



Development of an emotionally intelligent leadership concept

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Abstract

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<p>The purpose of this study is to connect emotional intelligence practices to a new service development with the help of a design thinking approach. It is a development-oriented study that utilises qualitative methodologies of interviews, netnography and co-creative workshops together with a variety of design thinking tools. The goal is to follow design thinking principles of developing a service which has a real human-centred problem as a starting point, and solutions are designed and narrowed down with three principles: desirability, feasibility, and viability. The development area is identified by experiencing leadership challenges alongside increasing concerns about well-being, with an emphasis on recognising the significance of emotional intelligence skills.</p> <p>The thesis introduces the reader to emotional intelligence studies through three main theories: Mayer & Salovey, Goleman, and Shankman & Allen, and mirrors these theories with a leadership aspect of the importance of developing such skills. The theoretical framework progresses to the future leader theme which examines present-day leadership challenges and anticipates future trends. The leadership role is seen changing and social skills are required in modern-day leadership. This dual theoretical foundation underscores the relevance of emotional intelligence skills in navigating the complexities of successful future leadership.</p> <p>Followed by the design thinking principles of creating a valuable service that is created from true human insights, the solution design considers the business model possibilities from feasibility and viability point of views. The development study analysis reveals a pressing desire among leaders for authentic connections, collaboration, and inclusion, driven by the wish for better work-life balance and task distribution. By empathising with the target group, the conclusions can be drawn for a solution that can provide supportive environments that embrace transparent discussion culture, learning and vulnerability with a specific emphasis on integrating emotional intelligence practices into their leadership approach.</p> <p>The study progresses into an analysis of the emotionally intelligent leadership concept and its future possibilities with the help of a business model canvas. The qualitative co-creative workshop findings reveal the desire for a training concept that provides effective tools, examples, and practices to help individuals to gain better communication and collaboration skills to understand differences and embrace diversity. A key for developing such a training concept is the role of the facilitator who dares to suggest improvement areas and encourages people to show and talk about their emotions. The conclusion of the development study analyses the program structure of the multi-day course and future demands for increasing resources to make the business elevate. The study leaves the testing and piloting of the concept for future research objectives.</p>
Keywords Design thinking, emotional intelligence, future leader, new business development, user insight, co-creation

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1 Introduction

Everything that our bodies feel, travels through the nervous system to our brain. When they enter the brain, they first arrive at the limbic system, where we feel emotions before entering the frontal lobe, where we think. This explains how our brains are fired; every one of us has emotions, and we cannot control them. What we can however control, is how we think or react to them. That is called emotional intelligence; how the emotional part communicates with the rational thinking part of our brain. (Bradberry & Greaves 2012, 129-134.)

Daniel Goleman (1998, 15-16) highlights the new rules of work life, where our success is not measured by the IQ (intelligence quotient), but by how well we navigate in social situations, negotiate with people, and adapt to ever-changing environments. Even the most technical skills are not so required in the recruiting process any more than the ability to learn, which corresponds to EQ (emotional quotient) skills such as good listening and communication skills, adaptability, and emotional regulation. Emotional intelligence itself is something that some of us might have more naturally but is something we can develop over time, rather than IQ, which we cannot affect that much.

Even though the topic is relatively new, studies have shown good results in investing in emotional intelligence skills in companies. Results have led to better management situations in handling crises, and transparent company cultures, which have led to better employee well-being and satisfaction. (Kokkonen & Saarinen 2003, 137-140.) Such an example is American Airlines which conducted an experimental case study on developing emotional intelligence skills among managers in hopes of improving their weak employee satisfaction. Training took place where leaders were taught about the importance of appreciative and empathic workplaces, providing real-life practices, tools and discussion, leading participants to engage with their team members and find best practices for themselves and their teams. (Raposo 3 June 2023.)

Besides promising results, emotional intelligence is seen to be an essential skill in future management. The role of the leader is changing, and the hierarchies are seen to disappear, where the leader's position relies on building authentic connections, collaboration and coaching the teams by providing psychological safety. Newer generations are bringing new expectations to workplaces, and companies are expected to provide purpose and inspiration, where efficient collaboration skills and inclusiveness play an even greater part. Leaders are expected to up-skill their self-reflection and regulation, adapt to new situations and embrace holistic well-being. (McKinsey & Company May 2023; Quantic August 2022; Wood 2023.)

Understanding the benefits and the alignment to future trends has sparked an interest in implementing theories to find a service to develop emotional intelligence in leadership. Instead of testing different EIL hypotheses in leadership, this thesis aims to find a concept that creates the most value for its user group. The thesis is not done as a case study of a particular organisation but from a personal interest and experience to the topic of emotional intelligence and leadership, combining a strong passion for creating a unique service, that could develop into a business one day. Through the purpose of this research of developing a service, design thinking was chosen as an approach offering a variety of tools to help gain insights that help to design a service. As the approach, design thinking also shares similar values as developing emotional intelligence: it centralises the importance of **empathy**; understanding and connecting with others, and **collaboration**; through diverse views and values, inclusive teamwork and co-creation, something truly valuable can be created (Maula & Maula 2019.)

1.1 Design Thinking Principles

Kotler, Pfoertsch and Sponholz (2020, 32) discuss design thinking as part of the abstract fundamental in the human-to-human (H2H) marketing approach that is a customer-centric, highly innovative, and iterative process - relying on deep customer insight to solve real, even complex *human-centred problems*. As design thinking dives into deep user insight, it needs to understand user needs and problems by observing real-time and ever-changing people's behaviour, emotions, and desires. Design thinking then matches these human insights with technical aspects by co-creation, experimentation (thinking out of the box), and testing, where the ideas are narrowed down with feasibility and viability perspectives. (Kotler et al. 2020, 38-41, 43-44.)

When innovating new valuable concepts by using a design thinking process, it should take into consideration the following criteria (Kotler et al. 2020, 41-42.):

- The concept should have a real human problem as a starting point, where the solution is built and tested with three factors (Figure 1):
 1. **Desirability**: is the solution wanted and needed for the customers, are they ready to pay for it? Does it have a rightful value proposition, a promise of benefits? It is advised to start from this in the ideation of a solution.
 2. **Feasibility**: does the solution work? What are the resources needed to make it work?
 3. **Viability**: Reviewing the business perspectives, is the solution profitable and sustainable? What are the costs and expected incomes?

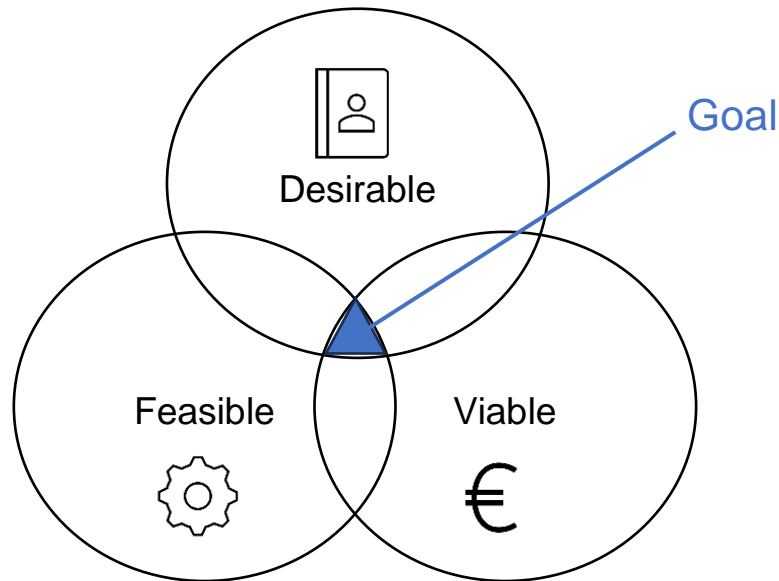


Figure 1. Key principles of design thinking

Design thinking is seen as an approach that combines methods and tools with technologies, producing a comprehensive problem-solving approach. Even though the approach relies on empathising with the customer, it also centralises the mindset of intuition, feelings, and quick thinking, which hostess creative thinking and shakes out the judgemental thoughts. As the process goes on, abstract ideas are made tangible by visualisation. Prototyping and testing play an important part, from where a great quantity of ideas are narrowed down to the most desirable, feasible and viable ones. Yet though, it is important to continue creating an encouraging experimentation atmosphere, and not get stuck with one design only, but collaborate with different teams, share ideas, and go back to earlier stages in the design process by iterations. (Maula & Maula 2019, 20-25; Kotler et al. 2020, 43-44.)

1.2 Target Group

Typically, the term leader would be someone leading the way to others, showing examples and convincing others to follow. The leader would then need a shared vision to inspire, motivate and encourage others in the desired direction. On the other hand, there's a continuous discussion of the difference between managers and leaders, where managers are defined as ones who are responsible for supervising the people, executing decisions, and delegating tasks. Leaders on the other hand, would be the ones who are overlooking bigger operations, typically C-level positions. The definition of manager is easily connected with traits of micro-management; someone who shows distrust by over-controlling and questioning their teams' achievements. The difference between these two is not that easily explained, and depends on the context at hand, but also the

preferences of the organisation that they choose to use. End of the day both leader and manager *lead*. (Morgan 2020, 18-25; Saarinen 2007, 65-66.)

In this thesis, the term leader is chosen as the main definition, and to be precise, not any kind of leader, but one who oversees people which could be from team leaders to C-level decision-makers, both needing social skills to succeed. The position of a leader has a great number of responsibilities but also a skillset that requires fast problem-solving and critical thinking, which can be a highly stressful role and is not always given the best tools to succeed. As the future is here so is the emphasis on the leadership role changing; the discussion is divided into whether we need leaders in the future or do we need them more than ever. What is certain, we need more brave leaders to lead changes and future visions, and courage is built through authenticity and real social situations. (Brown 2018, 3-9; Morgan 2020, 26.) It is a fascinating area to tackle; how to develop leadership so that leaders can lead to a vision of more aware, vulnerable, and empathic working cultures that include every individual with their differences. As Brene Brown (2018, 4) states “Studying leadership is easier than leading”, with the help of the practical side of design thinking, developing leadership aims to learn answers together with the *target group of people leaders*.

1.3 Research structure and questions

This thesis is a development-oriented study, that aims to create a human-centred service from real user insights. The theory part introduces the reader to the theoretical framework of emotionally intelligent leadership followed by future studies reviewing leadership challenges and future trends. The literature review proceeds to introduce the research approach of design thinking and continues to the empirical part. The development work's structure follows the design thinking stages of empathising, defining, ideating, and prototyping, where the first two parts aim to research the target group and define the focus area, while the ideating and prototyping are the experimenting and designing parts of the study. Besides the design thinking stages leading the project, the three principles of desirability, feasibility, and viability have a pivotal guiding role in the development process.

Following the design thinking stages and its principles, the research questions were formed as follows:

Q1. What is the human problem that the emotionally intelligent leadership concept aims to solve?

Q2. What kind of solution has the highest value for its users?

Q3. How to create an emotionally intelligent leadership concept?

The first two chapters of the research outcome (chapter 4); Empathise and Define will be diving into human insights and are moving around the problem definition phase. Chapters Empathise and Define answer the first research question by analysing the human problem that the emotionally intelligent leadership concept could solve. The second question; what kind of solution holds the highest value for its users, is a very vital question in this research and a key objective, that analyses not only what kind of solution solves the human problem but also what kind of solution has the highest value proposition for its studied target group; a desirable solution. The research aims to approach this question in consistent steps, moving from empathising and defining to solution ideation so that the findings support each other. The last question: how to create an emotionally intelligent leadership concept, moves around the feasibility, viability, and conceptualising themes, in which the last phase of the outcome; prototyping aims to answer and analyse the possibilities of how to create an EIL (emotionally intelligent leadership) concept.

1.4 Definition of a concept

“Concept is perhaps the foundation of your brand, your mindset”.

From a marketing point of view, concept is defined as introducing ideas in the form of a brand, which inspires and motivates the stakeholders. If the brand is the perception of the company or the product, the concept would be then the platform to influence this perception. It is based on **true human insights**, understanding the most relevant features and attributes of the brand, and through marketing, dramatizes it in a clear, memorable, and ownable way. A strong concept is more than just a good idea, it should be completed and grow into a concept, that is the link to the vision. The concept could be explained in the form of a train; if the concept is the locomotive, then the rest of the assets such as the company itself, products, brand, and employees are the rest of the train that the concept pulls along and together. (Ohtonen 28 October 2023; Crucq & Knitel 2016, 46-48.)

Strong creative concepts have usually the following features:

- Harness a simple insight that can delight even the most ad-saturated consumer - unique.
- Can be summarized in 1 to 2 sentences - focus.
- Can be extended way beyond the initial execution; communicates effectively true various marketing channels - generative.
- Presents an honest element of the product or service – honest. (Duke 2011, 10-22.)

The concept itself doesn't need to present the whole company or brand either, it can be a presentation of a service idea and its most important attributes within a company. Concept design has the same ideology as service design, it's user-centered, combines qualitative and quantitative

research methods, and uses visualization and prototyping to help in presenting and testing abstract ideas. The concept therefore is the visualization tool of user needs that is made user-friendly to understand and approach. It is made to support the company's strategic decision-making with the help of different future scenarios and technology development. Concept planning usually consists of two main process steps a) the research phase; user insight study, forming the base for the concept and testing it b) the project phase; defining the attributes, creating alternative concepts, and narrowing to the final concept. The process steps are very similar to the design thinking approach, making it common to combine these methodologies in concept planning. (Miettinen 2011, 107-108).

In conclusion, this research aims to research user needs, define its focus area and co-creatively design a human-centred service that brings value to its users and is unique. This study is a base for a concept, which is not a strategy, brand or completed business model, but is the locomotive for the rest of the train that will be developed outside of this study.

2 Theoretical framework

The theory part of this thesis reviews leadership from two angles; emotional intelligence and future perspectives. The first chapter Emotionally Intelligent Leadership explains the phenomenon through three main theories in their publishing order: Mayer & Salovey, Goleman, and Shankman & Allen, giving a broad overview of the topic, not only understanding the leadership role but also combining theories and reviews them from a critical perspective as well. The next main chapter, Future Leader studies leadership from the future point of view by understanding the current state, leadership challenges and future possibilities, and how the market might look in the future, using these theories later with the help of the design thinking process.

2.1 Emotionally intelligent leadership

Peter Northouse (2019, 39-40) addresses emotional intelligence as an important trait in leadership. It lets us understand the messages in our emotions using that knowledge to navigate through our behaviours and relationships, to make better decisions. While everyone has emotions, a person's EQ = emotional quotient score explains how effectively we observe, understand, and manage emotions. Studies suggest that leaders who are more aware of their and others' emotions are more effective at their jobs.

Studies (Mayer & Salovey 2008, 503-504) suggest that individuals with higher EI (emotional intelligence) have a greater ability to process information related to their emotions and stimuli that trigger emotional responses. Therefore, they have a higher capacity to engage in the processing of emotional information; they can understand, interpret, and analyse emotions more effectively than others. Additionally, these individuals are better at utilizing this emotional information to guide thoughts and behaviour.

While the core idea of emotional intelligence, and its leadership role might be similar depending on the study, researchers offer different models and theories to approach the topic. Some studies suggest that emotional intelligence is a group of mental abilities, while others that it's a mix of traits or skills. In leadership theories, Northouse (2019, 19, 28) categorises emotional intelligence as part of the trait approach. Originally trait approach was created to identify inheritable and natural qualities and characteristics that could make a "great leader", by studying highly influential people. Later, it was challenged that people are not born with certain qualities that either make them good leaders or not, but situations and contexts vary, and the approach was rebranded as relationship management and personal traits, that some individuals might pose more naturally but some are also learnable, such as emotional intelligence. (Northouse 2019, 19-21.)

The hypothesis is made that for a person who leads humans or has a goal to be a leader, emotional intelligence plays a core part in success. It is a central ability when building relationships and communicating efficiently. (Ludwig 2023.) To understand the phenomenon, the next chapters focus on three different approaches from known emotional intelligence researchers: Mayer and Salovey's four-branch model, David Goleman's theory of personal and social competencies, and Shankman's and Allen's EIL (emotional intelligent leadership) model of 3 consciousness levels; self, others, and context.

2.1.1 Mayer and Salovey's theory

The term emotional intelligence was first invented in the late 1980s by two researchers Peter Salovey and John Mayer, by studying aspects of intelligence, specifically social intelligence (Mayer & Salovey 1989-1990, 185). It is an ability to regulate one's own and other's emotions, observe them, and then use this information as part of the decision-making and actions. It is an ability to use feelings to motivate, plan and achieve goals (Mayer & Salovey 1993, 433). In their early research, they pointed out the link between emotional intelligence skills with mental health, but as in the early research, further investigation was suggested, to support their theory if lack of EI corresponds to depression and other mental health problems, or people with high EQ would be more pleasant to be around (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso 2008, 504).

Mayer's and Salovey's models have been modified over time. In their first research in 1989-1990, emotional intelligence term was looking for its definition. The phenomenon was divided into 3 mental process steps: 1) evaluation and expression 2) regulation 3) utilization of the emotion. The scale in emotional intelligence evaluation and expression could be either verbal or non-verbal, as well as regulation happens in both one and others. The ability to use emotional content creates greater problem-solving skills such as planning, creativity, concentration, and motivation. (Mayer & Salovey 1989-1990, 189-191.)

