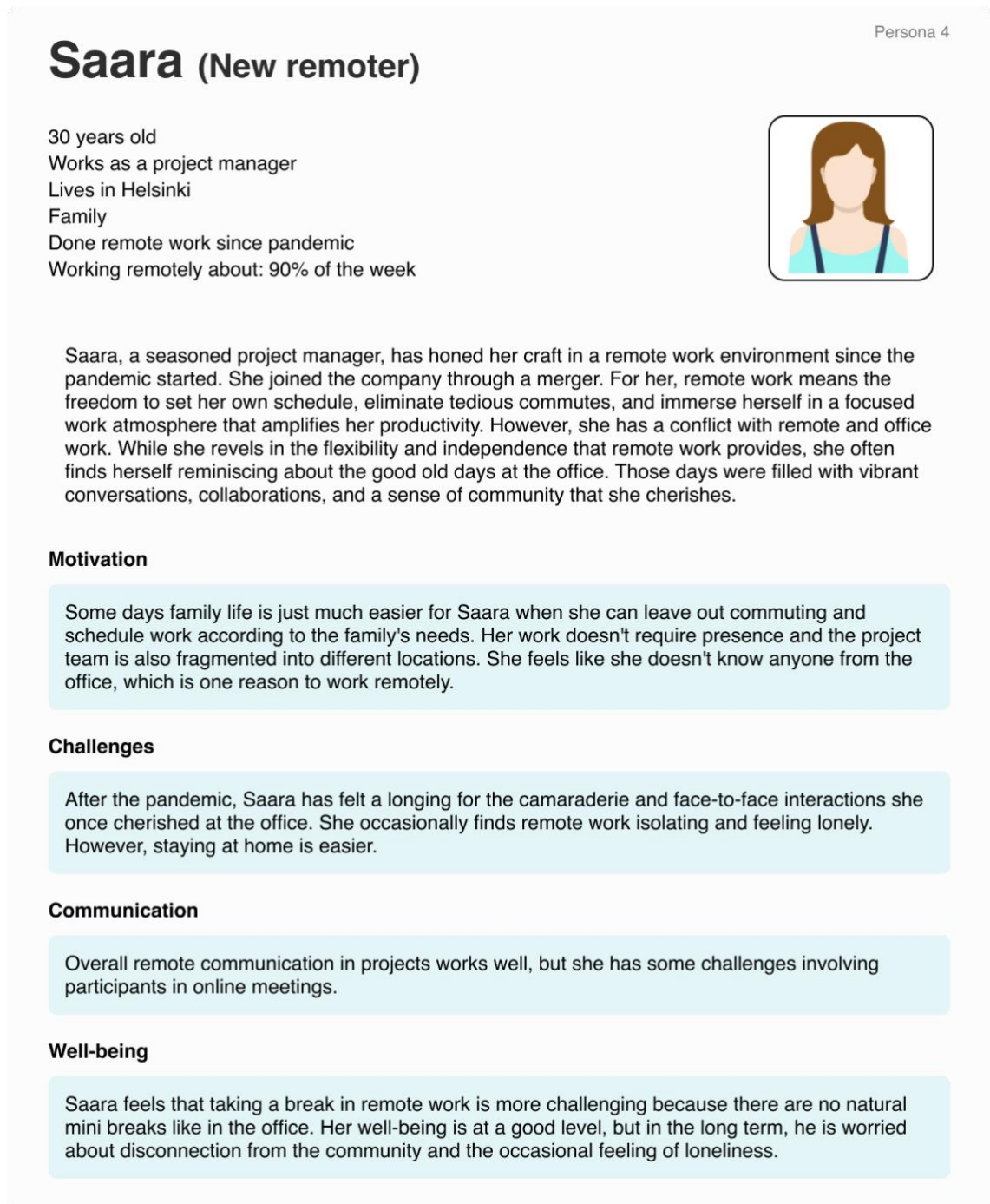


Figure 12. Persona 4. New remoter Saara.

