

Kyle Curinga

**Cultivating Trust, Enhancing Productivity, and Fostering Team
Morale in the Remote Work Landscape**

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ABSTRACT

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<p>The purpose of this thesis was to observe remote workplaces in Finland and the United States.</p> <p>The objective was to see how workers from the two countries differ and to create a guide to better understand implications for managers and remote teams when considering strategies for remote work outcomes and to create a playbook for organizations to navigate the remote and hybrid work scene.</p> <p>The theoretical part of this thesis referenced different theories: Herzberg’s Motivation Hygiene Theory, the Job Characteristics Model, and Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory. All with a focus on organizational psychology and cross-cultural management.</p> <p>The research was conducted via questionnaire. The questionnaire was answered 32 people from the US and Finland. The questions will address each key area and respondents will have the opportunity to also have open ended answers.</p> <p>The results showed that people value trust, flexibility and freedom to work in ways that fit their life. When those needs are met productivity and satisfaction increase.</p> <p>In conclusion, people want to feel support and connected irrespective of where and how they work. Meeting these needs is key to building a remote or hybrid work environment.</p> <p>Pages 36 + 21</p>		

<p>Key words Cross Cultural Management, Organizational Practices, Productivity, Remote Work, Team Morale, Trust in Teams, Work Life Balance</p>
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1 INTRODUCTION

The shift to remote work has completely changed how we view work and has revolutionized the global workforce and set up. Going from the office every week day 9-5 to a new landscape that stresses flexibility, autonomy and digital collaboration. As organizations across the globe make this transition, it becomes increasingly important to cultivate trust, enhance productivity, and foster team morale. These elements are critical to keeping a business running smoothly and efficiently. This thesis explores the dynamics of remote work in two different countries and cultures: the United States (US) and Finland. Both countries have embraced remote work, yet their approaches reflect differing underlying values, organizational practices and cultures. By comparing and contrasting the experiences of remote workers in the US and Finland, this study aims to uncover the factors that contribute to successful remote work environments and to provide insights into how trust, productivity and team morale can be effectively cultivated in a remote setting. Through this work, the goal is to uncover differences, motivations, and serve as a guide for international companies that want to offer remote work, those evaluating RTO options or something in between. For those continuing remote work, it can offer valuable recommendations for organizations looking to optimize their remote work policies and practices. The quick surge in remote work adoption which was likely driven by the global pandemic, has forced us to for new ways of thinking and focus more on digital leadership and virtual team dynamics. This shift presents a great opportunity to examine the tools and platforms we use and how they can be used to help us communicate and bridge the gap between teams in different locations. It also creates a level of uncertainty on how to manage employees and yourself when you are not physically together.

This work will also aim to provide actionable insight to sustaining productivity, improving trust, and increasing morale. After speaking with workers, doing independent research and reflecting on my own experience, these themes were always mentioned. They are the key ingredients to not only remote and hybrid workplaces but for any. The thesis will investigate how these key areas show up in the workplace, how they differ between the US and Finland and how teams can use them to better support their teams.

Trust is more than just believing your colleague is doing their job, it is about being transparent, being autonomous and having confidence in one anothers decision. Without trust, communication tends to break down and micromanagement can creep in. Being productive in the remote workplace is not just

about being online but about working in the right environment. By having the right tools, working smart and collaborating between teams, organizations can keep performance high and bring stress down. Team morale is the energy of the company and helps people to feel connected and part of something. When people are connected and valued, they are more engaged and can do their best work. Higher team morale brings a sense of belonging and boost collaboration. These three areas are intertwined and deeply connected to each other and are critical for a functioning remote or hybrid work environment. They shape how people experience their work and thus their performance. Getting these right helps to build a workplace for both the business and the people in it.

This work aims to provide actionable insight to increase productivity, cultivate trust and foster team morale. The workplace is ever evolving which emphasizes the importance of flexible and inclusive organizational practices. The outcome of this thesis is to provide practical and human focused recommendations in the form of a playbook so that companies can use this to navigate the complex and rapidly shifting remote and hybrid work environment.