After almost a decade and more research later, Mayer and Salovey decided to add another branch to their model in 1997; connection with emotions and thinking (Figure 1). Coming to this conclusion, studies found that emotions can prioritize thinking. For instance, when we respond to something emotionally, it draws our attention and helps us to remember better. (Mayer 2004, 5.) Besides adding a branch, Mayer et al. narrowed EI to the mental ability concept, leaving out personality traits like openness and warmth, to review them individually outside of this context as part of a behaviour study (Mayer et al. 2000, 402). In a leadership context, Caroley and Salovey summarized in 2004 that an emotionally intelligent leader is reflective based on his/her emotions, uses emotions in decision-making, empowers others by example, and keeps up a motivating atmosphere, that both the leader and the team benefits (Saarinen 2007, 79).

Table 1. Applying Mayer's and Salovey's 1997 model (Saarinen 2007, 54; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso 2000, 401):

Perceiving and expressing emotion	Emotions facilitating thinking	Understanding and analysing emotions	Managing emotions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifying and expressing personal emotions based on body/mind feelings or thoughts - identifying and expressing other people's emotions based on body/verbal language, behaviour, or artwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emotions as the ability to prioritize thinking to help productivity - emotions live, and help our memory and decision-making - diverse and shifting emotional states help us to give new perspectives, ideas and problem-solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to label variety of emotions, and recognize the connection with words - ability to recognize the connection between the emotion and behaviour - ability to recognize and understand emotional shifting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - openness to all feelings and their changes - self-reflection to monitor and regulate emotions - understanding the possibilities, intuitions, dangers etc. that the emotions communicate and act accordingly

Based on their 1997 four-branch mental ability model, a test was created to measure EI, going by the name MSCEIT (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test). It has eight themes divided into 4 mental abilities. In **branch 1**, how participants are identifying and recognizing emotions. **Branch 2** how they are stimulated between different emotions and what emotions are best to facilitate certain emotions. **Branch 3** how the participants react to changes to manage stress and identify emotions based on intense experiences. And last **branch 4**, asks how participants maintain or change their feelings based on different scenarios, and how to manage others' feelings to guide desired outcomes. (Caruso et al. 2004, 200.)

Reviewing Mayer and Salovey's studies critically, although, they have received a lot of concession from other advanced and critically reviewing researchers, there are a few positions to point out. Concerns are mostly related to their MSCEIT test and its accuracy, and whether it takes enough variables into account. The development of the test, its different results and cultural differences in responses were not properly investigated, and parts that test perceiving emotions and emotional decision-making, have been seen measuring more logical and information-based problem-solving rather than emotional processes. (Saarinen 2007, 55-56; Caruso et. 2004, 200-2001.) In conclusion Mayer et al.'s model of emotional intelligence and leadership, studies support the hypothesis of EI enabling better relationships at workplaces, when the person can recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions (Jordan & Troth 2011, 263).

2.1.2 Goleman's theory

It's nearly impossible to talk about the terms EQ (emotional quotient) or EI (emotional intelligence) without mentioning the pioneer of the emotional intelligence study and its importance in leadership, Daniel Goleman. Goleman emphasises the importance of EQ score very highly in any aspect of life, school, people management or work. Dr Bradberry supports Goleman's theories in his studies and explains that 90% of most successful players, also scored high in EQ. The same as high EQ level corresponds to a higher salary. (Bradberry & Greaves 2012, 129-134.) Emotional intelligence is not just seen as one crucial skill in this light, it's all the communication and negotiation we go through with ourselves and each other (Goleman 2001, 15-16).

Goleman became an international sensation after his book in 1995: *Emotional Intelligence – Why It Can Matter More than IQ*, 5 years later after Mayer and Salovey published their first study of emotional intelligence. It received a lot of coverage in the press and applause, but researchers such as Mayer and Salovey criticised Goleman for altering the original idea of the EI and only showing positive attributes, without critical review. Goleman makes a thesis that in the future of work, emotional intelligence outstands the importance of the intelligence quotient, determining a person's success and well-being. Such claims were very powerful to present, and it is seen that Goleman's studies weren't following the research ethic of reviewing the results critically and taking other factors into account. (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso 2008, 504.)

Although the criticism that Goleman's theories received, they are still one of the most widely used emotional intelligence models, referred by other researchers, and studied further. Such researchers are Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves. In their book *Leadership 2.0* (2012, 133-134), they define adaptive leadership as 12 skills, and 4 of them as emotional intelligence skills: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness (empathy) and relationship management (social skills). Besides Bradberry's and Greaves' studies (2012, 12), newer future-oriented studies (Morgan 2020, 198) received results that self-awareness and empathy (social awareness) were seen as the top 4 crucial skills that leaders should have, among transparency and integrity.

According to Goleman's theory, emotional intelligence can be divided into **personal competencies**, which include social awareness and self-regulation, and **social competencies** including social awareness or empathy, and relationship management or social skills (Figure 2). Personal competencies are skills in how we see ourselves, stay aware of our emotions, and manage our behaviour and impulses. It is our inner world rather than our interaction with others when social competencies take part. Social competencies then focus on the interactions between each other; how well we're aware of others, their feelings, behaviour, and motives, and how we use that knowledge to improve the relationships. (Bradberry & Greaves 2012, 133-134.) Most

commonly social competencies are divided into social awareness and relationship management, but some of Goleman's theories (1996, 1999) either replace or include social awareness with empathy, and relationship management as social skills.



Figure 2. EI four skill competence model.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is a skill to read and understand the messages in our emotions. It is an ability to perceive our emotions, values, beliefs, and drivers, and to use that knowledge in our reactions and actions (Arruda 10.1.2023). Self-awareness is not only awareness of our strengths and weaknesses but also a clear understanding of what makes us behave in certain ways. Self-aware leaders know better what motivates and triggers them, and therefore they can tolerate even negative emotions, such as hate, sadness and shame, when we're not categorizing emotions to good or bad as understand that all of them have a purpose.

Self-awareness is a core part of emotional intelligence, not only in Goleman's theory but also in all major emotional intelligence researchers (Mayer & Salovey 1997; Shankman & Allen 2015). Once leader knows their true self, they become more comfortable even in situations of crisis and distress. And once the leader uses their awareness, thus seeing their improvement areas and what they do well, it allows them to better achieve their goals. (Bradberry & Greaves 2012, 134-141.)

Pirjo Kolari in her dissertation (2010, 46-47) refers to the **emotionally self-aware** leader as responsive to their inner signals. The person recognizes how their emotions affect themselves and their surroundings. They have a strong intuition that leads them to work according to their values, and the ability to manage even more complex situations. A self-aware leader is open-minded and humble and can easily be vulnerable around others. Besides a good knowledge of a person's own

emotions and what is their impact, a self-aware leader has strong **self-assignment** skills; knowing what they are capable of, as well as **self-confidence**; the capability of using their strengths to believe in themselves. Both traits make the leader more likely exposed to optimism, but also build their resilience for feedback and criticism, which also helps them know when to ask for help. (Kolari 2010, 46-57; Goleman 2002, 39-42.)

Self-management

Self-management is the ability to use personal awareness in actions and responses. It is the ability that tell how well the emotions are managed, to bounce back from setbacks and to stay positive. It is a crucial skill to have when managing stressful situations. We can learn to manage our impulses, which in short are the responses from reactions (the emotional brain communicates with the rational one). We sometimes feel they are automatic, and we cannot impact them, but the right amount of repetition, time and practice can help us to improve them. (Goleman 2015, 3-4; Landry 2019.)

Table 2. within self-management, Goleman (2002, 39, 45-48) & Kolari (2010, 47) adds 6 other sub-competencies:

<p>Self-control: helps us to manage our emotions and impulses, to focus them to something useful. It lets us to stay calm during crisis and high stress situations.</p>
<p>Transparency and honesty: the person lives by his/her values. The person can communicate their beliefs, emotions, and reaction-actions efficiently and are not easily manipulated. The person accepts their mistakes and weaknesses and interfere if something isn't fair.</p>
<p>Adaptability: flexibility of the situations even when they don't go according to person's wishes or plans but can still work towards the goals or change plans accordingly.</p>
<p>Achievement: having personal standards that drive them for better performance and learn-by-doing. He/she can set the bar high and takes controlled risks.</p>
<p>Proactive: optimistic perspective towards life, sees opportunities and thinks they can affect to their life by the choices they make. Person believes in growth and changes the course when needed.</p>
<p>Optimism: when person faces setbacks, they rather see them as opportunities to learn and grow, than lets them to affect who they are. Optimistic person sees others in a positive light and</p>

believes in them. This person sees future and changes as something exciting and important in personal growth.

Social awareness

Social awareness is the ability to proactively read and understand the feelings, moods, and emotions of others. It is an ability to not letting own emotions or impulses take over but stay considerable of others and give space for them to express themselves, without the need to feel the same way. It keeps us focused and objective on the topic, managing our own emotions. It is a skill to read groups' and/or individuals' moods and offer suitable solutions. (Bradberry & Greaves 2012, 156-157.)

As an example of social awareness in a group; the team manager is having a meeting and sees one of the team members being more quiet than usual, the face doesn't make the usual expressions. Instead of confronting the person in front of everyone, the manager schedules a small talk after the meeting and goes through if everything is well and if any assistance is needed, offering a confidential person to talk to. Based on the situation, it's not always advised to mention *why* the manager wanted to have a quick chat. If revealing that team members' moods and expressions are monitored, it can decrease trust and make the team more careful of expressing their emotions.

In other words, social awareness could be described as **empathy**, a very important part of emotional intelligence, and specifically in leadership development. Famous researcher and public speaker Brene Brown (2018, 140-143) outlines the importance of empathy as part of daring leadership, it is a skill that connects us to our emotions and supports our experiences and memories. It connects us to the feeling that is related to the memory, and it takes courage to practice empathy while hearing something painful connecting us to painful feelings and memories. Once we see someone in pain, we rather try to take the pain from them and fix the situation at any price, but the idea is not to fix it, empathy is the courage to sit with the person in pain and understand them without rushing to "make things better".

At the TV show Atlas at Heart (2022, eps. 5) Brown connects empathy with compassion, which is a skillset of wholeheartedly connecting with people allowing us to embrace, agree and validate, where compassion makes us equals with each other. Empathy is a choice we make, and only with practice; communicating our boundaries, sharing, listening, and most importantly, making mistakes and receiving feedback, we can get better at it.

The five steps are suggested while practising empathy:

1. Not just put yourself in other people's shoes but stay curious about the other and take perspective.
2. Staying out of judgment by being aware of our vulnerable connection to shame.
3. Recognising emotion by practising self-awareness.
4. Communicating our emotions by practising vulnerability and sharing.
5. Paying attention and taking distance by practising mindfulness.

(Brown 2018, 143-149; Brown 2022, min. 12:30-19:30).

Social skills

Social skills are the last competence in Goleman's and his peers' studies on emotional intelligence. It is not only friendliness towards people but a skillset to be able to move people in the direction of preference. It is a critical tool of leadership, that combines the other EI skills; awareness of own emotions and how they affect the surroundings, and the ability to use empathy to guide the way. It is a mindset when the work needs to get done, we need to work together and find where everyone is good at to find a common goal. The important task of leadership is to inspire and make the people to see the vision of the leader. For leaders to be inspirational, they usually have clear guiding values, that can be then translated to a vision and direction. (Goleman et. 2002, 51-52; Goleman 1996, 21-23.)

Bradberry and Greaves (2009, 44-45) highlight relationship management as the ability to get along with different kinds of people, whether you agree or not with them, but have the patience to listen, understand and communicate with them. If you want to convince people and make them listen to you, social skills are the key, especially learning from challenging relationships and people who disagree. Communication skills are the key to relationship management. They allow us to not only prevent crises, but also it has a very high correlation to stress management; stressful situations are built through conflicts and disagreements at work. What usually happens is that the needs and emotions are not communicated properly, and they bottle up and later escalate to something bigger. While most of the time situations like this could have been avoided with open and transparent relationship management.

2.1.3 Shankman and Allen's theory

Shankman and Allen (2015) in their practice-oriented book combine the leadership and emotional intelligence theory. It was originally developed for students to teach them emotional intelligence leadership (EIL), thus, it is same way transferrable to corporative and other environments. Based on different leadership theories, EI is seen as a trait or attribute among others (Northouse 2019;

Dugan 2017), not a stand-alone theoretical framework for leadership. Shankman and Allen (2015, 10) on the other hand suggest emotional intelligence as a core function of successful leadership, proving the individual right understanding, skillset, discussion, and views to gain desired results. Same as all main EI theories (Goleman 1995; Mayer & Salovey 1997), EIL is a skillset that is accessible for anyone to learn. (Dugan 2017, 104.)

While leadership theories offer different approaches to explain what makes a good leader, and what the characteristics or behaviours to improve (Cherry 23 May 2022), Shankman et al. (2015, 7) approach this as “no theory is the best theory” and that everyone should develop their leadership model, stay curious to all information, and continuously learn by doing. Shankman et al. (2015) approach leadership from ten assumptions that are the foundation for the development of emotionally intelligent leadership. The first assumption; leadership is a science and art, emphasises that a leader should have knowledge and academic experience (science), but it standalone doesn't make a great leader, it always depends on the context and is based on the situation, requiring improvisation (art). Other assumptions to point out are *leadership is learnable*, but also *available to all*. Based on studies, 70% of leadership is learned, and while it's learnable, it's also available to all no matter of person's environmental factors or genes, considering the rest 30% of the impact is within external factors. (Shankman et al. 2015, 5-6.)

The EIL theory is process-oriented, integrating cognitive processes that combine personality traits, behaviour, and other personal competencies. These components interact together and play a role in different leadership situations and their outcomes. The theory consists of three aspects: consciousness of self, a consciousness of others and consciousness of context, which have 21 capabilities divided into these aspects that the leaders should pay attention, to help them improve their emotional intelligence skills and therefore management skills (Allen et. 2012).

Consciousness of self

Similarly, to Goleman's theory, the consciousness of self is a self-awareness, or in Mayer et al. theory perceiving and expressing emotion; identifying and expressing personal emotion. The consciousness of self is working on the inner dimensions, where we're united with our emotions, values, strengths and weaknesses, abilities, and limitations. Three key steps are suggested as practising self-consciousness: prioritizing self-awareness, seeking feedback and reflection. To improve self-awareness we should practice self-reflection, and seeking feedback supports the process of improving both. (Shankman et. 2015, 21-23.)

Table 3. The consciousness of self includes 9 out of 21 capabilities (applying Allen et al. 2012, 184-185):

- **Emotional self-perception:** identifying your own emotions, how you react to them, and what's their impact.
- **Self-understanding:** awareness of abilities and limitations
- **Self-esteem:** a balanced sense of self
- **Self-control:** ability to moderate emotions and reactions
- **Authenticity:** transparency, therefore trustworthy actions
- **Flexibility:** openness to changing situations
- **Achievement:** drive to reach personal standards
- **Optimism:** positivity
- **Initiative:** seeking and seeing opportunities easily

Consciousness of others

The second facet of the EIL theory is the consciousness of others is teamwork; we're our best when we work together, and to practice group consciousness we must be aware of each other's abilities, emotions, and motives. As Shankman et al. (2015, 6) mention as 4th and 5th assumptions about leadership: "leadership doesn't require a title or position" & "leadership is more than the leader", anyone can lead and influence without a position, and even the most successful leaders do not work alone, they need their team to collaborate. Same with the consciousness of others, it doesn't mean that one leader is aware of the team and their abilities but involves everyone being conscious of each other and using that as a weapon to achieve wanted results, together. (Shankman et. 2015, 114.)

Table 4. The consciousness of others includes 10 out of 21 capabilities (applying Allen et. 2012, 185-186 & Dougan 2017, 105):

- **Empathy:** understanding others and their motives
- **Citizenship:** fulfilling and recognizing group responsibility
- **Inspiring others:** moving the group to the shared vision by motivation.
- **Influence:** ability to encourage and convince others
- **Coaching:** helping others to find and strengthen their skills and abilities
- **Facilitating change:** seeking and working towards new directions
- **Conflict management:** identifying and solving conflicts effectively.
- **Relationship development:** creating meaningful connections and networks.
- **Teamwork:** working together as a team for a shared goal

- **Capitalizing diversity:** building teams with different people and benefiting from multiple perspectives.

Consciousness of context

The last facet of Shankman et al.'s theory; consciousness of context, is different from other EI studies as consciousness of self and others have a lot of similarities with Goleman's and Mayer al.'s theories. The definition for context is that it changes constantly, and so do situations, environments and other external factors, or even internal factors within the group how the dynamics work. While the context changes, it needs people actively to adapt, react and expect especially the unexpected possibilities. Consciousness of context is also a crucial part of EIL, while no matter how much we study people and prepare for scenarios or outcomes with practice, it can take an opposite turn due to situational factors. Sometimes with the same effort, we might be successful, but other times fail. Without letting the experiences put us down, we learn to review the context, and we can see future opportunities and be prepared to challenge better, grow our **resilience**. (Shankman et al. 2015, 209, 210-213.)

Table 5. The consciousness of context includes 2 out of 21 capabilities (applying Allen et. 2012, 184 & Dougan 2017, 105):

- **Environmental awareness:** taking external factors, forces, and trends into consideration.
- **Analysing the group:** read and analyse the dynamics of the group, situation, and network

As Shankman et al.'s 3 consciousness level model is very practise-oriented, they have created facilitator and activation guides for developing EIL. Both books have very extensive guidelines and materials to choose from, practising the main consciousness levels, and each of their 21 capabilities. The activities are a combination of self- and peer evaluations, tests, and individual and group activities. The books help to understand what EIL is, and how emotionally intelligent one is. Through examples, practises and feedback everyone can develop their leadership skills. The books are a good inspiration for training sessions anywhere and to anyone: companies, teams, schools etc., and can be customized to the parts that are needed, to make the content serve each business's needs. (Shankman al. 2015.)