3.5 Remote employee experience map

The Employee Journey Map is a visualization of the employee experience. It follows the experience of Personas step-by-step, from hire to exit. The journey contains, for example, the following steps: hiring, onboarding, development, progression, and offboarding. Employees' actions, development targets, and opportunities are mapped at each stage based on employee experience studies. (Harvard Business School, 2022.)

The remote employee experience maps (Figures 13-16) have been modified from the employee journey map and made suitable for this study. The study did not examine the traditional employee path from hiring to offboarding. Here, the focus was more generally on remote employee experience. That is why the employee's experiences are presented in the map through the social, work, and well-being areas. A remote employee experience map identifies feelings, motivations, pain points, and opportunities in remote work. The purpose is to create a visually easy-to-understand map based on the different remote employee personas identified in the research. With these, teams and managers can plan a remote work experience based on different personalities.

Experience Map

“Experienced remoter” Mika

Experience	Social	Work	Well-being
Feels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy that the company supports remote work. Wouldn't work in a company where that's not possible. • Activities must bring added value. Don't always get added value from visiting the office. 		
Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets enough social interaction in free time • More time for family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better productivity • Better commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No commuting • More leisure time activities • Better ergonomics at home
Pain points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many colleagues remain distant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearer model for hybrid meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harder to turn-off the working mode
Solutions / Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise meetings that add value professionally and socially 		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make clear instructions for hybrid meetings and invest in office equipment so that even remote participation is effective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support staying in working hours

Figure 13. Experience map for experienced remoter Mika.

Experience Map

“100% remote contract” Michelle

Experience	Social	Work	Well-being
Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She feels that the fully remote community is still under development. Could be better connected with the rest of the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Happy with the fully remote work option and the home office equipment provided by the company 	
Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She believes that the social side can also work in remote work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independence and can decide where to work Good tools offered by company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No office near by so fully remote is only option Good ergonomics in the home office
Pain points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feels disconnected and left out from all what happens in the offices No community feeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No ad-hoc conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Movement during the work day
Solutions / Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop fully remote community and ways to involve fully remote workers in the rest of the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables hiring from places other than the vicinity of the offices. Support teams and individuals in remote communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase understanding of the importance of movement and ways to increase it in remote work

Figure 14. Experience map for fully remote contract Michelle.

Experience Map

“Hybrid worker” Samppa

Experience	Social	Work	Well-being
Feels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He feels that a couple of days a week is enough so that his sociability does not suffer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciates the possibility of remote work, but feels the challenges of remote work are greater than the benefits it brings. 	
Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get enough social interaction from the office days so couple days of remote work does not affect • Not many colleagues in the office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused work • Back-to-back meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility
Pain points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less interaction and discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hybrid meetings are challenging (voice, visuals and misunderstandings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line between work and free time • Less moving • Worse ergonomics
Solutions / Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support teams and individuals in remote communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach employees to use online meeting platforms, collaboration applications, office tools and communication • Explore opportunities to reduce the number of meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help draw the line between work and free time in remote work • Increase understanding of ergonomics and the importance of movement and ways to increase it in remote work

Figure 15. Experience map for hybrid worker Samppa.

Experience Map			
"New remoter" Saara			
Experience	Social	Work	Well-being
Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not satisfied with the social aspect of remote work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed feelings, because remote work has good and bad sides. The desire to find a balance between remote and office work. 	
Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She feels like she doesn't know anyone from the office, which is why she prefers to work remotely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remote work has become a habit and project team is elsewhere anyway Focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No commuting Saving money
Pain points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Camaraderie has decreased Feelings of outsider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only project related communication involving participants in online meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feelings of loneliness Breaks
Solutions / Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find ways to improve communication during remote work and enable meaningful meetings and interactions both remotely and in offices. Recognise feelings of loneliness and outsidersness and offer channels to discuss them. Find ways to overcome these challenges together with the team or the team leader, as these can have an impact not only on well-being but also on work efficiency. 		

Figure 16. Experience map for new remoter Saara.