2 REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK OVERVIEW

Remote and hybrid work arrangements and models have become a necessary part of working life, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. This set up have not only transformed where your work is done but how it is approached by employees and organizations. According to the 2023 Owl Labs State of Remote Work report, 66% of workers would prefer a hybrid arrangement and nearly 30% would leave their jobs if they were forced to return to the office full time (Owl Labs, 2023). These types of trends and statistics suggest that having remote or hybrid work arrangements are no longer seen as a temporary solution but expected regardless of the situation. These setups are now a foundational part of organizations of the future and they effect every aspect of the workplace. From hiring to retaining talent, the company's culture and even performance. Understanding these definitions will help organizations clearly understand the structure of their policies and the practical implications that are associated with remote and hybrid work.

2.1 Remote Work

Remote work refers to when employees are able to do their job outside of the traditional office setting, typically from home. This set up gives workers flexibility, eliminates commutes and gives people better control over their work environment. Statistics Finland (2023) reports that 35% of those earning a salary are working remotely. In the U.S, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics suggest that many employees favor this set up, at least part time. These two reports suggest that remote work setups in both Finland and the US remain highly prevalent. In Messenger's working paper titled "*Working anytime, anywhere: The evolution of telework and its effects on the world of work*" they identify several advantages of remote work such as increased productivity, reduced stress from commuting and higher job satisfaction as a direct result from greater autonomy. Because remote work gives people the ability to do their job outside of a centralized workplace, workers can faces challenges such as isolation, communication barriers and blurred lines between work and personal space. Navigating these challenges require trust and appropriate systems to foster a remote work environment (Messenger, 2016, 12).

2.2 Hybrid Work

Hybrid work is a mix of remote and in office work. Employees will typically split their time between the two. The goal of the hybrid set up is to balance flexibility and the benefits that come with the interaction of being in the office together. Hybrid arrangements can offer the best of both worlds. By having the ability to work a few days at home and some at the office you maintain your autonomy and and preserve your social cohesion and team collaboration (Felstead, A. and Henseke, G. 2017, 195-212).

The most successful hybrid work models will be deliberate in their scheduling, communication and workflows. According to an article from Gallup that addresses the advantages and challenges of hybrid work, hybrid workers tend to experience higher levels of engagement and lower rates of burnout when compared to those who work exclusively in office and remotely (Wingert B. and White, J. 2022). Organizations that have implemented hybrid models typically see improved job satisfaction, less turnover and overall improved productivity.

2.3 Covid-19 Acceleration

Remote and hybrid work arrangements were often seen as a perk that employers could give to their employees. After the global COVID-19 pandemic these set ups became essential. Organizations had to quickly adapt to the situation. Adopting remote and hybrid work environments, new tools and workflows were immediate decisions that needed to be made and offered worldwide. This shift also created deeper conversations about worklife balance, employee wellbeing, productivity and trust in the workplace. As the the situation continued to evolve, what was originally a short term solution became a long term solution that has reshaped how organizations conduct business and work. A report from McKinsey & Company reported that 85% of company's had to accelerate their digital transformation efforts as a result of the pandemic and that over 70% of those company's planned to maintain some form of remote or hybrid work moving forward (Alexander et al., 2021).

Not only did this accelerated shift create deeper conversations around worklife balance, employee well being, productivity, trust and team morale but also about how our cultural differences play a role. This caused an immediate response and forced both leaders and employees to rethink how we approach the

workplace, team management practices, performance and creating inclusive environments without the ability to rely on in person and physical interactions.

3 PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

Psychology is the study of the mind and human behavior. These theories help us get a better look into an individual and how we can categorize, understand, and explain different human actions. With this information we can make better decisions. Psychological theories help us better understand how people work, think and stay motivated, specifically in remote and hybrid work. If we focus on employee experience and how organizations can support and get the most out of their teams these theories will help explain what drives people, how they find satisfaction and what can influence their performance. The psychological theories provide a structure to what can seem like an abstract concept.

The theories chosen look at human behavior from a different angle. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's Motivation Theory and the Job Characteristics model focus on motivation, basic needs, satisfaction and how different roles can impact us. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions provide a global perspective to how different cultures experience different situations. The theories were chosen to provide a framework to navigating the remote and hybrid work environment and because they support the core concepts (trust, productivity and team morale).