Critically reviewing EIL theory, Dougan (2017, 106) praises the board context by combining leadership and emotional intelligence studies, on Shankman et al. theory. Theory is flexible based on personal experiences and perspectives, and context can alter the outcome, not offering only one outcome, but changing perceptions of leadership. The downside of the theory is still seen as relatively new without enough empirical testing. Some capacities are seen as very complex without conventional explanations, and elements of power dynamics and an individual's social position were missing as part of EIL factors.

2.2 Future leader

Jacob Morgan in his book *The Future Leader* (2020, 41) suggests two main responsibilities of a leader. First is **decision-making**; leaders should be on track with the latest information and trends, where they hold the power to show the direction. The second main responsibility is to **lead the people to wanted direction**; inspire, convince, empower, and engage. It is not the old way of commanding or micromanaging top-down but shows with an example, and for that managers need a better understanding of how people think and work. The structures are changing, instead of organizations telling the employees how work needs to be done, employees are bringing new expectations, ways of working and values to organizations, and are demanding to be treated as equals. (Morgan 2014, 19-20; Ahire & Sinha 2022.)

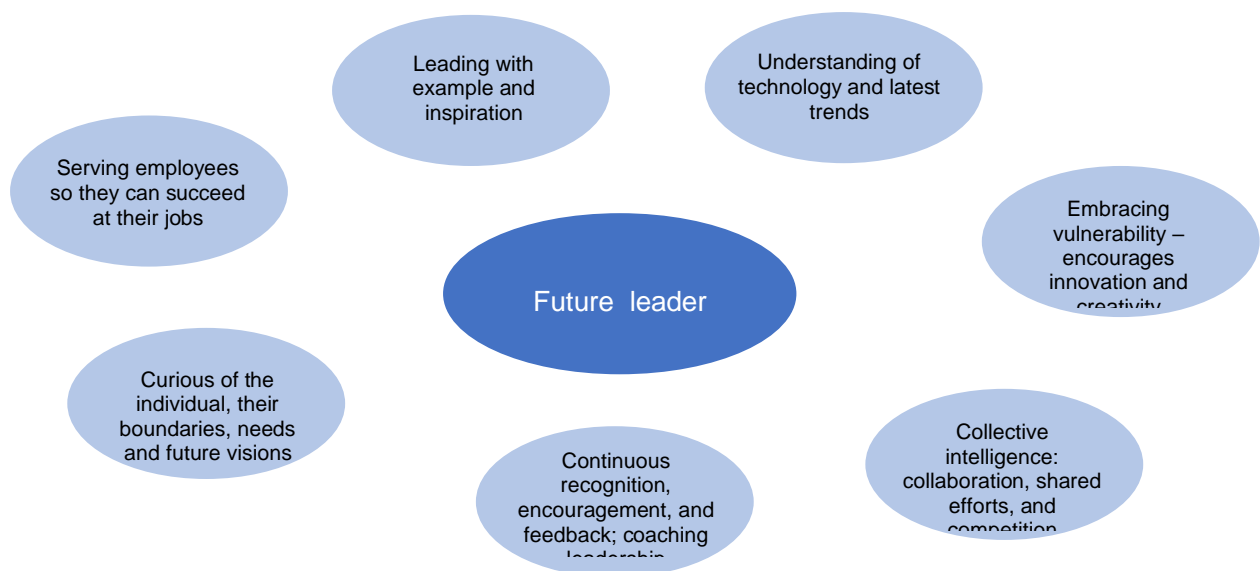


Figure 3. Applying Morgan's (2014, 92) ten principles of future manager.

Morgan (2014, 101-103) highlights **vulnerability** as one of the ten principles of a future manager (Table 2). It allows us to be humans and make mistakes while we connect on a deeper level with others. Brene Brown continues this by uniting the vulnerability with encouragement as an ability to

take risks without knowing the outcome, or possibility of winning or losing. Vulnerability is the core of daring leadership; the ability to give feedback, and discuss difficult decisions such as laying off staff, but only then if you're able to put yourself out there to get your "ass kicked" and be open for feedback and discussion. (Brown 2018, 19-21.) Besides vulnerability is essential in connecting with people, learning, and developing, it is also a core of emotional intelligence, specifically in developing social skills. In aiming to connect with people, the first step is to show our real selves; ask, share, and reflect. Practising vulnerability could start by being honest and more direct to people around you and to yourself; practising seeing your strengths, weaknesses, and taking ownership of mistakes, and through communication showing people that you care. (TalentSmartEQ.)

Lehtman (2022) reflects on future communication through news and online discussion, and sees attitudes changing, where leaders are allowed to show their emotions more openly in the future. While a news column said, "Leaders cannot cry", it received a lot of commotion from people defending that emotions make us human, and leaders too have emotions and are allowed to show vulnerability to connect with people. The World Economic Forum (WEF) addresses the importance of good communication skills in the future of work: the ability to solve problems by thinking critically and having social influence skills and resilience. Vulnerability is the glue in improving social communication skills by letting us connect and share. (Lehtman 2022, 167-172.)

2.2.1 Leadership challenges

Jacob Morgan (2020, 12-13) refers to multiple quantitative research between the years 2014 and 2019 showing that employees are not happy with the leadership in their organisations. Research showed that 80% of the employees thought they would do a better job than their managers or think they wouldn't necessarily need one. Results showed (Randstad 2018) that 60% of the employees have left their jobs due to bad management, or 50% of 7.000 participants saying the reason for leaving their job was to get away from their supervisors to improve the quality of their life. And the other side of the table is not any better, showing numbers such as 71% (DDI 2015), or 85% (DDI 2014) of the leaders do not feel skilled enough or comfortable to lead their organizations. In an even broader sense, research shows a survey of 10.000 millennials from 36 countries, with results of 71% of them saying they would like to leave their jobs due to unhappiness with leadership development opportunities.

The future brings a lot of challenges and changes to workplaces. While organizations are changing, so is the role of the leader. Changes can be seen in the recent history of how COVID-19 changed the working culture from offices to remote work, and it hasn't changed fully back to office life but has formed a new normal of **hybrid work**, the combination of virtual and physical

workplaces. Physical workplaces are replaced with home offices, and advanced technology and fluent communication have an even greater impact. COVID showed us that the work could be done effectively remotely but leaves us still missing the physical presence, lacking the social interactions that we as humans crave. (Haapakoski, Niemelä & Yrjölä 2020, 29-30.)

A big future leadership challenge that is affecting organizations already is the **well-being challenges**; mental health problems are on the rise and affect companies' work efficiency. And not only mental health challenges are increasing but also populations in the EU and Finland are ageing, and due to globalisation and immigration, the population is getting more **diverse**, bringing challenges in healthcare. Uncertainty of the future, post-pandemic life, climate change and other crises are one to increase mental health issues. Alongside increasing loneliness and mental health challenges (Kela 2021), the pandemic increased holistic health trends significantly. It encourages not only individuals but groups and even organisations to view and support health from all perspectives; physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual (TrendBible 2023; Sitra 2023, 26-27).

While it looks like **Covid-19** is in the past now, its consequences are not yet completely measured in mental health. Latest statistics show that every fifth of the working-age people in Finland struggle with quite a lot, or a lot of work-related stress (TTL 2023), 50% of the disability pensions are due to mental health disorders (Sitra 2023, 26), and sick leaves due to anxiety disorders have gone up 5 times among young women since 2005 (Kela 2021). Besides the statistics, millennials (the generation born between 1981 and 1996) are referred to as the burnout generation. Peterson (5.1.2019) describes the causes for burnout as unrealistic expectations at work, too high workload or demands, less equity or stability, especially now between crises, and alarming numbers of isolation and loneliness, and the list goes on.

Besides post-COVID times, and future challenges in hybrid and well-being leadership, the ageing of the population, globalisation and internet time generations are bringing new expectations to workplaces. According to the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System's (ESPAS 2019) report of global trends in 2030, EU fertility rates continue to decline at the same time as the world population grows, causing bigger moving waves and, therefore globalisation, making the working population more diverse. As Europe is not yet seen to lose its power soon, technology in creating online communication and collaboration tools plays a crucial part in succeeding. Not only do digital and virtual connections play a part, but growing physical connections are seen very essential in the future, and corporations are expected to offer both physical and digital connections to their employees. (Sitra 2020; Sitra 2023; ESPAS 2019).

Start-ups Magazine (Wood 2024) states that in 2025, **Generation Z** (generations born 1997-2012) are expected to be 27% of the workforce, who are different from the earlier generations and expect to be led differently. The generation has grown fully in the internet era and therefore is very fluent in technology and is seen bringing innovations and start-ups to the scene. This generation, and maybe generations after, are seeking purpose and meaningfulness at work, they want to work for companies that meet with their values. The generation expects to work for themselves, not for someone else's pocket, and engaging rates to corporate work can be at risk. Even though the generation has grown with digital platforms, they value authentic connections, vulnerability, and inclusiveness, such as emotional intelligence from their managers. This generation above all is seen to be on top of the trends, is future-oriented and optimistic, which might change the world into a more inclusive place. Therefore, companies who can answer to these expectations, are seen to have successful and sustainable positions in the market. (Wood 10 January 2024; Wells 10 December 2023.)



Figure 4. Leadership challenges

Summarizing the leadership challenges, it is possible to divide them into 4 categories; hybrid work, well-being, diversity, and challenges that the newer generations bring (Figure 3). These are variables that will shape the future of work and leadership, and companies sooner or later are demanded to answer. Recent history with pandemic, rise of technology, and globalisation are the factors that have started these challenges, and are developing new trends; business ideas to tackle the future demands, risks, and challenges.

2.2.2 Future leadership trends

The previous chapter shows the statistics of the current state of leadership and leadership challenges, this chapter looks into the future trends; what the market looks like in the future and what kind of solutions are expected to come to solve leadership challenges.

Based on 140 business leaders' interviews, and surveys with 14.000 employees, Morgan (2020, 14-15) suggests leadership directions to solve some of the challenges in the market. Notable Nine (Table 4) is a combination of four mindsets and five skills that are seen as critical for a successful future leader. To summarize the results with one word, it would be humanity; leaders are like any of us without special superpowers. They lead other human beings, and the interaction should be people-oriented, and show our real selves through vulnerability. Rather Morgan focusing on some special leadership traits, it is about the mindset of openness, flexibility, and optimism. Skills could be seen as the conception of how the role of the future leader is formed; we need Coaches to inspire people and build teams, Translators as the bridge of communication, Yoda to show our "force" through awareness and compassion with ourselves and others, and the Futurist and Technology teenager to show the way of the future possibilities. (Lotery 22.6.2022.)

Table 6. Notable nine (Morgan 2020)

FOUR MINDSETS	FIVE SKILLS
<p>The Explorer: Curious for information and changes, growth mindset – to explore something new and unknown.</p>	<p>The Futurist: instead of having ability to predict future, it's openness – make future scenarios and be open and flexible for any outcome.</p>
<p>The Chef: master of balance, purpose driven and caring, empathy and self-awareness.</p>	<p>Yoda: emotional coach, emotional intelligence skills = empathy and self-awareness.</p>
<p>The Servant: switch of old roles; leaders serve employees to succeed – so they serve you, humility, and vulnerability.</p>	<p>The Translator: bridge to connect people and things; ability to listen and communicate.</p>
<p>The Global citizen: ability to think globally; lead diversity and spread ideas across globe – understand cultures and differences.</p>	<p>The Coach: ability motivate, engage and inspire – ability to build teams of differences, create future leaders.</p>
	<p>The Technology Teenager: technology fluency, embrace possibilities realistically, encouragement to adapt quickly and learn by doing.</p>

What stands out from Morgan's notable nine is the glue of improving people skills, and understanding the responsibilities leaders have. From the mindset side, "the chef" is the master of balance; the leader balances the human side of work, employees' well-being and psychological safety, adding the technological side; the ability to advance the changing world of digitalisation, data, and AI. The chef is answering to the expectations of the new generations; they embrace the purpose and common values in their jobs and use emotional intelligence skills such as self-awareness and empathy as their tactics. Morgan encourages future leaders to handle 5 skills, and what stands out, is Yoda, a known character from Star Wars. Yoda was not only a successful Jedi trainer, but he was emotional intelligence coach. Empathy and self-awareness are seen as the top 5 skills for leaders to have in the future. (Morgan 2020, 136-146; 197-208.)

Future of work-study prepared by McKinsey (23.1.2023); article suggests areas to focus on to strengthen the hybrid/remote work efficiency. The first area that stands out together with other leadership studies, such as Morgan (2020) and Brown (2018), executives' key focus should go to clarity, coaching and empathy; leaders should centralize their time to provide a sense of purpose to their employees and invest to authentic and meaningful connections. Together with the McKinsey study, Haapakoski al. (2020, 50, 82-90) emphasise the importance of investing in authentic human interactions, finding communication channels that work for everyone, and adapting to new ways to collaborate to see how everyone is doing and how they are feeling. Embracing honest and open emotional talk is seen to be the key to success, where everyone in the organisation should be encouraged to discuss their feelings, have both positive and difficult discussions, give, and receive feedback, and change power structures and lowering hierarchies.

Well-being issues are not only a leadership challenge, but it is also a big mega-trend in the market, that people are looking to solve with innovations. To put the issue in perspective, well-being challenges are not anymore, an individual problem of a few but a whole society's responsibility, which affects to big part of the working-age population and productivity. Emilia Kujala, a future-oriented psychotherapist addresses the worry for the mental health crisis and the importance of not only looking for the root causes but finding sustainable solutions. Instead of looking at mental health issues as short-term expenses and psychotherapists' responsibility to fix the people, well-being should be seen as a collective long-term investment to make the population symptom-free. She challenges corporations and decision-makers to join in making the world a better place. Together, everyone, specifically people holding more power should join in questioning current truths and ways of working, and co-creatively come up with solutions to help with this mental health crisis. (Sirta 2023, 28-29.) As Kujala states, solutions should not only support individual but also group mental health, developing emotional intelligence skills in organisations could be a solution. It would help individuals who have it difficult to label, communicate and be more open about their

emotions and boundaries, and others such as leaders to be more empathic and understanding of the individual, creating an accepting and inclusive company culture. (Uusitalo-Arola 2019.)

Brown addresses the current state of leadership issues in different stages of avoidance; whether it's difficult conversations, understanding and regulating our emotions, masking communication or connection issues with lack of time, resources, and ownership. In her years of research and interviews with leaders, everyone empathises that if we want changes in the future, we need more courageous leaders and inclusive company cultures. To get there, leaders should practice vulnerability, self-awareness, and compassion. Through honesty to themselves as leaders or businesses, we can practice seeing where we are and communicate this to employees, as no business issue such as financial difficulties could be solved by sweeping it under the rug. (Brown 2018, 6-15.)

3 New business development with the design thinking approach

Due to the increase of service sector businesses and changing customer demands in the last couple of centuries, organisations have woken up to re-evaluate their operations and business models from a different angle. As businesses, schools and individuals are racing against resources and want to be ahead of their game, their eyes have turned to the creative professionals: designers. Studying designers and their methods of approaching certain problems has not only created new creative ways to approach tasks but has made it available for everyone to apply these methods as part of strategic thinking. Design thinking was created as an approach to utilize the designer's sensitivity to combine real human insights with technology, to create new fearless innovations with higher value propositions. Design thinking is not only an approach, method, or tool set, it is a mindset that unites the customer needs, problem-solving, visualisation, experimentation and diversity of ideas and people. (Maula & Maula 2019, 19-21; You 2022, 1-2.)

As a research approach, design thinking has increased its popularity by embracing innovation and value co-creation, and it is an excellent tool for gaining user insight. It is an approach that can be modified to many fields; business sectors, hospitals, science, education and so forth — offering a variety of different tools and methods to gather information to develop the wanted improvement areas. Besides, it is an excellent approach to developing company cultures as it encourages creative thinking and innovation by being a forward-looking, future-oriented approach to strategic planning, that can create competitive advantage. In management education, design thinking is used to teach important leadership skills, such as empathy, out-of-the-box thinking, and experimentation, as well as communication skills and teamwork through collaborations with different teams. (Mandaar & Vijayakumar 2020, 2-3.) In new business model innovation, Xinya You (2022, 2-5) emphasizes the role of design thinking as an important method to understand business problems to find creative solutions, where the business concepts are built around the most important value propositions.

Rudkin Ingle (2013, 18) describes design thinking research as an evolving approach, that doesn't seek statistical results but aims to gain information from insights and perspectives that it uses to lead business decisions. As the results might vary on the sample group, the facilitator of the research has a great responsibility to make the right conclusions. To avoid making biased resolutions, the approach centralises the mindset of questioning rather than assuming, the research then documents the answers and analyses them for business decision-making. Methods to lead the process can be either quantitative; relying on a high amount of data and statistical results from either existing sources or new surveys, or qualitative; relying on the specific sample group and a more thorough exploration and understanding of the right target group. These two can

be also combined in the research process, beginning the process relying on quantitative results from surveys and online data, and later deepening the understanding and designing the service, using qualitative methods such as interviews and workshops. (Ingle 2013, 18-19; Ojasalo al. 2014, 72-78.)

IDEO U, an international design company and design thinking educator, centralises the core of the design thinking process in three mindsets: 1) Empathy; the ability to broaden our horizons and get inspired by others 2) Ideation; the goal of the process is getting non-judgemental to generate many ideas 3) Experimentation; start to experiment and test early, to understand the ideas is to make them tangible. The process can be visualised in a double-diamond framework (Figure 4), where the beginning of the journey is discovering the user's problems with empathy and defining the specific problem area to focus on with traditional research methods. Once the problem is defined, the design methods come into place, and ideation and experimentation are needed aiming for specific solutions with developing and delivering phases. (IDEO U; Interaction Design Foundation May 25, 2016.)