3.6 Reliability and validity

The research has been carried out as a qualitative study. As part of the survey research, there was also quantitative research. The research process has followed the planned steps. Various data types and analysis methods have been used in the study. The methods used are well-suited to the research problem and the contents of the material. The content and results of the material correspond to the research problems. Research and analysis methods and results supported each other well, so reliability and validity have been achieved. It should be noted that the subject of the research is people's experiences. Experiences vary over time.

4 Delivery of insights

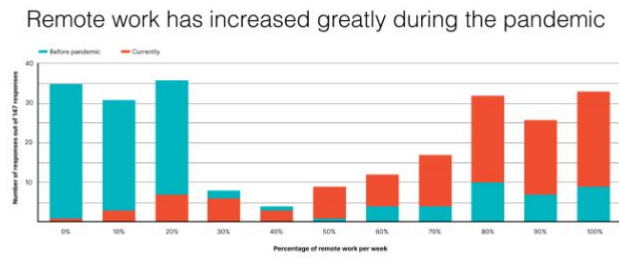
This study gathered information using research methods and service design methods about the motivations of remote workers and how remote work affects their employee experience. This chapter reviews the key findings of the interviews, survey, and reflection on Desk research. Based on the results, recommendations are created to improve the remote employee experience at company X.

4.1 Key findings

The research topic of the thesis was the motivations and effects of remote work. The research used literature and previous studies to highlight the findings of other researchers and companies on remote work. This information was used to increase awareness of remote work and plan company X's research. Interviews and a survey were used to identify the motivations and effects of remote work in company X. Figure 17 shows the key findings of the research carried out for company X.

The research clarified that remote work has increased considerably in Finland and other countries. Company X has no information on how much total remote work has been done before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it was possible to state that the change among those who participated in the study is enormous.

KEY FINDINGS



Why employees do remote work?

- Flexibility
- No commuting
- Focus
- Productivity
- Work-life balance
- Money saving
- No colleagues in the office
- Most meetings are remote anyway

What are the challenges of working remotely?

- Lack of human interaction
- A sense of community
- Loneliness
- Communication
- Physical ergonomics
- Blurry lines between work and free time

Impacts of remote work

Social	Work	Well-being
63% Feels camaraderie has decreased	Most feels flexibility is important	More time for personal important things
24% feel like outsider	95% finds meetings to be remote-friendly	70% Have good ergonomics at home
35% not getting enough interaction	67% feels more productive	60% moves less during the working day
	44% feels number of meetings has increased	30% feel loneliness
	31% feels that working days get longer	40% Does not take regular breaks

Figure 17. Key findings from Company X remote work research.

There are many reasons and motivation factors for working remotely. This study was in line with other studies regarding motivational factors. The feeling of flexibility was the biggest motivation for remote work, which is connected to other factors such as commuting and work-life balance. According to research by Owl Labs, lack of flexibility is one of the biggest reasons for turning down a job offer (Owl Labs, 2021, p. 3). This can also be seen in the answers to the interview and survey because some feel that remote work is so important that they would not work in a company where it is not possible.

It is also clear that remote workers prefer to use their time for things other than commuting, like work, family, sleeping, or free time. The commute may be very long for some, so even if a person likes working in an office, the person sees a greater advantage in eliminating the commute. The financial savings can also be significant. It is also worth noting that commuting can increase stress due to traffic and human traffic jams, delays, smells, and sounds (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2020, p. 26). On the other hand, it can help separate work and free time.

The feeling of productivity has increased or remained the same for many remote workers. According to the survey, over 67% feel more productive when working remotely, and 25.5% answered neither agree nor disagree. Owl Labs (2021) and Cisco (2022) have received the same numbers, with a share of over 60%. Studies also state that productivity decreases for those who work full-time remotely (Robinson, 2023). However, this study did not find similar results. Every full-time remote worker who participated in the study answered that remote work is more productive or at least the same as in the office.

Concentration was also one of the big factors that motivated remote work because many feel that there are more distractions in the office environment. It is also one of the reasons for the feeling of better productivity (ERTO, 2021). An environment where the employee can concentrate also improves cognitive ergonomics (Boijer-Spoof Heikinheimo et al., 2022).