3.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs is broken up into 5 stages. The theory states that for a person to achieve self-actualization, or in simpler terms self-fulfilment, they need to progress through these stages and in order. First you need to secure your basic needs, essentially survival. Once those are taken care of then you need to focus on your psychological needs. Belonging, feeling good about yourself, being close, intimately, and having a sense of community. Lastly, there is self-actualization. Becoming the best version of yourself and having balance on all the stages. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs brings a focus to many of challenges that remote and hybrid work have, specifically belonging and self esteem. In a non traditional office set up, people can feel isolated and disconnected even if their other basic needs are met. The model can give us a path and understanding to where people are on their journey to fulfillment (Rowland, 2023).



Maslow's hierarchy of needs

FIGURE 1. Adapted from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod,2023)

3.2 Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene Theory

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory also known as the "two-factor theory" deals directly with job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Within each of those there are factors of motivation that can increase or decrease job satisfaction. The factors that increase job satisfaction are called motivation factors and the factors that prevent job satisfaction are called hygiene factors. These factors can outweigh others but are unique on a case to case basis. In Figure 2 below, we can see that motivators like recognition and growth are areas that help to increase job satisfaction while hygiene factors like supervision and work conditions are areas that can decrease motivation. Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene Theory helps us to understand what people like or dislike and can provide an explanation on why some workers thrive and others struggle. Figure 2 provides more examples of these factors (Denis, G. 2018).

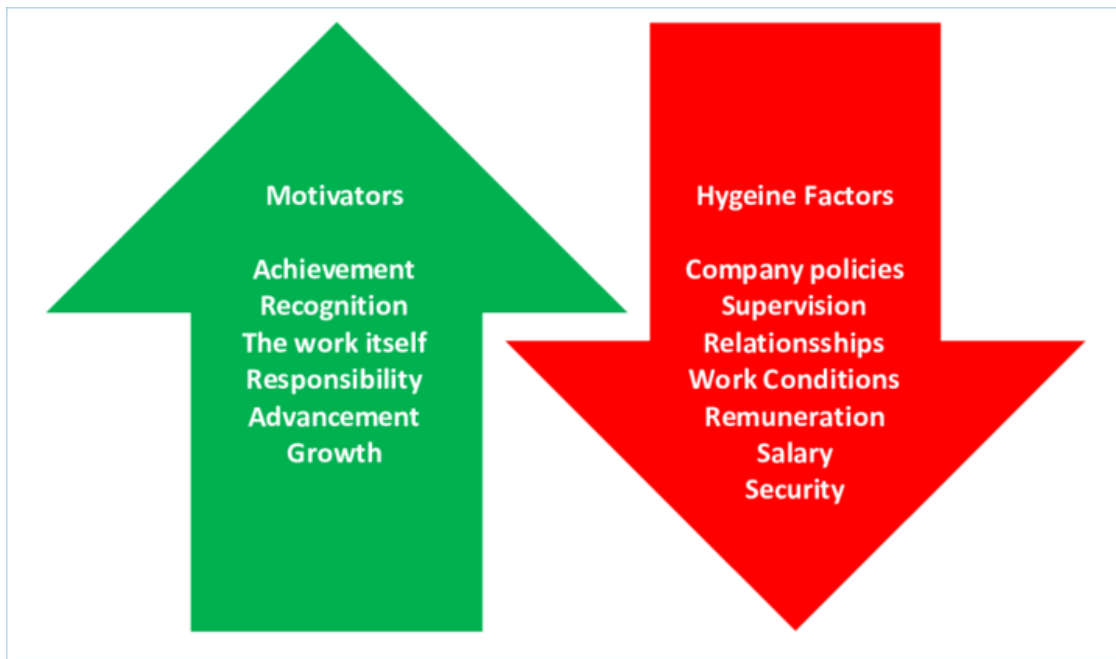


FIGURE 2. The two-factor theory. (EPM,2018. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. In *Motivating Millennials: the journey to project success*)