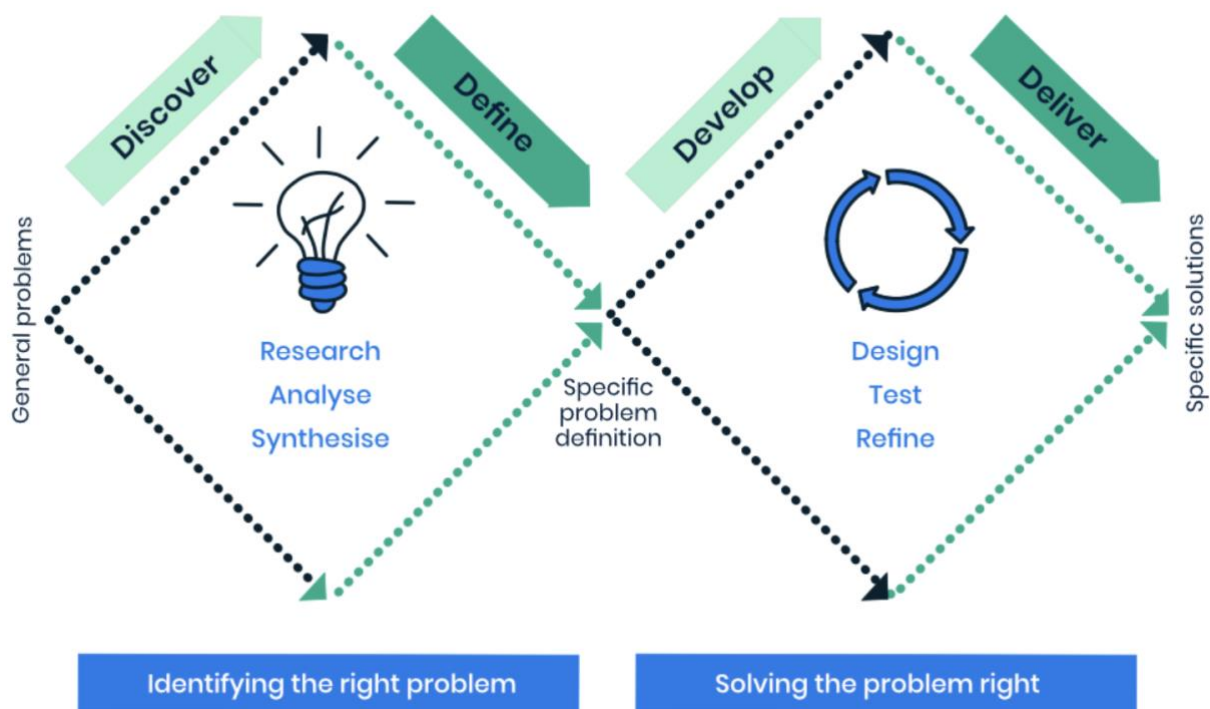


Figure 5. Double diamond framework (Interaction Design Foundation May 25, 2016)

To conclude this, design thinking is a people-centred, co-creative, and ever-evolving iterative process. It is searching for answers to have a holistic understanding of human behaviour; how we

think and feel, what motivates us and what are our drivers. Building user understanding enables innovations. To quote Steven Jobs “Design is not just what it looks or feels like. Design is how it works”, in a similar way as design develops experience with added value, design thinking aims to optimise the service experience with similar tools like research, collaboration, visualising, testing, and iterating. (Cramer 29.4.2021.)

The next chapters will dive into the process of design thinking; what stages the research is following, and what research methods and design thinking tools each stage is utilizing. The final chapter brings all this together; process, methods, and tools into one unified research project.

3.1 Design thinking stages

Design thinking study has different variations on the steps due to its flexible nature, greatly depending on the original problem or challenge at hand. The ideology is to gather information from a variety of sources, co-create, test, and analyse it along the way. The process is not linear, and the steps might go back and forth, iterations are an essential part of the process. (Ingle 2013, 2-3; Ojasalo al. 2014, 74.) Apart from being an iterative process, Kotler et al. (2020, 44-46) culminate a few more factors for the successful process; a diverse project team with knowledge and insights from different fields, as well as a working culture that encourages experimentation and creativity. Highlighting the mindset of *failing early and often*, and steps that do not need to be finished before going to the next one.

The purpose of this research is to design an emotionally intelligent leadership concept that creates the most value proposition for its defined target group (people leaders). The following stages are chosen for this project: empathise, define, ideate, and prototype. Starting from empathising and defining, these two steps are looking to define the human-centred problem, these steps could be described as the research part. During the first two steps, the research and chosen methods are looking to answer the desirability and validate it throughout the stages. Continuing into ideate and prototype steps, research transforms into design, this is the creative phase which is looking for the right solutions and analysing them from feasibility and viability perspectives. (Voltage control 2023.)

The first step, **empathize**, aims to gain user-centric insights by empathising with the end user. It combines understanding and observing design thinking methods, by exploring and making sense of the problem in its natural form from many different perspectives, and observing the user, their behaviour, and environments by not only focusing on the problem itself but also what's around it. Instead of focusing on the traditional structured interview style, the empathize stage tries to gain information through semi-structured conversation-styled interviews. Rather than assuming, the

designer aims to understand the deeper needs, motives, and experiences. (Friis Dam 16.10.2023; Kotler al. 2020, 45-46.)

Moving to the next part; **define** gathers the information gained from the empathize stage and narrows it down to the focus area; to the problem the designer wants to solve. In the define stage, the researcher usually doesn't do additional interviews but analyses the data from the previous step. It is also a common step to return to through iteration from later stages to redefine the focus area and the problem. It is important to do advanced observation in this stage; what are the repeating patterns, thoughts, or words the user mentioned, and what did they say about the needs and challenges? As the definition aims to narrow down the focus area, a common tool is to form a problem statement or a point of view (POV) to make sense of the problem or challenge the user has. Instead of focusing on business goals, the problem statement approaches the challenges from the user-centric needs. (Stevens 19.4.2023; Voltage control 8.8.2023.)

The last two steps ideate, and prototype present the co-creation and design part of the study. As in the previous two steps the research moves around the problem space and tries to focus on one human-centred problem, **ideation** aims to generate a great number of solution options, reviewing the challenges from different perspectives. At this point, the ideas should be non-judgemental and not get too stuck with business model perspectives on whether the solutions are feasible or not. The tools should encourage fast thinking, commonly involving brainstorming sessions that are as inclusive as possible, making each participant contribute one way or another. **Prototype** then strives to make the abstract ideas tangible, deepening the understanding if something works or not by different visualisation and explaining techniques. The prototype doesn't aim for a ready product, but early feature testing for early failure to build resilience. (Friis Dam 16 October 2023; Kotler et al. 2020, 47-48; Stevens 19 April 2023.) Typically, design thinking has one more step, testing, to go to the market with the product or service and pilot it, but in this study, the prototype is the last phase of the study.

3.2 Methodology

Ojasalo et al (2014, 76-78) empathize with the possibilities and versatility of the methods to approach the research questions in development-oriented research. At the beginning of the process when gaining an understanding of the target group and defining the focus area, user-centric interviews, as well as different ethnographic approaches (observation, netnography) are common choices. Continuing to ideate and prototype, where the research aims to develop solutions, the methods rely on collaboration, therefore co-design methods, such as ideation workshops are the most common choices for aimed results. In design thinking, in this context, the methods are referred to as necessary practices to reach the compulsory information, and tools on

the other hand are the implementations to reach the wanted results inside the methods (Kurek 2023, 5). The main three methods chosen for this development study are interviews, netnography and co-creative workshops. As nature, these are qualitative methods that study defined target groups of people leaders, and instead of statistical results, the study aims to conclude true human insights and experiences, that can be used as part of the development process (Silverman 2013, 9-11).

3.2.1 Interviews

Empathy, one the most central aspect of design thinking is the key to building a connection between the designer and the target group, to be authentically interested in them and create mutual trust (IDEO U). Interviews are a common way to get closer to the customer and gain user insight. The meaning of the interview is to gather knowledge of the customer's life and thoughts, both work and free time. This is the inspiration and guidance while designing the services. The interviewer is genuinely interested in the interviewee's life, actions, and asks precise questions, and observes the person. The idea is not just to ask questions one by one, but to understand the customer and their motives. The situation should be as normal and relaxed as possible, where recordings and notepads can disturb the authentic situation, and therefore the interviews are usually open or semi-structured. (Tuulaniemi 2011, 146-148.)

As a first design thinking method, interviews were organised to gather essential customer information and insights to find the design issues. Interviews were done with 5 participants, and they followed a relaxed, customizable semi-structure, aiming to empathise with the user with the relaxed questions and themes, but also observe them. The goal was to interview people with leadership experience, who have true insights to share and are interested in the topic of leadership development and emotional intelligence. Recruiting the participants happened through references from others and connecting with people online (LinkedIn) and offline (work-related events).

Interview participants:

Person 1. Leadership consultant with versatile experience from team management positions to C-level leadership.

Person 2. Marketing manager with experience in team management.

Person 3. Leadership and internal communication coach -entrepreneur. Versatile experience in team management and leadership challenges, emotional intelligence enthusiasm.

Person 4. Team leader in consulting services with a psychology study background, currently finishing an additional degree in leadership.

Person 5. The sales manager from a mental health organisation with experience in talent acquisition, human resources, and team management. Enthusiastic of emotional intelligence.

Forming the interview structure, literature, and online sources such as Scherba 20 August 2021, Tuulaniemi 2011 and Tool Factory helped to form the interview themes into 4 main categories, and one extra category of observation as follows:

- 1) Who are we empathising with; Discuss their current situation, what they like the most about being a manager and what are the current challenges.
- 2) What do they need to do; what is the most important job for (people) leaders, what are the required skills and how to develop them? During the time the mental-health crisis was also discussed, such as what could managers do, whose responsibility is it, and what is the connection between emotional intelligence and mental health.
- 3) What do they see and hear; what are the current trends, what does the environment look like and what are the media/channels they follow?
- 4) What do they think and feel; what makes them feel good, what kind of dreams do they have? What frustrates or annoys them? As one of my personal favourites in this theme, I also asked them to define success (in leadership or life in general).
- 5) Observation theme, no questions were asked in this one but analysed from the point-of-view; what I can imagine them saying or doing, and what kind of behaviour I observe.

3.2.2 Ethnography

Besides the empathic interview approach, many literature sources suggest ethnographic methods (Ojasalo al. 2014, 76-77; Tuulaniemi 2011, 152-153; Miettinen 2011, 63-65) as an approach to deepen the user insight and search solutions; how others are solving the issue at hand.

Ethnography relies on observation and interaction with the target group, either online (netnography) or offline. Ethnography itself is a great choice to support other methods, such as interviews or co-design sessions to understand the market, but as an approach alone it could be seen as too narrow with the scope, relying too much on the researcher's conclusions, and possibly biased thinking. Specifically, for the define phase to refine the user problem and understand the market needs, netnography fits excellently. (Nielsen June 2017.) In this research, the ethnographic methods are used as observation of the interviewees and workshop participants, and netnography of online (LinkedIn) and audio sources (podcasts) that were mentioned during the interview process, to strengthen the knowledge of the market, trends and topics people talk about.

3.2.3 Co-creative workshop

Lastly, as a method, a co-creative workshop was a clear choice from the beginning to include in the design process. As design thinking is described as a co-creative, inclusive, and creative process, the project would have felt empty without a group to co-design with. Satu Miettinen (2011, 77-78) rephrases the co-design method as an approach to bring experts from various fields and backgrounds together, looking for solutions from different angles, where a facilitator encourages the group for supportive and non-judgemental teamwork. In the co-creative workshops, the idea is to get the creativity flowing and make solutions tangible by visualizing them with various options of tools (Ojasalo et al. 2014, 78.)

After the data gathered from interviews and ethnography methods, the workshop was an excellent way to gather more useful insights of the target group, and above all it was a key part of the process, where the workshop participants were invited to co-design a service. Reviewing the design thinking stages of empathise, define, ideate, and prototype, the co-creative workshop can be used in various steps to gain necessary information for the study; either gain user insights for discovering and defining, or group brainstorming and group developing (Designorate).

Unlike the interviews, no background experience or title was set as a requirement from the workshop participants, rather gathering a group from various backgrounds and skills, who can have a playful mindset and share ideas. End of the day I was able to recruit one organisation that agreed to give away 5 of their employees to join this couple of-hour workshop, and all participants happened to be from management or leading positions, as introduced below.

Workshop participants:

Person 1. Head of facilities.

Person 2. Team leader/ head of services, mental health advocate.

Person 3. Head of events and production, service design enthusiastic.

Person 4. CIO, MarCom specialist.

Person 5. CEO.

3.3 Tools

Methods were previously introduced as a necessary part of the development process to get the essential information, tools could be described as the key building blocks that help to gain the information, analyse it, ask the right questions, and guide the decisions (Kurek 2023, 5). Design

thinking is known for its diverse choice of tools to approach the research issue. Sometimes it also makes the work rather difficult when the process can be approached from different angles compared to traditional research approaches. This work was not an easy one either when it came to choosing the right guiding blocks, and during the process it formed, and even until the end, some were taken away and replaced with others. End-of-the-day design thinking is an iterative process; therefore, changes are a natural part of the journey. With the help of Haaga-Helia UAS teachers and tools provided, such as Lab8 Tool-Factory and Hyper Island Toolbox, in collaboration with famous design thinking trendsetter IDEO, it was possible to analyse the set of tools and choose the most appropriate ones for this study.

IDEO.org describes tools as an essential part of the design thinking process, to approach complex human-centred problems, and empathise with the target group. Once we get closer to understanding the user, the next tools guide us to form the solutions, test and iterate them. Xinya You (2022, 13-14) accentuates the importance of design thinking tools to facilitate new business innovation, with implementations such as business model canvas, customer journey, value mapping, and SWOT analysis.

Below is a description of the tools used during this development project. Other than the tools mentioned below (Table 7), **Value Proposition Canvas** has a pivotal role in guiding the process and aiming for desired results. It describes and analyses not only the ideal **customer persona** by understanding their jobs to be done, gains (what makes them happy and jobs easier), and pains (frustrations and jobs to do difficult) - it also discovers the central research question; *what kind of service has the most value for its users*. The other side of the value proposition canvas analyses 1) gain creators; what to offer to achieve gains, 2) pain relievers; how to relieve pains and eliminate user problems, and 3) services; and the service to offer to get users' jobs done. (Gust de Backer November 2023.)

Table 7. Tool choices explained:

	What	Why
Empathy map	A way to compound the valuable insights gathered from the interviews, identifying, and analysing optimal users. Look for answers to user pains, gains, and jobs to be done, as well as needs, dreams and expectations. (Ingle 2013, 44-45)	Core in getting closer to the customer, empathize with what's important to them and form the understanding of the user problem the solution tries to answer. Way to combine the data into one customer persona.

Point-of-view	A deeper analysis and definition of the human-centred problem by analysing the user tasks and needs to make them happen. Built with elements of user, need and insight, forming to a sentence. (Friis Dam November 2019).	As the interviews or empathy map itself didn't fully analyse the user problem, the point-of-view helps to define what underlines deeper in the customers, what could be the deep need to make their jobs be done.
How might we?	The idea of the HMW -exercise is to see opportunities instead of challenges, forming how might we -questions from the customer insight and leadership challenges. HMW should not only offer one solution, but a variety of ideas. (Toolbox)	Stimulate the design group to start forming opportunities from the challenges and problems and define the focus area to see what is important to the group.
Crazy 8	Participants fold A4 paper into 8 segments and have 1 minute in each segment to sketch an idea. During the practice, the facilitator gives guidance and tips, and after 8 minutes, participants present their solutions. (Workshop Wednesday 2021)	Great transition from define/HMW to ideation, to have everyone participate, and get creative. The facilitation point of view was also clear to instruct and organise, with time pressure to get playful mind moving.
Roleplay	Through roleplaying, in this case, using Lego figures as characters, the idea is to combine ideas into one solution. A sales situation keeping the problem, service description, and value proposition in mind when demonstrating, plus if can demonstrate why the concept works and is sustainable.	Make ideas tangible, test abstract concepts, and see what works and what does not. The idea is not to have it perfect, but to learn from it and make conclusions, what direction possibly go to, or if some of the earlier steps need more focus = iteration.

Furthermore, the value proposition canvas has the role of specifying and analysing the research findings from the value point of view and exploring what kind of solution is the most desirable, **Business Model Canvas** is used to scan the business possibilities. It compounds every aspect of the business idea from describing the purpose, the value proposition, customers and relationships, key resources, and activities, as well as analyses the cost structures and revenue streams. The canvas is made of 9 segments which summarise the three design thinking principles: solution desirability, feasibility, and viability. Besides business model canvas is an excellent tool for new business innovations as it coherently takes all variables of the business into account and visualises

it perfectly, it is also an important tool for ever-evolving demands, to review the business and modify it accordingly. (Isaac Jeffries.)

3.4 Compilation of the research and development process

As a process, method and toolset, design thinking is a very abstract concept, and to understand and utilise it as part of the development-oriented study, it is important to review it as at whole and understand how it is built. Figure 6 presented below visualises the 4-stage process, compiling them with design thinking methods and tools chosen for this study.