It is positive that the participants in the study find the meetings to be remote-friendly. Giving a presentation remotely can also feel less stressful (Owl Labs, 2021, p. 22). However, many feel that the number of meetings has increased, which can negatively affect well-being. It was also mentioned in the interviews that in remote communication, people do not get to know the same way as face-to-face. According to Virolainen (2010), psychological safety is a prerequisite for a functioning team. If communication does not work, there is a risk of a feeling of insecurity, which affects the desire to ask questions and help.

According to the survey and interviews, taking a break from work is challenging for many remote workers. That is why finding suitable routines for remote work would be important. Routines play a big role in the brain's well-being, which can be used to improve workflow and well-being during remote work (Puhti, 2023). Movement during remote working days is also significantly reduced, but on the other hand, there is more time for leisure time exercise as time is saved from commuting. Also, 68% of Cisco's (2020) study participants believed that remote work positively affects physical ergonomics due to increased leisure exercise.

Social well-being is the weakest aspect of remote work. The study showed that camaraderie has decreased considerably, but remote workers also have feelings of being an outsider, loneliness, and little interaction. Microsoft's remote work study also found that 42% experienced a weak connection with colleagues, which is one reason for burnout (Teevan et al., 2022, p. 21, 56). According to the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, areas that inspire brain work are ideation, learning, interaction, and participation (Työterveyslaitos, 2021). Based on research, these factors that inspire brain work are weakened by some remote workers, which may affect cognitive ergonomics negatively.

4.2 Recommendations

Understanding and maintaining the employee experience requires many actions from the organization. The organization and the employee's activities and the interaction between the employer and the employee should support the

employee's experience. The recommendations answer the research question: How can the company influence the work experience when employees work remotely?

Recommendations are listed below. They are divided into social, work, and well-being areas. The following are recommendations for the commissioning company to maintain and develop the remote employee experience.

Social

- Encounters: Creating encounters online and in offices is important. The biggest challenge for remote workers is little human contact. Community and camaraderie can be improved by creating opportunities to meet remotely and face-to-face, professionally and informally.
- Psychological safety: By creating a safe environment for online communication. Communication should be open, positive, and friendly. Employees should feel that communication is safe without conflict. It can also increase creativity when employees dare to share their views.
- Understanding individuals: Leaders should get to know the employees. Everyone has different needs and experiences. By hearing them, understanding them, and creating solutions can improve the person's employee experience.

Work

- Freedom: Freedom is important to employees, and almost every remote employee values it. Keeping it strong in the company culture improves the experience of many remote employees and positively affects commitment.
- Communication practices: By providing employees with remote and hybrid communication instructions and training, clarity in communication can be achieved. Ad-hoc meetings are challenging in remote work, so teams should discuss ways to increase them. By adding clear goals and agendas to meetings, time use, and concentration can be improved. Also, knowing what kind of participation is required from the participants

can facilitate preparation. It is also good to increase understanding of online collaboration tools such as Miro and other online innovation methods.

- Creating a daily routine: By providing employees with information about the importance of routines in remote work, they can learn best practices.
- Up-to-date information: By ensuring that communication and information are easily accessible and findable by everyone, the flow and reliability of information can be improved.

Well-being

- Avoiding prolonged work: Directing and creating policies so employees stay within the agreed working hours. One idea is to instruct them to close the notifications at the end of the workday to disengage employees from work. This also requires self-management skills from the employee to stay on time. This can be used to avoid mixing free time with working time and reduce worker overload.
- By supporting sick leave: Remote workers work more easily, even when sick. Work well-being can be improved by reminding employees that taking sick leave is also important for remote work.
- Loneliness and outsidersness: By providing channels to discuss problems, feelings of loneliness and outsidersness can be identified. Finding ways to overcome these challenges together with the team or the team leader can have an impact not only on well-being but also on work efficiency.
- Physical ergonomics: By instructing employees on the importance of physical ergonomics. By emphasizing taking work breaks and adding exercise to working days and organizing a short exercise remotely, for example, during the working day.