3.3 The Job Characteristics Model

Job characteristics model was created by Greg R. Oldham and J. Richard Hackman and they wanted to know why employees began to lose interest in their work (*A Practical Guide to the Job Characteristics Model - AIHR*, n.d.). The model was created over forty years ago and is still used today in the workplace. Using the model can help employers keep employees happier and more productive. The five core job characteristics are skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. This model requires a relationship between employer and employee. Below is the job characteristic model, it shows how each characteristic feeds into a psychological state and the outcome of the combination. The Job Characteristics Model fits really well into the remote and hybrid work context because it doesn't just focus on the environment but the job itself. Remote and hybrid work involves a unique set up. Remote and hybrid workers have more control over how they work but struggles with feedback and acknowledgement of achievements whereas traditional work typically has the opposite in less autonomy but quicker feedback loops and in person acknowledgement.

JOB CHARACTERISTICS MODEL

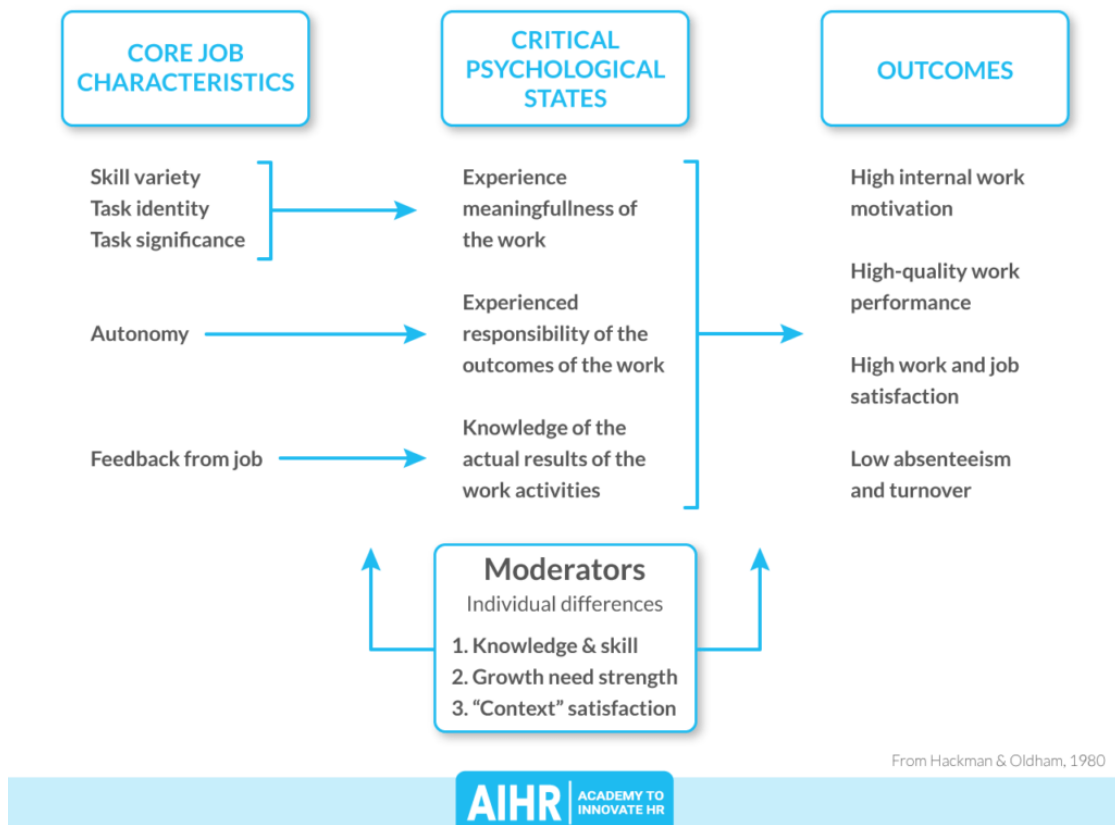


FIGURE 3. Job Characteristics Model (AIHR, Lucas, 2021)

3.4 Organizational Psychology

Organizational psychology, commonly referred to as industrial organizational psychology, aims to understand human behavior in the workplace. It focuses on psychological theories and research to improve employee satisfaction, strengthen workplace relationships, and boost organizational effectiveness (Cherry, 2022). The key aspects that are studied within organizational psychology are employee motivation, leadership styles, communication teamwork job satisfaction and culture.