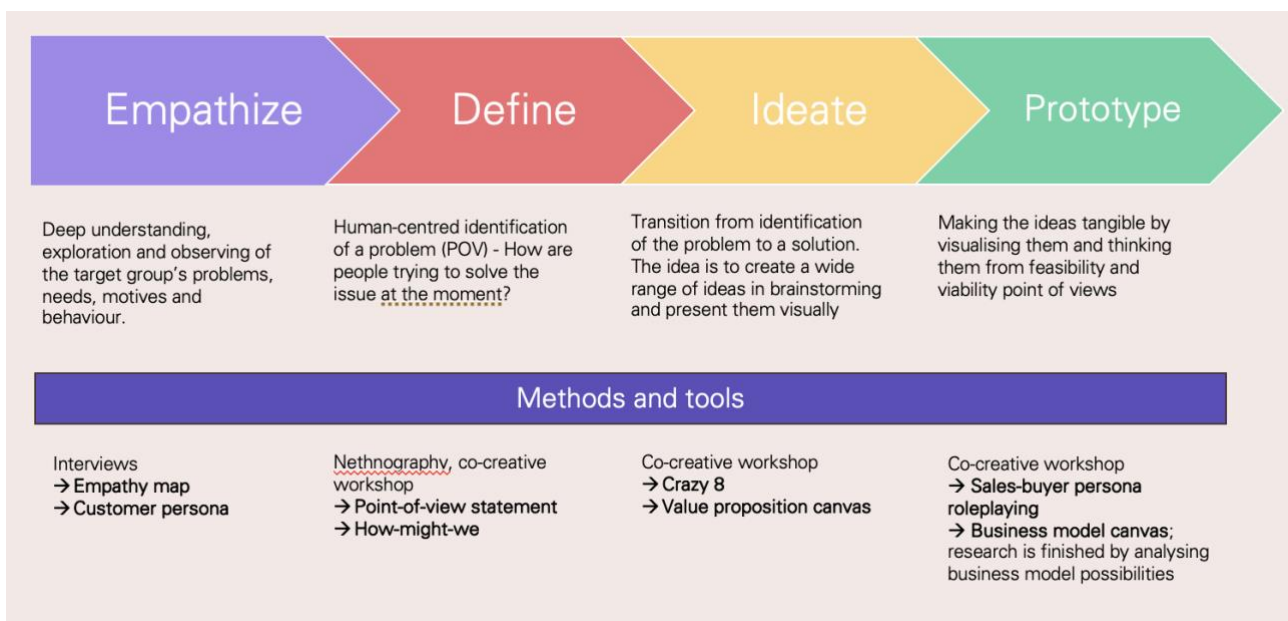


Figure 6. Visual presentation of the design thinking process, methods, and tools

The first stages of the study; is empathise and define what was previously explained as the research part, focusing on understanding, and observing the user, and recognising the repeating patterns. To get closer to the user and empathise with them, interviews are chosen as the method, and empathy map and customer persona as tools to guide interviews and analyse the findings. In the define stage, no additional interviews are done, but the previous findings are further analysed with the help of netnography methods. In the define stage, the goal is to identify the human-centred problem, that the emotionally intelligent concept could solve, the point-of-view statement is the tool that analyses this research question by combining user insight and needs. The define stage is a complex part of the design thinking process, that not only analyses the interview and netnography results, but it also asks the workshop participants to join in defining the focus area with How-might-we practice. The Empathise stage is the introducing stage of the user, The define stage analyses

the findings and answers to the first research question; what is the human problem that the emotionally intelligent leadership concept aims to answer?

The design thinking process is divided into the research and design parts, next two stages; ideate and prototype move around the designing a solution phase. The co-creative workshop plays a pivotal role in the development process, as well as gaining necessary information for the study. Workshop being the design thinking method, a set of tools are chosen to receive the wanted results in the process and answer to the research questions. Design thinking literature (Tuulaniemi 2011; Miettinen 2011; Ojasalo et al. 2014), online sources (Lab8 Tool Factory; Hyper Island Toolbox) and YouTube channels (Workshop Wednesday; Career Foundry) are a great inspiration for understanding the role of design tools, how to utilise them best and choose the right ones to this study. The workshop agenda presented below (Figure 7) is an excellent presentation of compiling design thinking tools of How Might We, Crazy 8 and Roleplaying into the method of co-creative workshop. The workshop itself moves from the stages of Define (How Might We) to Ideate (Crazy 8) and finishes with Prototype (Sales-Buyer Persona Roleplaying). Then as a guiding frame and way to analyse the findings Value Proposition Canvas is used to understand the value proposition and to answer the second research question; what kind of service has the highest value proposition? Business Model Canvas is used to analyse business model possibilities by answering the last research question; how to create an emotionally intelligent leadership concept.



Figure 7. Workshop's agenda

4 Development of an emotionally intelligent leadership concept

The previous chapter introduced the design thinking process, methods and tools chosen for this thesis, this chapter analyses the data gathered in each step of the process; empathize, define, ideate, and prototype, utilising the methods of interviews, ethnography, and workshop together with various design thinking tools. The chapters are divided into the design thinking stages, and within every chapter, sub-chapters dive into relevant design thinking questions by proceeding from the customer understanding to identifying a problem, to developing solutions and understanding feasibility and viability points of view. Every sub-chapter starts with explaining what methods and tools are used to gain and analyse each theme of the chapter.

4.1 Empathise

Tony Scherba (20 August 2021) introduces the empathise stage as the first crucial step in design thinking which we should not forget or rush out from. While often we come up first with solutions to certain problems rather than investigating the real user, it is important to go back to the baseline of empathising with the people who we're developing the service for and use these insights as part of the development. Therefore, inspired by literature such as Tuulaniemi (2011) and Ojasalo et al. (2014) the first step of the process is to understand the user, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the first method to approach the topic of identifying an ideal customer and dive into their world; how their surroundings or days look like, what makes them happy and what frustrates them. A tool to gain this knowledge is an empathy map which plays a central role in approaching the user and structuring the interviews. Besides the empathy map, the customer persona is used to further analyse user insights by understanding their gains, pains, and jobs to be done.

The next two sub-chapters analyse more of the findings of the user insight and perception of emotionally intelligent leadership. Keeping in mind that design thinking is not a linear process but rather iterative, not only the interviews were used to gain user insight but also the workshops, and along-the-way observation helped to revalidate and achieve a broader amount of data. This chapter is a baseline to introduce the user, their challenges and how they perceive emotional intelligence, and it is a preface to analysing the first research question; what is the human problem that the EIL concept aims to solve?

4.1.1 User insight

Methods: interviews, observation, workshop

Tools: empathy map, customer profile (part of value proposition canvas)

Combining the data from the interviews and analysing it, an empathy map was used to visualise all 5 interview findings in one (Figure 8). However, only to rely on the analysis of the empathy map is very extensive, Ojasalo et al. (2014, 138) remind the importance of noticing repeating patterns and themes. Once repeating themes are analysed, it is also important to review them from different perspectives and revalidate the findings. To broaden the user insight sample, the workshop group was introduced to the customer insight findings through the customer profile (Figure 9) and asked them to join in empathising. The findings were not only revalidated with the group but also some additional changes were made to the persona together with the workshop participants.

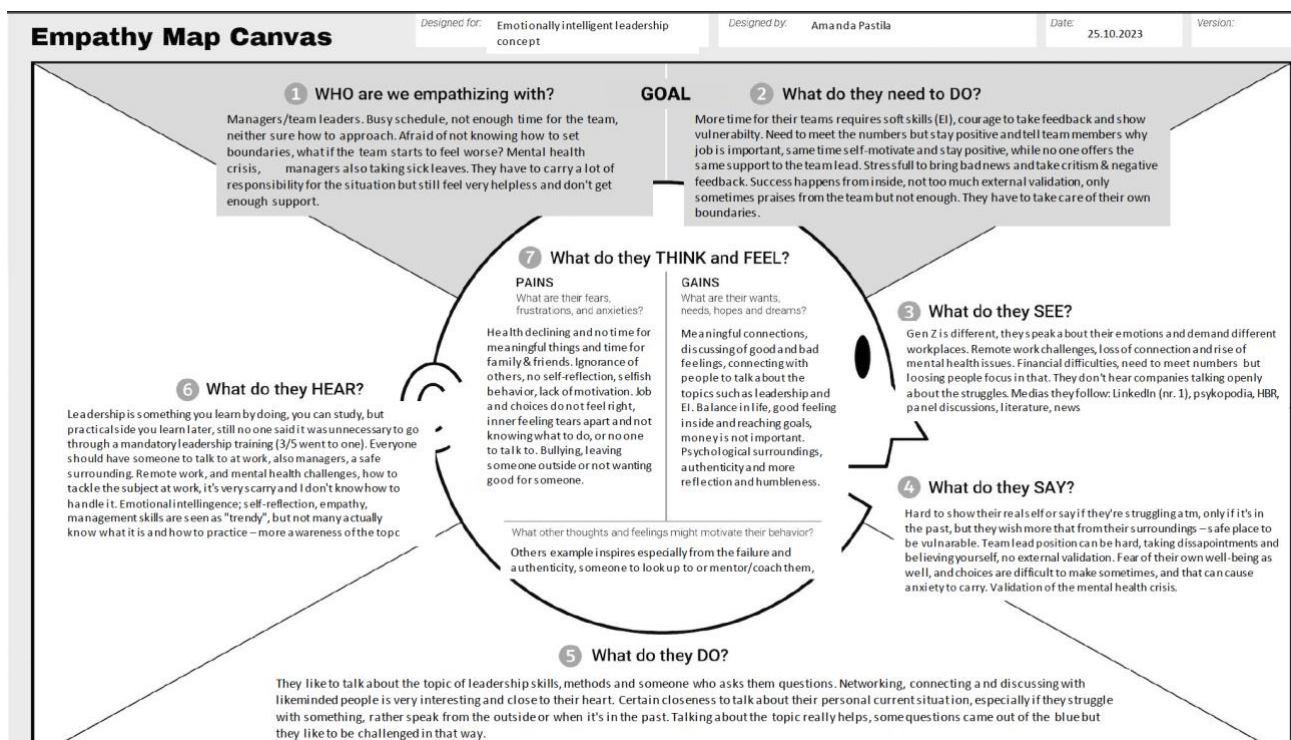


Figure 8. Empathy map

Analysing the interview findings, a few findings came out as very strong through how people were expressing themselves and through observation of repeating patterns. Firstly, each participant mentioned in one way or another the downside of the team management job, or even for someone the reason to switch jobs was the loneliness and loss of direction the role provided them. It was underlined that managers too, if not even more than their team members, suffer from mental health issues and many times it is due to high workload or uneven distribution of work, and one thing they wish is to receive more empathy and vulnerability from peer colleagues or higher-ups. Most of the participants felt that if companies could practice more openness and discuss difficult topics and struggles, the company could be more successful, where vulnerability and empathy are seen as the keys to success.

Another essential finding from the interviews was the leadership training that 3/5 of the participants have received and the other 2 felt that it would have been nice to receive one. All said the trainings were lacking the practical side but saw that they were still essential to go through in the career development. Also, what was noticed by interviewees was that since they were logging in for more collaboration and human connection in their roles, they wished to have someone to turn into such as someone mentoring or coaching them. This was an important finding to take into consideration in the later stage when investigating what kind of EIL concept could work in the market and could provide the highest value for the target group.

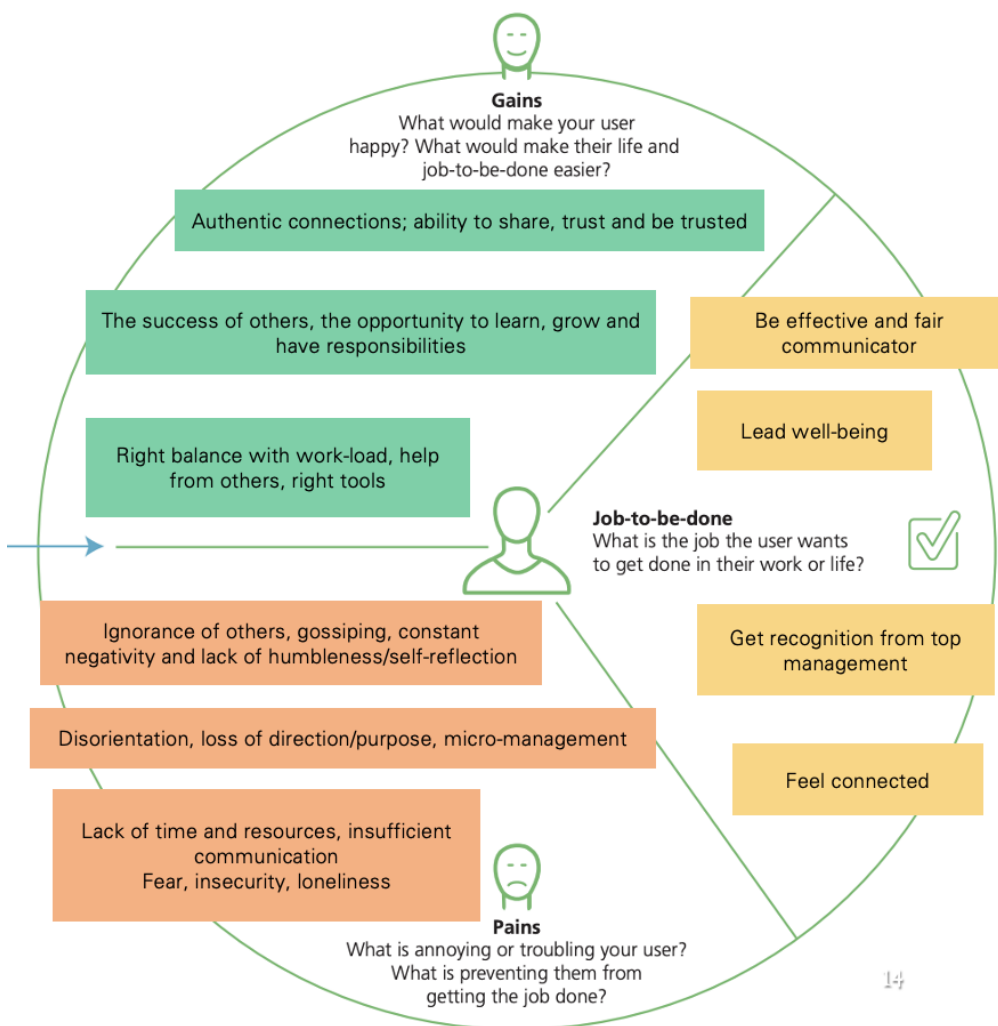


Figure 9. Customer persona

Moving into a deeper analysis of the data and the customer insight, specifically the interview theme 4: what do they think and feel, was analysed, and put together into customer persona; what are their pains, gains, and jobs to be done? Besides the interview findings were put together in a visual form of customer persona (Figure 8), it was also presented to the workshop participants, and some

additional changes were made to the persona. Figure 9 presents the findings combined and narrowed down to the ones that resonated with most of the participants, both interviews and workshops.

Analysing the customer profile, it is recommended to start with jobs-to-be-done, something that the user wants to accomplish (Gust de Backer 7.11.2023), and in this context, in work life, specifically in the team management position. A centric finding was made that as people leaders, the most important job was named naturally people focus, taking care of each other with open and transparent communication, not forgetting to take care of their boundaries as well. Not only are the team managers responsible for peoples' well-being, but considering the changing times and leadership challenges, they are expected to embrace the well-being with their leadership style. Both interviewers and workshop participants empathized with the mix-match of responsibilities that the role has, on the other hand, it is taking care of the team with high-level communication skills that need experience and practice to gain. It was also mentioned the pressure from above that makes the job very stressful, and leaders are expected to be masters in balancing expectations from high and low in the company and take care of their limits and mental health.

Continuing to the customer gains; what makes them happy. Human connection was something that resonated the most, whether it was described through success, interactions at work or values in life. While the user feels the relationship is authentic, they feel that the trust is mutual, and can gain more responsibilities, culminating in a feeling of success. As the human connection is very important, users also enjoy seeing others succeeding, which they see as an opportunity for them to learn and grow and have a good inner feeling. Analysing more on the right side, jobs to be done and what would help the user make them easier, right tools and balance with workload was mentioned, but also the teamwork, people coming together to work for a common goal which is not only given from top-down.

Lastly moving to customer pains, what annoys or troubles the user, it continues with the same theme as the jobs or gains with people focus. Thinking of the opposite of authentic connections that the user desires and is making them happy, they feel unsure when surrounded by people with bad intentions, gossip, ignorance, and/or constant negativity that doesn't let them self-reflect, learn, and progress in life. These types of people are usually the ones that they don't want to have in their teams making their jobs hard. Frustration also reflects on the distrust they either receive from above or they are not able to trust their colleagues, which can lead to toxic traits such as micro-management. As mentioned, the people leader position is very mixed-matched with responsibilities, one of the most mentioned objectives that are preventing their jobs from being

done is time and resources. It is hard to prioritise the right tasks to please everyone, where transparent communication is the key to investing, both in good and bad times.

4.1.2 Perceptions of Emotionally Intelligent Leadership

Methods: interviews, workshop

Tools: notes summary

Several sources (Tuulaniemi 2011, 147-148; Ingle 2013, 5-6; Scherba 20.8.2021) explain the design thinking, and specifically the empathizing phase as an un-bias approach where the user should be observed in as natural and relaxed surroundings as possible. They should be encouraged to express their real thoughts rather than something that was given to them. Taking this into consideration but also the topic of emotionally intelligent leadership concept, the empathizing stage looks for answers to the question of current perceptions and attitudes of the topic without answering on behalf of the user. In the interview situation, the target group were introduced to the research topic and the aim of the interview briefly but otherwise told not to prepare for the interview, but rather to come as they are. While the interviews aimed to identify the ideal customer and gain valuable insights, the interviewees were also asked either directly or indirectly about their perception of emotional intelligence. Not only relying on the interviews but the workshop participants were also asked to write down in the introduction phase what they think of emotional intelligence.