5 Conclusions

In conclusion, this study aimed to understand remote workers in company X. The research was timely due to increased remote work and organizational changes. It has also been studied that expectations regarding the nature of work and organization have changed during the pandemic. Remote employee experience was studied using design thinking and service design methods. Diverse research and analysis methods were used to understand remote workers' experiences. The research questions that led the research were:

1. How does remote work affect the work experience?
2. What are the motivations for doing remote work?
3. How can the company influence the work experience when employees are working remotely?

The answers to the first and second questions had to be found through research in order to be able to answer the third question. Based on the research, several factors in remote work affected the work experience. By applying the employee experience theories and the gained understanding of remote work, three factors were found with which the results were analyzed and presented. The factors were social, work, and well-being.

According to the study, social factors were the most challenging for remote employees, which had a negative effect on the work experience in remote work. At Company X, community spirit and camaraderie have been at a high level, but according to those working remotely, camaraderie and the sense of connection weakened with remote work. It has also contributed to an increased feeling of outsider. According to Desk Research, physical closeness was not a prerequisite for strengthening human relationships, but psychological safety was more important. The research found areas where the company can influence. The areas were increasing human contact, psychological safety, and understanding individuals.

The second most negative effect of remote work was the well-being factors. It was found that remote workers do not move during the working day or take breaks, and the feeling of loneliness increases. On the other hand, it has been established that remote work brings more free time, enabling more exercise in free time. The most motivating area in the well-being factor was no commuting, which also helped save money. Other motivating areas were work-life balance, good ergonomics, and modifying one's work environment. The observed areas the company was able to influence were the length of working hours, reducing loneliness, and improving physical ergonomics.

The third factor was work. Its effects were the most positive. Flexibility was essential for remote workers. For some, it was so important that they would change jobs if they were forced into mandatory office work. A large number of remote workers felt that they were more efficient in remote work and that they were able to concentrate better, which has a positive impact on the work experience. Factors that negatively affected the experience were the increased number of meetings and the experience of a longer working day. The observed areas the company was able to influence were maintaining motivating things, developing communication, and creating routines.

The research achieved answers to the research questions. With the results, it was possible to provide the company with valuable information about remote workers' experiences and development points that can be used to improve the remote worker experience. However, the subject of the study was people whose attitudes and experiences can change. It has been studied that the development of employee experience should be active because people change and technology changes. In addition to this kind of research, it would be good to study how the remote employee experience is integrated throughout the employee life cycle.

The commissioner's comments

Organizational Development Director:

“Employees are at the core of our company, and great EX is a competitive advantage in our field of business. As Tommi's work describes, our work setting has undergone rapid change during and after COVID-19. Remote work has been possible in our company for a long time, but the amount and vastity grew fast during Covid, and there is no going back to “the old times.”

So, to develop our EX to fit today and the future, we need a better understanding of the motivations and practicalities around the issue. Tommi's work supports this goal tremendously, and we can plan and execute tangible actions to improve our EX. The thesis work was done in a systematic and engaging way, and the outcome is solid and very usable.”

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Appendix 1. Interview script.

Welcome.

(Introductions)

The topic of the interview is your experience with remote working. We organize a few interviews on the topic because we gather an understanding of the pros and cons of remote working so that we can develop and support our employees and our organization. Remote work research is part of a broader employee experience development project.

The interview is also part of my master's thesis research, which I do at Turku University of Applied Sciences. The interview results will be used for internal development and the final thesis report.

The interview will be recorded if the interviewee accepts the recording. Do you agree to this being recorded? The recording is only for me to help with transcription. It will be stored in the Google system, and the recording will be destroyed within a week of the interview.

The transcribed data collected from the interview is stored in the company's Google environment, and only I have access to that data. No name or identifying information is stored. The transcribed data from the interview will be stored until the end of this thesis project.

I make an anonymized summary of the interview data, which we analyze with the EX team. Finally, the project results are communicated more widely in the organization to support the development work.

Anything to ask?