Organizational psychology aims to develop workplace environments that boost well-being and employee performance. Leaders and managers can use organizational psychology to increase productivity and support the personal satisfaction and growth of employees by understanding the factors that influenced them (Cherry, 2022). This involves a 360 understanding of employee's roles, perceptions dynamics, and an alignment between expectations, values and organizational goals.

Remote and hybrid working arrangements are increasingly common which is why organizational psychology is even more important to understand and embrace. It gives a full overview and understanding on how to maintain effective communication, trust and motivation in teams that are spread out. A deep understanding of organizational psychology will allow managers and leaders to address the challenges of remote or hybrid work and with that understanding are able to ensure that Productivity and Team cohesion don't suffer (McGregor and Doshi, 2020).

Applying the principles of organizational psychology helps companies effectively manage various types of change within the organization, helps build resilient employees and gives an overwhelming sense of trust. The outcomes will support better employee engagement, increased productivity and more success for today's evolving workplace.

3.5 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions focuses on the difference between people across different countries and cultures. It is important to understand that not everyone communicates, works, or thinks the same way. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions provides a framework to help understand how national cultures can influence workplace behavior. This is particularly relevant in today's global work environment especially because remote and hybrid work are more prevalent in teams increasingly have people from different cultural backgrounds.

The model is based on six different dimensions:

- Power distance: how comfortable people are with hierarchy. If a country has a high-power distance, then employees will expect strong leadership and top-down authority. If a country has a low power distance, then employees will expect more open and equal communication and interaction between themselves and leaders.

- Individualism vs. Collectivism: This dimension focuses on whether people prioritize group or personal goals. The US is rated high in individualism, and independence and personal accolades are highly valued. Finland is also very independent but has a large focus on the group dynamic.
- Masculinity vs. Femininity: This reflects how a culture values competitiveness and achievement versus cooperation and quality of life. Finland tends to lean toward femininity and can be seen in their work life balance and group cooperation.
- Uncertainty Avoidance: This describes how people feel about uncertainty. If a culture has a high uncertainty avoidance, those people will have preference toward structure and predictability which can influence how they adapt to remote or hybrid work environments.
- Long Term vs Short Term Orientation: This is in reference to how people plan for the future. Short term cultures can be seen as more transactional whereas long term cultures focus on planning and continuity.
- Indulgence vs. Restraint: Indulgent cultures typically applaud freedom and personal expression while restrained cultures are more reserved and may have more of a herd mentality.