In analysing the data and its repeating patterns, communication skills came as a very strong main theme. Communication skills, whether it was mentioned that it's transparent, collaborative, or inclusive, were seen as sort of an umbrella in emotional intelligence where underneath other themes were divided. Interview participants specifically were focused more on the individual side such as listening, reflecting, and understanding, while workshop participants were more on the social side talking about empathy; the ability to step in someone else's shoes. Besides the communication skills, both individual and social aspects, what was emphasised various times by the participants was the link between diverse teams and emotional intelligence. It was seen that emotional intelligence is a significant attribute to have or improve when working with different types of people and wanting to embrace diversity.

Only one participant mentioned emotional intelligence as the ability to label emotions and openly discuss them, others were more focused on soft skills, communication skills and empathy. It could show that even though all the participants saw emotional intelligence as a crucial and very important skill in leadership, they didn't want to associate it too much with talking about emotions. With some participants, the link between mental health issues and emotional intelligence was

discussed more in-depth, many mentioning the pandemic causing more mental health issues when the social aspect was taken away from most of us, and by investing in tools to build more social connections, it would be one way to answer to this mental health pandemic.

4.2 Define

This stage of design thinking continues in the research phase before entering the designing a solution. The define stage moves around the problem space, continues to deepen the customer's understanding, and investigates the precise problem (Kotler al. 2020, 45-47). Typically, in design thinking, steps overlap with each other, this research is not an exception either. The empathizing stage already diagnosed some user needs and problems with the help of an empathy map and customer persona, as well as the literature review revealed the future leadership trends and challenges around the scope where developing emotional intelligence could work. According to its name, the define stage aims to explain the business challenge or the user problem, and in the later stage, ideate and prototype are looking for possible solutions (Ingle 2023, 6-7).

As this stage moves around the problem space, so it is underlying the principle of design thinking; the solution should have a real human problem as a starting point (Kotler et al. 2020, 41) this chapter discloses the answer to the first research question; what is the human problem that the emotionally intelligent leadership concept aims to answer. Methods used in the define stage are to further analyse the interview findings with use of netnography as well as helping to define the focus area, workshop participants are invited to join in deciding the focus area. Tools used in the define stage are the Point-of-View statement which helps to define the user problems, and How might we -exercise that helps to co-develop the focused user problem.

4.2.1 Defining human problems

Methods: interviews, netnography

Tools: Point of view/problem statement

Ingle (2013, 6) explains the define phase as a transition from understanding, to utilising the same data gathered from the previous step. This is the case in defining the human problem as well, it is advancing the same data gathered from the interviews and analyses it further, but also gathering more information through netnography. Netnography is a typical method used in design thinking which is a qualitative approach to studying online and social media channels through text, video, sound, or picture formats (Ojasalo al. 2014, 117-118). This research does not greatly rely on netnography as the only approach, so an extensive online study was not made to find answers to

the research questions, but to support the interview findings and what the participants highlighted to gain a broader sample of the target group and the future trends.

Based on the interview findings, the participants were asked to describe the current situation in the market, trends they see or channels they follow, the focus was determined for the netnography. The most common social channel for the user group is LinkedIn, where they get updated on the latest trends, and discussions and collaborate with other like-minded people. In the same way, a few companies were mentioned in the interviews they follow regarding trends, that were looked up to for inspiration. Such companies mentioned were Auntie, Laavu Performance and Velbi. Besides keeping information up to date with literature and additional education, interviewees mentioned some YouTube and podcast channels they follow, and one that stood out particularly was the Finnish Psychological channel PsykoPodia. Below is a summary of three episodes highlighted from the podcast and important findings regarding this research.

Table 8. PsykoPodia findings summarized:

<p>103. Mieli ja mielenterveys työpaikalla. (<i>Mind and mental health at workplaces</i>) Kirsi Mäkelä & Matti Räsänen. 31.10.2022</p>	<p>Based on the expert survey, 80% of the participants predict that mental health issues will increase in the coming years, and workplaces should participate holistically in supporting collectively everyone's (mental) health. Experts suggest that there should be more open discussion and actions in workplaces to help either individuals who are struggling or to future prevent. Such actions could be for instance: reviewing work tasks and stress factors, providing the right tools, structures, and meaningfulness for employees (also for supervisors), present and empathic supervisor support, and collective caring company culture. A 4-point discussion framework was given for difficult situations and conversations.</p>
<p>128. Saako johtaja olla epävarma? (<i>Is it ok for leader to be insecure?</i>) Suvi Eriksson. 28.8.2023</p>	<p>The episode talks about leading people, and how good people management focuses on listening, communicative, humble, and empathic leadership, which also centralizes authentic interest in people. The episode discusses previous survey findings where leaders were asked what they worry about the most, and results were work-free time balance, team and own well-being, and fear of failing and difficult situations. Suvi discusses her own time as a starting leader receiving professional guidance, empathizing on the importance of empathic leadership and emotional skills, but also</p>

	getting widely to know oneself (self-awareness). It was underlined that all of these skills are possible to learn but one needs to be genuinely interested in people and willing to collaborate.
133. Monikulttuurisuus työpaikalla. (<i>Multiculturalism at workplaces</i>) Neleah Kagiri & Sanni Haapasalmi. 23.10.2023.	Theme was multiculturalism and diversity, and how it should be seen as a resource rather than a threat. Companies, specifically leaders and supervisors can embrace this by giving safe and supportive surroundings for new employees and being open to new cultures and habits, offering equal opportunity to learn. Moving into a pro-cultural and -diverse company cultures could start by examining biases, and investing in open and transparent communication that expresses one's practices, expectations, and boundaries (cultural exchange).

Throughout the interviews and netnography research, it is important to underline the user needs to identify the user's problems and the focus area. Sprouts (October 2017, min 1-2) suggests approaching the research issue of identifying the problem by analyzing the activities that were mentioned during the interviews, and what were the needs to fulfil them. Activities noticed are for instance difficult discussions with team members, high expectations from the top-down, and balancing between time, resources, and tasks. Then analyzing the needs or wants to achieve the activities, one could improve (soft) communication skills, connect with people, and priorities the right tasks. To form a point of view statement, it is about combining these previously mentioned activities, needs and customer insights as below.

PoV 1:

Leaders (Users) need to **improve their communication skills** (Need) because they want to handle difficult situations and conversations more efficiently (user insight/activity).

PoV 2:

Team managers need to **authentically connect with people** because they want to get closer to their team members and feel successful at their jobs.

PoV 3:

Team leaders need the **right tools and guidance** to work with because they need to find the right balance between work and free time and be able to handle difficult situations.

Combining these three statements to understand what are the human problems that the emotionally intelligent leadership concept could be an answer to, the problem space moves around the lack of tools and guidance that could provide them with the confidence to communicate and collaborate with others and create authentic connections. The user problem is that the leaders want to authentically connect, communicate, and collaborate with others but they don't have the right tools, guidance, and knowledge to do so, this all also culminates in distributing work more evenly and communicating the boundaries, and ask help from others and give it to others too.

4.2.2 Defining the focus area

Methods: workshop

Tools: How might we...?

The workshop participants were presented with the leadership challenges (Figure 4. in theory part Leadership challenges) that were identified during the theory and interview phase. The group were asked to choose one that resonated the most and we had a brief discussion on them, asking the group to join in empathizing and sharing their insights. From the leadership challenges of hybrid/remote work, well-being, diversity and newer generation challenges, the well-being challenges received the most votes. Many recognized the patterns from hybrid and remote work on causing the issues and seeing the challenges or more like opportunities that the diversity and newer generations bring, emphasis was on receiving more tools on these themes as well, but mental health is most present in one way or another in everyone's lives and is a topic that takes away a lot of productivity at work.

After the discussion on the leadership challenges, the group were asked to keep these insights with them, as well as reflect on the customer persona with jobs-to-be-done, user pains and gains, and see if they could imagine any opportunities within these challenges and customer insights. The group was not asked to come up straight away with solutions but asked to form a question; How might we (HMW), where after the HMW *indented action* for *primary user group* so that *desired outcome*. Such a question could be for instance: "How might we design a service for managers so that they can improve their emotional intelligence skills?". The purpose of this exercise is to make the group loosen up, and instead of only seeing challenges, for instance, the leadership challenges and pains of the position (customer insights), they think of opportunities and open for creativity (Workshop Wednesday, January 2021).

It took a little while for the group to get into the exercise but after understanding the task, they came up with very creative HMW -questions as listed below:

1. How might we balance the workload for our colleague X so he doesn't burn out during Y's event?
2. How might we build a better work-life balance for a leader so that they can give their best for their team?
3. How might we positively contribute to wellness balance for leaders/teams so that they can be more focused and efficient?
4. How might we teach organisations resource planning for leaders so that the workload in their teams would be more evenly distributed?
5. How might we create a feeling of equal belongingness for everyone so we feel like one united team?

As the practice was to find opportunities, it was also an excellent way to find out what problems resonate the most, and it was interesting to see repeating patterns. The questions focused a lot on workload but also personal life balance, seeing if these areas were better prioritized, people, and in this case, leaders, could do their jobs better and their team members would enjoy it too. And pointing out the number 5, an interesting way of progressing from challenges to opportunities, was to think if there was a way to create a concept that creates belongingness, that will make everyone feel like one, well-being team.

As the questions had similar themes, it wasn't difficult to define one common question with the group, combining the environment, work-load distribution/balance and well-being factors to one final how might we -question that the next chapter, ideation, used as first baseline of the development process:

“How might we design a concept for leaders so that it creates an environment that supports an even distribution of workload and well-being?”

Besides defining the focus area in well-being and even the distribution of the workload that the next chapter works on in the solution design, this exercise also crystallised more clearly the answer to the first research question. The human problem could be seen in that the leaders feel that the work environments do not support an even distribution of workload and well-being.

4.3 Ideate

Tuulaniemi (2011, 180-182) describes the ideation phase as an open-minded step, where quantity is more important than quality in the sense of thoroughly thinking about each idea. The cure is to encourage the group of designers to come up with as many, non-judgemental ideas. Once there is a great number of possible ideas, it is more likely that the good ones are pointed out rather than a small number of ideas to choose from. The same way as saying, “practice makes perfect”, we try

many ways and times until we get it. In the earlier chapter, the design thinking was moving from the problem space to opportunities with how might we -practice, the ideation stage continues in developing solutions to the opportunities. Once there's a great quantity of ideas, they are narrowed down and reviewed from the value proposition point of view; is the solution desired, and what is the promise of value? (Kotler al. 2020, 47).

Here in the ideation chapter to reach the number of ideas, crazy 8 is used as a design tool to make everyone participate and come up with possible solutions. Sub-chapter 4.3.1 contemplates the evolution of 5 participants' ideas and aims to recognize repeating themes and patterns, while chapter 4.3.2 examines not only workshop findings but other findings too from the interviews and ethnography in the form of a value proposition canvas, to understand what kind of solution brings the most value to its users and is desirable. This chapter, the ideation stage, is an important part of the thesis, as it reveals answers to research question 2; what kind of solution has the highest value for its users?

4.3.1 Solution ideas to solve the human problem

Methods: Workshop

Tools: crazy 8

Previously highlighted in the 3rd chapter of Design Thinking Tools, YouTube videos had a great impact on planning the content and tools for the workshop. Only reading about the theories and practices was a difficult way to make sense of these abstract tools and how to facilitate them, real examples were needed to see if certain tools were appropriate to this research. YouTube channel Workshop Wednesday guided with the How Might We -approach and how to best use it and suggested a great way to get everyone involved to generate ideas with effective time pressure (Workshop Wednesday 3.2.2021).

Starting with the Crazy 8 practice, in the first two minutes the participants could think of possible solutions to the previously defined HMW question "How might we design a concept for leaders so that it creates an environment that supports an even distribution of workload and well-being?". As time went on, the group were given more tips to think of their solution or continue sketching on the earlier one if they still had more ideas flowing. In minutes 3 and 4 participants could start thinking about the idea from the value proposition point of view; gain creators, pain relievers and services to get their jobs done, keeping in mind the customer profile we sketched earlier. After some minutes, more tips were given to think of the idea from the desirability (what makes it unique and stand out), feasibility (how does it work), and viability (is it profitable and sustainable) point of view (questions presented in Figure 9).

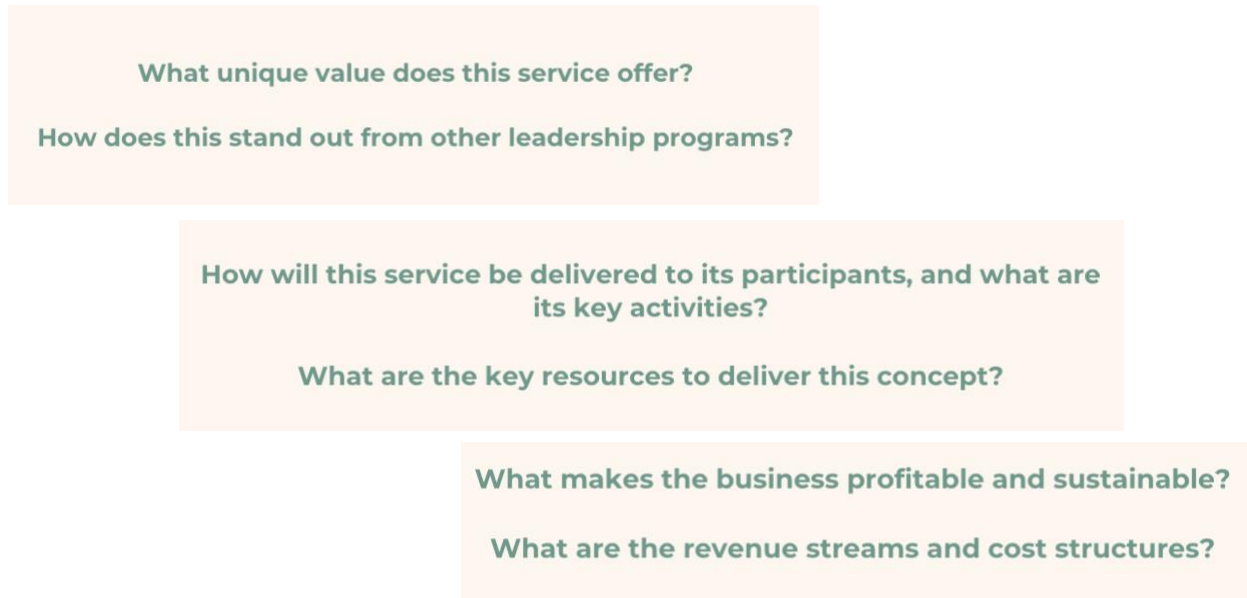


Figure 9. Crazy 8 tips

Table 9. Crazy 8's solutions summarized:

1	The first one presents the task findings stating that it wasn't easy to come up with ideas to help with this user problem and found the task very difficult. The person approached the issue by thinking of solutions that could lower the hierarchy and have more activities together, that could bring the team together, help each other and offer help when asked. The solution would be a combination of workshops and providing examples and tools to manage these activities.
2	The second one had a similar approach in the beginning by providing help, examples, and tools to approach the well-being challenge and even distribution. This person thought that by encouragement the team would be more honest about their needs and where they need assistance. Boundaries, responsibilities, and expectations should be communicated particularly well and invested time in, label tasks as primary and secondary. People must take ownership of each other but themselves as well as tasks, even when they don't like it.
3	The third concept culminated in the same; leading with example, having a philosophy behind that treat others the way you want to be treated, which presents empathy. Collaborate and actively interact with your team and across other roles to get fresh ideas. Calendars should be up to date if someone wants to

	<p>book a time to discuss. Invest in a company culture which encourages both asking and providing help and seeing that as strength and opportunity to learn and do something new = vulnerability. This would also focus on more collectivity rather than individuality which creates more movement and activities together. The solution could work by having resource planning sessions, execution, review and refine, a sort of design thinking process, that could be scaled online with facilitators and teams.</p>
4	<p>The fourth person started to approach the problem or question by gaining an understanding of the team members, especially the quieter ones since they might have something important to say and are not usually interviewed but are very dedicated employees. This could be done through coaching and mentoring, which makes them gain better people skills understand different kinds of people better, and understand how to lead them, not forgetting how important it is for leaders to also have a proper network, people to rely on for discussion and help. Concept ideation also evolves to thinking workshops with leaders from different companies to get to know more people and gain more knowledge not only of themselves but others as well, and how they manage their workloads. Training sessions would make them to understand different leadership styles through collaboration to discover best methods to create open environment, leading to happier managers with better work-life balance, evolving to happier team members, helping with productivity.</p>
5	<p>Continuing similar theme as the others, last person also started to approach the HMW by thinking solutions that could provide real-life examples that had good results, and how did they identified needs and opportunities in their teams where help was needed to evenly distribute the workload and maintain well-being. Solution could provide right tools to help with resourcing planning and how to support each other, recognizing others when they succeed. It is also important to have right number of resources planned, and the issues need to be validated before being able to work with it. Communication and collaboration are the key to recognize pains, gains, and jobs, and together work for solutions that work for everyone. Solution should take into consideration business needs and be customizable based on them by interviewing companies beforehand and encourage for vulnerable information sharing. Only once the companies can recognize their improvement areas, they can develop them.</p>

Examining the crazy 8 findings with participants from different unique backgrounds, it was interesting to see many repeating patterns in everyone's idea evolution, but also very creative and out-of-the-box conclusions. When starting with the HMW question, many were thinking of real-life examples, there's a big need to see how others are doing, and how they overcome difficult situations and make people feel better, both leaders and their teams. Themes such as vulnerability, encouragement, team activities and collaboration were repeated a lot as well. And thinking about the original user problem, an even distribution of work and life balances to well-being, among vulnerability, and honesty was seen as key, the tasks should be mapped out, understood, and come up with solutions together. Possible activities that were mentioned were educative workshops, coaching or mentoring, and training where leaders from different companies and backgrounds could meet and collaborate, to make new connections, and have valuable tools with their work. No one talked about giving psychological training or educating about mental health issues, which was a finding that everyone wants to focus on practice instead only theory only, or not too much on individualism but collectivism, and teamwork.