Interview:

- Which regional and professional community do you belong to?
 - How long have you been working at ?
 - Did you work remotely before the pandemic, and how much?
 - Why and in what situations did you work remotely before the pandemic?
 - How much do you work these days remotely?
 - Describe what kind of remote work culture/practices has.
 - Why do you work remotely, and what is the best thing about it?
 - Are there any downsides to working remotely?
 - Is it easy to recognize when to go to the office and when to work remotely?
 - Does remote work affect the implementation of tasks in any way?
 - Has remote working affected commitment to the company?
 - Can you keep work and free time separate?
 - How do you take care of your well-being when you work remotely?
 - Do you ever feel lonely when you work remotely?
-
- Who do you communicate with the most when you work remotely?
 - Has communication with different people/departments decreased due to remote work?
 - Is communication sufficient when you work remotely?
 - Do you have different practices in different teams for remote communication?
 - Have you identified situations at which point in the team it would be good to have f-2-f?
 - What kind of office serves your needs, and are there any attraction factors?

Anything to add?

Thank you for the interview and your time. As a reminder, I will summarize the data from the interview, which we will analyze with the EX team. Finally, the project results will be communicated to the employees by the summer.

If you have any questions, you can contact me.

Thank you for your time

Appendix 2. Survey questions.

Which community do you belong to? *

Helsinki

Tampere

Turku

Jyväskylä

Oulu

Kuopio

Sweden

Poland

USA

Portugal

Remote Finland

I have work tasks that require leading people
(e.g., leading project teams, cell/communities, etc.)

Yes

No

How much did you work remotely before Covid-19? *
Enter an estimated percentage of how much you did remote work per week.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
0% / week 100% / week

How much do you do remote work these days? *
Enter an estimated percentage of how much you do remote work per week.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
0% / week 100% / week

Do you need clearer instructions for working remotely? *

Yes

No

Section 2 of 5

Motivation ✕ ⋮

We want to understand the motivational factors related to remote work better.

What are the reasons you work remotely?

Long answer text

How does remote work affect your work motivation?
(commitment, energy, learning, etc.)

Long answer text

What do you like the most about working remotely?

Long answer text

What do you like the least about working remotely?

Long answer text

Are you struggling with anything regarding remote work?

Long answer text

Section 3 of 5

Well-being & Self-management

Understanding how remote work affects your well-being and self-management is important so we can support these better in the future.

When working remotely, it is easy to turn on work mode at the beginning of the day *

(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

When working remotely, it is easy to turn off work mode at the end of the day *

(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

I feel more productive when working remotely *

(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

I feel that my working days get longer due to remote work *

(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

I regularly take breaks when working remotely *

Yes

No

I feel like I don't walk during the day as much when remote working *

(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

I feel that camaraderie (Fin: toveruus) has decreased with remote work *

(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

I feel like an outsider in my organization *

(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

I feel lonely when I work remotely *

(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

I feel that I am committed to the company *

(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

Section 4 of 5

Communication

By gathering data on communication practices and challenges in remote work, we hope to gain insights into how to optimize communication processes, tools, and strategies to ensure that remote teams can work together as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Who do you connect with most often when working remotely? *
(You can choose several options)

- People in the local community
- People who work in similar profession as me
- Project members
- Customer
- Leaders
- People in random Slack channels
- Friends in Vincit
- Friends outside Vincit
- Family
- Other...

I feel that I get enough interaction with people when I work remotely *
(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

I feel it is easy to reach my colleagues when I need them when working remotely *
(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

I feel it is easy to reach my supervisor when I need help/support when working remotely *
(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Has the number of meetings increased when remote work has increased?*

Yes

No

I feel that our meetings are remote-friendly *

(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.



Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

What makes our meetings more remote-friendly?

Long answer text

After section 4 Continue to next section

Section 5 of 5

Environment  

Understanding how environment affects remote work is important so we can support these better in the future.

Do the working spaces in the office support your needs?

Long answer text

Is there anything that would increase the desire to visit the office more?

Long answer text

Is the ergonomics of your home office ideal in terms of work ability?

Long answer text

Last question

In general, what are your suggestions on what could be done differently or improved right now? (Regarding remote work)

Long answer text

Appendix 3. Kendall-tau correlation values.