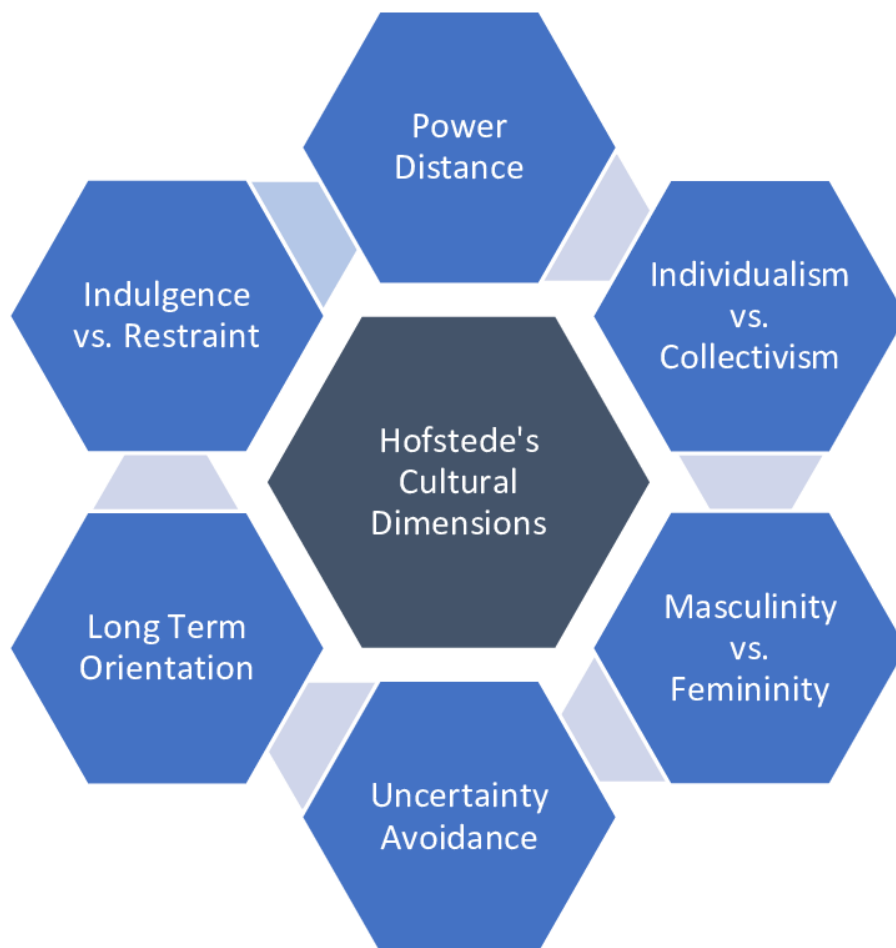


FIGURE 4: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (*Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (Adapted from ResearchGate, 2023)*)

When comparing the United States and Finland, we see some similarities in individualism and power distance. Both countries' cultures suggest that there is a liberty and independent element involved where people can take care of themselves and be relied upon individually. For the United States the emphasis is more on personal goals and achievements where as Finland typically combines its independence with group collaboration. While the two countries score relatively close in terms of Power Distance (33, Finland and 40 United States), they express their comfort with hierarchy differently. In the United states, employees are able to speak with superiors but the ranks are respected and reflected in the workplace. In Finland, there is a flatter organizational culture where no one person is above the other.

The biggest difference in scores was seen on Motivation Toward Achievement and Success (or Masculinity vs Femininity). The US scores very high here suggesting that the United States favors competition and has a "winner takes all" mentality. Finland scores very low on this metric suggesting that Finland prefers cooperation and equality.

By including Hofstede's Cultural dimensions theory section, it allows us to understand the discussion of how people from various cultures function in the workplace, remotely and across borders in particular. While other psychological theories focus on individual needs or different motivators, Hofstede's model brings in the cultural layer. It will help to explain why a one size fit all remote or hybrid workplace policy is received differently by employees in different countries. The scores from the Cultural Comparison tool can be seen below.