4.3.2 Solution desirability

Methods: Interviews, nethnography, workshop

Tools: Value proposition canvas

Introduced in the chapter 3.3 Tools, the Value proposition canvas was a leading guideline in the design process directing back to the right track, and answering to the research question; what kind of solution has the highest value for its users? Not only does the value proposition canvas provide the answer for the solution desirability, but it also explains clearly what the service is, and what makes it unique and important considering the user insights (IDEO U). The canvas combines data gathered from all research approaches; interviews as user insight, nethnography as understanding the market, current solutions and competition advantage, and workshop findings overall adding up to the user insights, opportunities, and solution ideation.

On the right side of the Value proposition canvas (Figure 10.) is the customer profile that was explained in the empathising phase; a people leader who needs to be a master of balance, lead and embrace well-being, communicate, and connect authentically, and answer to the demands from higher up. Not only connecting and communicating were the jobs to be done, but also essential factors making them happy, and they require tools and guidance to succeed. As well as disconnection, distrust and lack of time and resources making their jobs difficult and frustrating to the user.

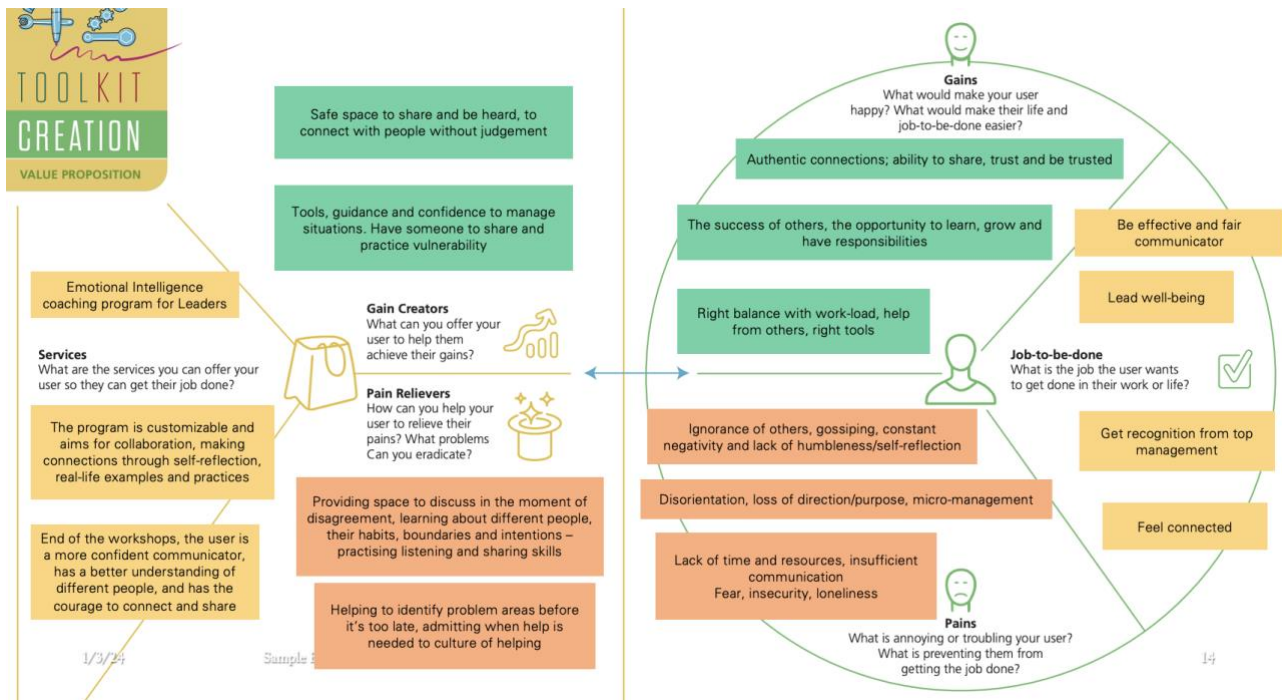


Figure 10. Value proposition canvas

On the left side of the canvas, solutions that could achieve these gains are a place that provides the user connections with others and a safe space to practice making mistakes, a service that provides tools for building confidence. Not only does the solution focus on the happy moments and user gains but encourages difficult and transparent discussions by providing examples, and a place to practice, share and learn from each other. Service centralizes authenticity by sharing examples and encouraging discussion by offering a place to connect with different people with different views. Specifically, an important finding that came across in the interviews was the uneven balance between talkative people and the ones who do not express themselves so loudly, and the work-life seems to favour these extroverts rather than introverts, while everyone has important insights to share and be included in the decisions and communication. Especially now with hybrid/remote work environments, the gap is even more clear that not everyone is feeling as included in decision-making.

This program above all should encourage everyone to share and connect, which are the learnings these leaders should take to their teams to practice inclusiveness so that everyone is heard. The service combines EIL tools offering a coaching type of workshop program, where it isn't based on individual sessions, but learning by practice, discussion, and team mentoring, offering tools to self-reflect and understand not only themselves as individuals better but others too, helping to embrace diversity, inclusion, and well-being. To summarise the answer to the research question; what kind of service has the highest value for its users, an inclusive leadership program that connects people

from different backgrounds, offers examples, practices and above all a safe space to share, connect and learn.

4.4 Prototype

The last step of this development-oriented study is a prototype, it is a transition from ideas to something more concrete, crystallising the best practices and making ideas tangible so that they can be presented, processed, and tested so that everyone understands them. The idea is to have the concepts in an early stage, where making mistakes is encouraged to receive feedback and learn, to be then agile to try something different and test it again. The prototype is not meant to be a longer-lasting solution, but a baseline for the learning process, failing early and fast and having the ability to iterate and stay hopeful. (Maulua & Maula 2019, 191.)

Usually, design thinking also has the last step of testing, or even conceptualising and publishing a ready product to the market, but in this thesis, the design thinking is finished with prototyping. Prototyping gives ground for analysing the current market, what are the solutions that could work, what are the risks around them, processing some parts of the business model canvas, but leaving the rest open for future business development. This chapter answers to the last research question; How to create an emotionally intelligent leadership concept.

4.4.1 Solution feasibility and viability

Methods: workshop

Tools: roleplaying

"You can discover more about a person, a team and a company in three-four hours of play than in a year of meetings." - Mário Passos Ascensão

Commonly in design thinking, prototyping is a moment to visualize the solution, understand its faults and develop it further. As we learned from the earlier steps, applying emotional intelligence to management positions, the solutions mainly move around training, workshops, and coaching services, which can be more difficult to visualize in a tangible form than a service that is digital or traditional service and product.

Approaching the topic, the business model canvas was at the back of my mind as a baseline, using some of its elements to explain the service. In the end business model canvas moves more around the last stage of design thinking, the testing and conceptualizing (Ojasalo al. 2014, 75), and therefore it wasn't chosen as an extensive tool to have part of the study. Thinking how workshop participants could visualize their ideas, a form of roleplay came as an option. Thinking about how to explain the service easily, the idea was to pitch a service; how would you sell a service to someone with little time? In sales pitching the designer needs to think of a way to demonstrate the service clearly, what it does and what kind of value it brings to the user. With the help of the Lab8 tool bank, principal lecturer Ascencao's LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® worked as an inspiration. Using LEGO carters instead of real human roleplay would make participants more open and playful, focusing on this imaginative person rather than associating with themselves (Figure 11).

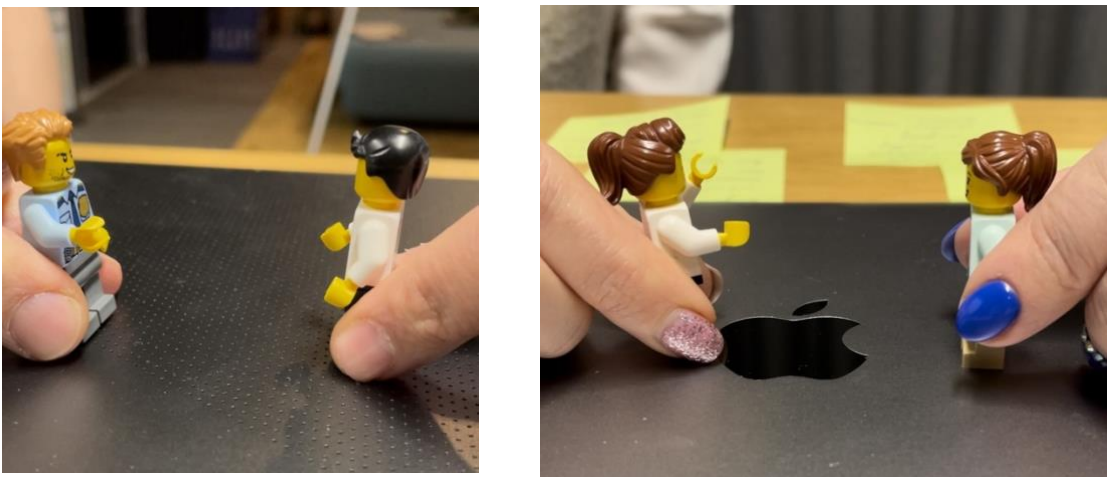


Figure 11. Lego roleplaying

Workshop participants were divided into two groups and given little time to first discuss their ideas combine them into one, and then think how to sell this as a service to someone. Participants were asked to remember the original problem, how this service solves the problem and brings value to the user, and how to demonstrate how the concept works and is sustainable.

Solution 1. Started to approach the topic of an exhausting workload, people burning out due to working too much and the tasks not divided evenly, managers should have tools to check the resources and divide tasks evenly, and in some cases an excellent way to see if more resources are needed. The solution is a sensitive course which tackles the use of a calendar, which would be a sort of extension tool for G-suite users. The course teaches people efficient calendar use with 5 steps that everyone does at their own pace, the course provides the materials, and progress points and integrates with other tools. The integration analyses the availability and suggests available times, encouraging different colour codes for the type of tasks. This allows individuals and teams to

find out better who is available, and when to help and come together, encouraging efficient collaboration. If the workload is not improved by the time the product is used and trained, there's a money-back guarantee. Solutions works as a monthly subscription base.

Solution 2. In a similar approach of overwork and well-being issues, tasks are not distributed evenly, and employees are dissatisfied and quitting, which causes a loss of production and money, but also reputational issues. This solution brings an outside expert that first examines the current state; of how everyone feels and is doing at their jobs by observation and interviews, understanding the underlying cause of the situation. Based on them give a non-biased view and suggestions that are optimized and customized based on the real company needs, and personality of the business, and individuals. From the interviews and observation findings, the idea is sketched and suggested, and once the company has approved, the company will receive coaching. The training program provides real-life examples and cases of how other companies tackled difficult situations but still encourages them to find their ways and best practices with the help of a coach/mentor who provides tools and methods to take with them. During the training feedback is gathered, and training is constantly developed based on them. A unique selling point is the experience of the startup world and constantly developing business needs and trends, where the solution looks for answers with collaborative methods and examples, showing real case studies as references to how this has worked before.

Analyzing both solutions, where both could demonstrate the idea in a very clear and innovative way, empathising with the user problem and finding solutions to them. Both ideas were very different from each other, where the first one went very out of the box by thinking of a digital solution, that is possible to integrate with their current tools. The second was more hands-on collaborative, analysing the core issues and showing case studies of other companies. From the feasibility perspective; understanding what is needed for the solution to work and be successful, it could be concluded that either the time-management course or the well-being coaching would need course facilitators. Solution 1 would also need software developers and a strong understanding of how this world works, which would need a lot of background study, investors (viability) and a skilled group to work with. Solution 2. On the other hand relies on case studies, which need piloting with companies to gain reference customers. This one as well would also require strong expertise on the topic, or at least experience to make it work, the team itself doesn't need to be big in the beginning but good to have more than just one person to boost efficiency, ideas and operational speed.

Viability point of view; what makes the business profitable and sustainable, the first solution would rely on strong prototyping and testing at the start, to understand whether the solution would work,

this one needs to be clear since for the solution to work, it needs investors who can help to make the concept concrete, and it would take longer time to receive revenue due to heavy investing to development. Solution two on the other hand would not require huge investors, which could be seen as a low-risk and cost start-up to get into the market. This one as well would require testing and piloting but could be predicted to gain growth and paying customers while the pilots work out. Both solutions give service promises to their customer, the first one having a money-back guarantee, and the second having content that is customised based on background research and expertise, as well as providing case examples, that adds to the costs, but could be seen as a return of investment in a long run; gaining customer satisfaction and guarantee of reference customers.

4.4.2 How to improve emotionally intelligent leadership skills in companies

Methods: observation, interviews, workshop

Tools: Business model canvas

Concluding the findings and returning to the topic of emotionally intelligent leadership, one central question is still left to answer, how to bring all of this together to a service; how to create an emotionally intelligent leadership concept. This last chapter analyses shortly the findings from all previous steps and possibilities to create an EIL service with the help of a business model canvas. Business mode canvas is an excellent tool to develop the business from a strategy point of view, what areas are the most profitable and where to invest resources. It works as either an ideation tool for new or already existing business development, and this extensive model should be filled together with a design group or stakeholders. (Tuulaniemi 2011, 175-179.) In this scope, as the business model canvas is performed individually, it only plays an analysing part for further research needs and visioning future opportunities. However, not only relying on the previous research methods of interviews and workshops but some ideas were also brainstormed with ChatGPT as part of the possible business development, to gain more ideas for the concept planning.

With the help of Isaac Jeffries's (8 September 2023) explanation of the business model canvas, each segment of the canvas is analysed below.

Purpose of the business: Teach emotional intelligence skills to organisations and leaders so they can become more inclusive, empathic, and understanding to their employees which will increase the well-being, collaboration and overall satisfaction and success of the company.

Customers and value proposition: People leaders, ones that want good for their teams and make them successful, leaders who understand the importance of connection and collaboration. Tools that increase their confidence, which is about understanding themselves – increasing self-awareness, ability to share and regulate – self-regulations, ability to understand others and connect with them – empathy and relationship management. Helping companies to face difficult situations, find common ground with teamwork and have better balance in life. The service promises to raise inclusiveness and understanding of diversity by teaching key EIL skills; personal competencies and social competencies (Goleman's theory), as well as considering consciousness of the context (Shankman al. 2015) as not everyone comes from same background and possibilities. When the leader learns about these differences, they can improve their communication and collaboration skills, then they can also practice more inclusiveness when they understand differences within people; both talkative and not so talkative, increasing the belongingness and well-being.

Channels and customer relationships: Professional networks such as LinkedIn, are important in raising awareness first with marketing campaigns, events and collaboration with different organisations and influencers. However, since the program would be about physical presence and connection, channels to reach the customers should be also face-to-face such as sales contacts. As thinking of something innovative, the solution could be something that offers customers a longer-lasting relationship, after an intensive period of training, regular check-ups to review current state and future needs, training for new skills. As the business promotes embracing well-being, it could affiliate with occupational health organisations, offering programs to new employees, specifically leaders.

Key resources, key activities, and key partners: as concluded before, the key resources do not need necessarily a huge investment to get started, even to start with one person piloting to a few companies, asking for feedback and adjusting accordingly. Promoting the pilot groups could also have a catch of looking for business partners, to work with together. As the business grows, more resources are needed. Key activities to get the business going would need first a website to promote the service, highlighting unique selling points and what the service tries to solve, prices, and contact details, which after this could be started to promote in different channels and start doing sales contacts to gain customers. Once there's a customer, key activities rely on workshop preparation, background study of the company (interviews, observations) and facilitation of the workshops. After successful workshops, and customer service efforts, get their feedback and improve the business accordingly and continuously. Key partners would rely on these successful customer stories and later affiliations with influencers and organisations.

Reflecting on the theory of this thesis from a practical point of view, and brainstorming ideas with AI; on **how to develop emotional intelligence skills in companies**, this program could be divided into 8 preliminary segments:

1. Company interview; going through the development needs, current state, and personalisation options of the training -> proposal for the program, planning the starting time.
2. The first session is based on the theory of EIL and a discussion on its importance. End of the first session, everyone does an EIL test, which findings the facilitator takes into consideration for the next session planning, and the results can be discussed at the next meeting.
3. Session 2: Self-reflection and awareness, how to regulate emotions, consists of individual and group practices, examples and facilitators mentoring.
4. Session 3: leading motivation, theory, discussion, and practices.
5. Session 4: Empathic leadership; discussion on the test results, team collaboration practices with real example situations from work.
6. Session 5: Relationship management & understanding differences; team collaboration practices, practices how to take everyone into account and manage conflicts and disagreements in teams.
7. Session 6: daring leadership: how to practice vulnerability, feedback giving and receiving, and how to grow resilience. Discussion of boundaries, how to connect with people and how to handle disappointments.
8. Session 7: recap and feedback session, planning authentic team activities and time to connect and collaborate. Planning the next steps after the training; how to transfer these learnings to the team members. Ability to request follow-up or individual sessions.

Cost structure and revenue streams: analysing the last parts of the business model canvas, this was gone through briefly in the previous chapter on the feasibility and viability perspectives.

Starting from the revenue streams, the biggest revenue comes from the workshop participation fees, which could be calculated through hours included in the training and its planning, number of participants and costs excluded, and considering how much wage should this training accomplish to make it sustainable. Besides participant fees, revenue could also come from sponsorships such as healthcare organisations, unions, and corporations, as well as later licencing training materials and partnerships. Costs would be built from the training materials, facilitator/employee fees and wages, technology expenses, and marketing and promotion costs.

In answering the last research question: how to create an emotionally intelligent leadership concept, it is necessary to review the design thinking development process, where this last chapter

of analysing some of the business model possibilities is a great tool. Starting from the empathising and defining steps, the human problems were identified as a lack of balance between work and free time and tools to embrace well-being such as communication tools. The moving to the next question of what kind of service has the highest value for its users; a service where people come together, learn from each other, and have a facilitator who gives examples, coaches, and provides a safe space for discussion and practising. Promises that the solution gives are inclusiveness, confidence and above all aiming for understanding different people, collaborating effectively, and increasing overall well-being. The next steps in the solution development would be piloting the service and receiving constructive feedback, growing with new business partners, and going to the market with a 5-8 session course with a possibility to further educate and train leaders affiliating with occupational healthcare.

5 Conclusions

Emotional intelligence and design thinking both hold a pivotal role in developing leadership skills with an eye towards future competitive advantages. The significance of emotionally intelligent leadership becomes even more clear in the future when corporations are expected to master inclusivity and well-being. In a technology-driven world, we find ourselves longing for authentic connections and meaningful interactions, where everyone, no matter their personality type or background is included the way they are, and above all, everyone is given a chance to express themselves.

The design thinking approach is shown to be an inclusive method, that shakes the beliefs and brings people together from various backgrounds. It is not only an excellent approach to innovation, but it also encourages everyone to participate, with the same aim of the emotionally intelligent leadership concept, which wants to understand different people to bring them together to connect, share and learn. Not only did service design help gather insightful information from various stakeholders, but it also helped to understand the human-centred problem, crystallise the unique value proposition through authentic sharing, and analyse the possibilities of the business model in the EIL concept.

Pamela Spokes (Metropolia 10 January 2023) summarises the mindset shift in design thinking excellently; it focuses on the problem instead of the solution, the user instead of the company, learning instead of getting stuck with mistakes, and impact instead of efficiency, which all have been experienced during this process. At the start of the process, there was a solution in mind already, the purpose wasn't then to validate the idea, but to connect with the user group, empathise and understand what matters to them. The road was not linear either, it had many bumps and obstacles, but above all, it was a learning experience. The aim was not to test emotionally intelligent leadership theories in real life or come up with a ready service to the market, but to learn, analyse and see future opportunities. As the introduction chapter introduced similar principles on developing emotional intelligence and design thinking, this work has also understood the possibility of combining these two in the service itself, which could be teaching emotional intelligence with the help of a design thinking approach.

5.1 Outcomes

The origin of the business idea came from a personal interest in the topic of developing emotional intelligence and leadership, with a strong entrepreneurial drive; what if this could be created into a service? As the project did not have any case organisation or project group behind it, instead it was an individual vision and throughput, there was an idea stuck in my head that the service should be

co-created, including real insights, thoughts and feedback from various stakeholders, design thinking was chosen as an approach. Overall, the biggest goal was to follow my vision of creating a service; theory, research questions and project plan formed around it. Learning about the design thinking process and principles, helped me to crystalise what to do and how to form the research around the 3 principles of design thinking concept planning: desirability, feasibility, and viability.

The study followed the process steps of; empathising, defining, ideation and lastly prototyping, leaving the testing and final conceptualising into the future business development. The study itself was an extensive project, including 3 main methods; interviews, netnography and co-design workshop, and several tools to support and analyse the findings. Still though, even when the project was extensive and took longer than originally expected, it was an insightful and educational journey, in which all steps had their part in the project. The theory was a dive into the emotional intelligence theories, in addition to studies of understanding the future of leadership, which end of the day had an important part of the process when defining the human problem and designing a desirable and feasible service, that brings the most value to its possible users. As we have learned during the project, design thinking isn't a linear process, the project itself didn't always follow a consistent plan. For instance, the first interview was already planned before the project plan and design thinking steps were defined. Or the previous part was not always finished before entering the next one. As Ingle (2013, 2-3) reminds us, the steps do not need to be finished before entering the next one, to keep the flexibility and open mindset to the process and its changes. The further the project went, the clearer its goals and objectives became.

Reflecting on the research questions, which too, changed over time, the goal stayed the same; aiming to design a service that has the most value proposition to its users. As the first research question, what is the human problem that the emotionally intelligent leadership concept aims to solve? Stages empathise and define answers to this question by understanding the customer insights. As originally thought, the human problem wasn't only about the rising mental health issues caused by remote work, or unrealistic expectations of work life, it was about leaders longing for connection, trust, and confidence, and they wishing to receive more tools, resources, and support from the corporate level to better balance with high demands and personal life. As the second research question, what kind of solution has the highest value for its users, solutions were developed in the ideation and prototyping phases from the time management point of view, helping organisations to evenly distribute work, help each other and plan the resources better. It was clearly expressed, that managers wish to see more success stories and examples, and are open to suggestions, and then through practice, workshops and mentoring to improve these skills. The service should also have some kind of guarantee or a promise; to show that it works and is beneficial for them to invest in. The last research question: how to create an emotionally intelligent

leadership concept, was the summary of the whole project and analysis of the business model canvas, and where to possibly go next from here, which the last stage, prototyping was mainly concluding. The service would need more testing and piloting, where more ideas would be gained, and the service developed into something that is also sustainable and profitable. As concluded, this service does not necessarily need huge investments to get started, but patience and time to test with some enthusiastic companies and individuals, and through transparent feedback the iterations and changes would be made to the solution and build on resilience on the individual and business level.

5.2 Discussion

This thesis has been an interesting, insightful but also hard journey. As it usually goes with design thinking, the research does not aim for statistical results, instead, it aims for insights for business decision-making, which can depend greatly on the studied person, researcher, time and so forth (Ingle 2013, 17-19). Reviewing this study from the reliability point of view; if this study was reproduced again, would it gain similar answers, the answer is yes and no. The research studied several professionals from the target group, from different cultures and backgrounds, as well as it did an extensive literature review and research on the online platforms and companies, supporting the findings. It is still up to the researcher to make the conclusions, which could be different based on the person in charge, therefore the results should be also reviewed critically. However, as mentioned before, there were many repeating patterns in all the data gathered, and people could empathise with the same themes, so the conclusions were possible to make.

The aim of this study was not to answer all the needs of the target group, nor to provide a service that fits everyone. It empathises the fact, that emotional intelligence can be only developed when a person is authentically interested in people and wants good for them but is also willing to learn. It is hard to teach something to someone when they have a fixed mindset that they either already know it, or they should not know. This is also something that came across in the interviews and was a question included in the preliminary workshop plan; how to teach emotional intelligence to someone who does not know they need to improve this and are against learning it. It is a hard question to tackle, and a great risk that the service might hold for future development; there will be always people and participants who are not willing to learn or see the opportunities, and they might be a negative force for the service development. The project was not saved from some more harsh feedback either, while every participant during this project applauded the importance of emotional intelligence, and how it would be beneficial to improve these skills in management, the workshop also received feedback for not generating enough value for its participants. This was a small

setback for the project, while otherwise workshop was successful, in both setting expectations informing the participants beforehand, and executing accordingly.

Another finding that was made throughout the process of observing people, discussing with them, and considering my background of living and working both in Finland and abroad, was the change of attitudes whether the person was Finnish or foreigner. While the international participants were excited about the project, were very driven to give suggestions and happy to help, some of the Finnish participants were more careful of expressing themselves and giving away insights. Still though, I would not draw conclusions based on the background of the person, but would happily include people from different backgrounds in the future service development, when both are needed; critically reviewing participants who need more warming up and getting to know them before opening up, and ones who are enthusiastic to participate, they see opportunities and show encouragement without asking something tangible in return. This is still something to take into consideration for future development, how differently we express ourselves depending on our cultural backgrounds, and specifically when the service promotes inclusiveness and diversity, it is something to study further to keep a positive outlook no matter how excitedly participants express themselves.

What is learned during this research is that emotional intelligence is very relevant to this date, but also for future skills. It is a hot topic to teach individuals to recognise, regulate and communicate their emotions, and be more empathic to people around us. In Finland, emotional intelligence is taught at schools, both as part of minors' education and upper education programs, such as part of university studies to teach practical skills to prepare students for future work-life expectations and demands (Opetushallitus; YTHS). While some small service providers are offering emotional intelligence studies for organisations, it's not yet a widely conceptualised service. In conclusion, a lot of potential lies in developing emotionally intelligent leadership, a highly essential and relevant skill set for the future.

5.3 Further research

The original idea of this thesis was a continuum of an earlier school project and research implemented back in 2021, I see this project being a catalyst for future research opportunities. As the service development itself is at very early stages without any concrete preparations yet, the next big step would be to start testing and piloting the service, receiving feedback from the early customers, and iterating the service accordingly. The theories of different emotionally intelligent leadership could be studied from the practical point of view, reviewing what practices would be the most feasible for this service development, and then conducting a case study to test these theories

in practice to pilot the service. This, however, would be a whole new thesis project to tackle, which I would need to leave to someone else to conduct or manage on a smaller scale.

Besides piloting the possible key activities of the service, another area of study is to deepen the understanding of the cost and revenue structures of the service. Further development of the business model canvas and a similar approach of design thinking or service design would work here, but also broad networking and collaboration with various stakeholders, whom to receive more valuable insights. As it was concluded in the discussion chapter, this service might receive different reception depending on the audience, investing in strong and optimistic allies might play a pivotal role in the service's success. The service itself was never really thought to be conducted as a one-woman business, but having a strong desire to connect and find business partners who could help to develop the business further and challenge each other. Therefore, studying the target group further, their attitudes and different strategies have an important role in the future development of this service.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview themes and questions.

Theme 1. Who are we empathising with?

- Could you tell me more about you, where you work and what your typical day looks like?
- How do you see the current situation in leadership? What are the challenges? How do you see the situation developing in the future?
- What do you like the most about being a manager?
- What is the most challenging?

Theme 2. What do they need to do?

- What do you think is the most important job for people leaders?
- What are the skills that help the managers to succeed at their jobs? How do you think they could improve them?
- What are your thoughts on the current mental health crisis and wellbeing challenges? How could companies take care of their employees better?

Theme 3. What do they see? /What do they hear?

- What kind of (leadership) trends do you see in the market right now? What are the hot topics?
- What does the environment look like now?
- What kind of sources do you follow to keep your knowledge up to date? What are people talking about right now?

Theme 4. What do they think and feel?

- What makes you feel good? What kind of dreams do you have?
- What frustrates or annoys you?

Extra questions:

- what is the bridge between mental health and emotional intelligence?

Theme 5: What do they say? What do they do? (Observation)

Appendix 2. Workshop invitation.

Dear all,

Welcome to the service ideation workshop on the 20th of November from 14:30-17:00 in XX premises (the meeting room will be confirmed later). Big thanks to XX for organizing this time and place for us, and giving heads-up on the topic.

Based on multiple research and results, emotionally intelligent leadership has a large number of positive effects in workplaces; in people's well-being, work culture, relationship building, and so forth. Understanding the benefits sparked an interest in me to find out how we could conceptualize this. With the help of design thinking methods, I have been able to identify human problems that EIL could be an answer to. Moving to the development of a solution, I need your help; to identify and co-create a concept that creates the most value for the customer.

I will be facilitating 2,5 hour creative, open-minded, and playful workshop where we brainstorm ideas, visualize, and discuss findings. For the workshop, you don't need to prepare anyhow just come with an open mindset, and I make sure you'll be briefed on the topic.

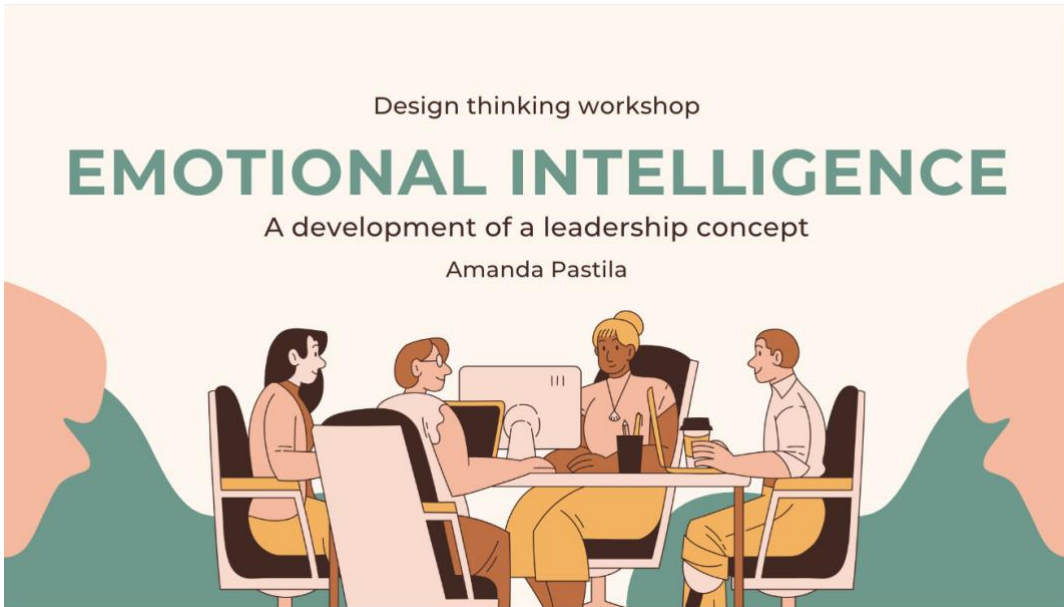
This workshop will be conducted as part of Haaga-Helia Master studies, and the findings will be discussed and analyzed in my thesis. To help the process and prove the authenticity of the source, I'll be taking photos and recordings of the workshop. To protect your personal data, no names or photos of people will be reported, I am also advised to leave the company name out to protect complete anonymity. I would need your written consent to proceed forward, which you can do by simply responding to this email latest on Monday 20th before the workshop.

If you have any questions regarding data privacy, the workshop, or my thesis, do not hesitate to drop me a message and I'm happy to answer.

I am looking very much forward to next Monday!

Best regards,
Amanda

Appendix 3. Workshop presentation and facilitation guide


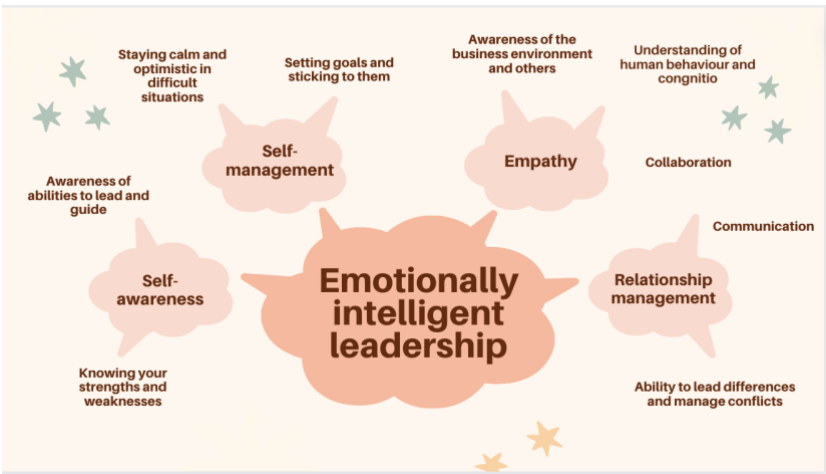


HELLO, I'M AMANDA

Let's get to know each other!

Before we go forward, everyone takes Post-it papers and a pen, and thinks for 2 minutes:

- What makes a good leader?
- How could one develop to become a better leader?
- What do you think of emotional intelligence?

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

The goal of the workshop is to ideate and co-create a concept that has the highest value proposition for the customer.

Before we get creative, there's some valuable customer insight to take with the design process.



LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES

1. Hybrid/remote work
 - Creates disconnection, loneliness, and poor communication
2. Well-being challenges
 - Unbalanced workload, stress, loss of productivity, and feeling of purpose
3. Diversity
 - Teams are more diverse, managers lack the right tools and experience to lead
4. New generations
 - New work-life expectations, biases, little/none awareness and tools



Do these resonate with you? Would you highlight any?

HOW MIGHT WE...?

Let's move from problems to opportunities.

Start by looking at the challenges and insights shared, and start forming questions to think desired outcome, to define the focus of the ideation.

We are creating a concept for leaders to improve their emotional intelligence



HOW MIGHT WE...?

Let's start generating questions

The goal is to find design opportunities. Does the question allow a variety of solutions, if not, try to broaden the question.

How might we [intended action] for [primary user] so that [desired outcome]?



CRAZY 8

The goal is to get your creative mind moving and come up with a variety of ideas with time pressure.

This is an individual exercise.

You have **1 minute** in each section to sketch the idea, and once the time is up, you have to leave it and move to the next one. You can start by sketching solutions for our HMW and moving to the next, you can continue the same idea or start a new one. I give you tips along the way and please, visualize!



DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

What was your creative process; what was the initial idea, how did it evolve, and was there any end result?

Share the craziest ideas!

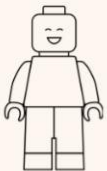


PROTOTYPING

Make the ideas tangible

The goal is to test your ideas in tangible forms and refine and validate your choices. In the process, start narrowing down your ideas with criteria of relevance, feasibility (is it achievable), and newsworthiness.

As service design is an iterative process, the best is to get your ideas challenged. In this exercise, you're divided into two groups.



Start by combining your ideas together, to make one unified service.

Answer to at least these questions:

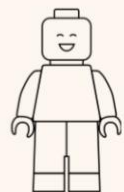
What is the user problem your service tries to solve?

How does the service solve that problem?

What is the unique value proposition why the buyer should choose you?

Can you demonstrate why your service works and is sustainable?

You have 15 minutes to discuss and prepare, then show an imaginary sales situation with LEGO figures. The idea is not to make it perfect but to experiment with what could work and what not.



Appendix 4. Customer persona and HMW -question