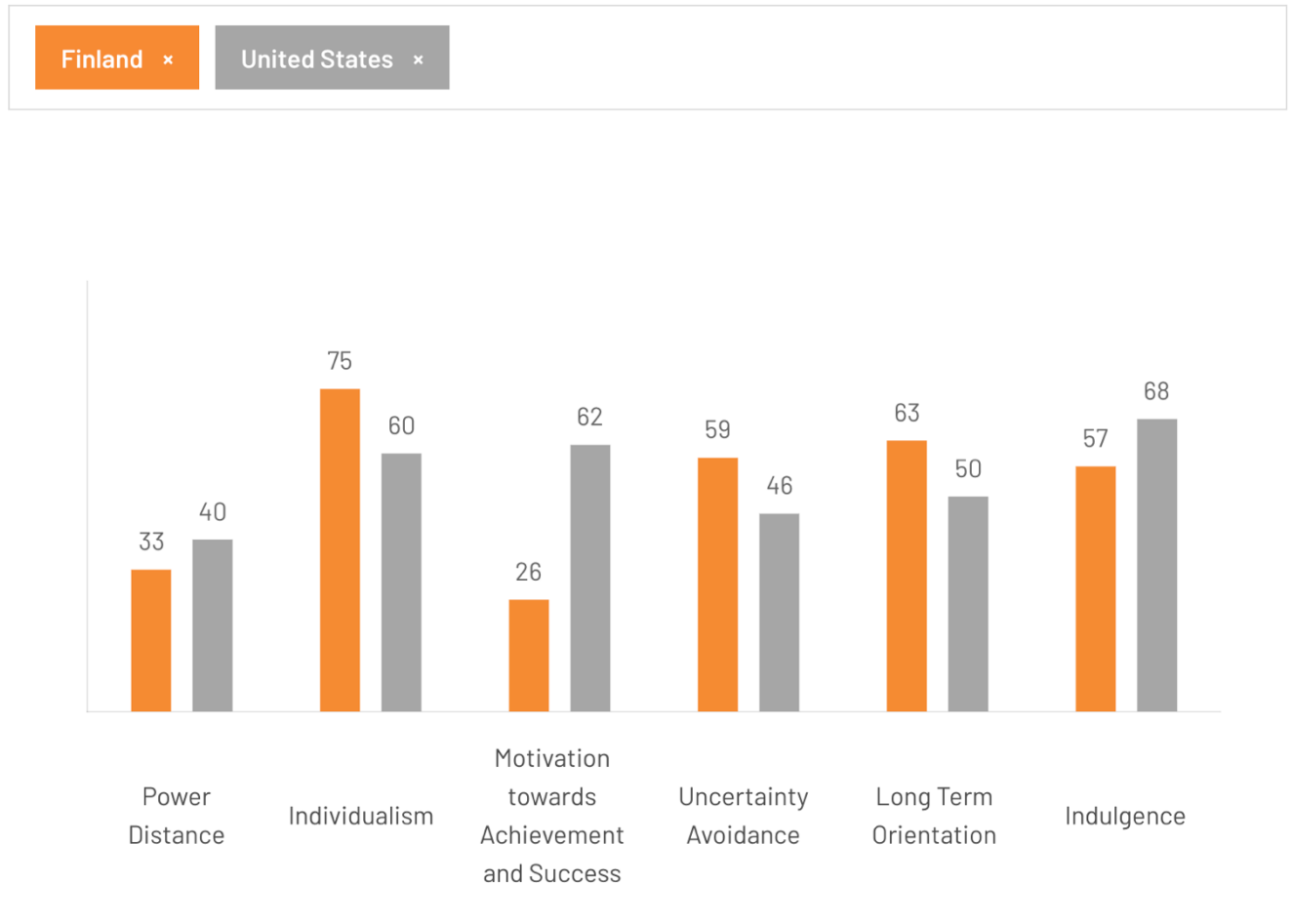


FIGURE 5: Country Comparison Tool Between Finland and the United States across Hofstede's Dimensions (Hofstede Insights, 2024)

3.6 Cross Cultural Management

Cross cultural management focuses on handling teams from different backgrounds and cultural identities. Organizations are constantly expanding internationally which makes understanding and embracing the various cultural differences even more essential. Not just for more success for the company but also for creating a workplace culture that is inclusive. Individuals need to feel valued and respected regardless of their background.

Effective cross-cultural management is not just about avoiding conflicts but about how we proactively show empathy, respect one another and communicate clearly. When leaders invest time to learn about the unique differences, they can adjust their styles of leadership and communication accordingly. This

guarantees that all team members are heard and included which improves decision making, collaboration and creativity (SHRM, 2020).

In remote work cross cultural management is even more critical. Virtual teams and environments can amplify some of the challenges and can make trust building more difficult especially in different cultures. The teams that proactively recognize and address these challenges are on a better path towards success and can bridge the gap of the physical distance leading to higher morale, better communication and stronger team cohesion.

Ultimately cross-cultural management is a thoughtful process and should be taken into consideration in all daily practices in the workplace. This inclusive approach not only boosts employee satisfaction but gives teams and companies who adopt this method a large competitive advantage in today's globalized marketplace. (Brodie, 2021).

4 METHODS AND DATA

This section will outline the approach on the research and collected data. The aim was to gather insights into the three main areas of trust productivity and team morale and how that affects those working in remote and hybrid environments. To try to uncover these insights, the questionnaire focused on questions surrounding how teams communicate, how often they get feedback, their perceived levels of autonomy and trust, how satisfied they felt with remote or hybrid work arrangements and how motivation or collaboration could be affected by this type of set up. The Webropol survey was sent to workers in a range of industries in the United States and Finland and were chosen to ensure a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences were covered. The survey was sent to 50 different people and 32 people submitted answers.

4.1 Methods

The approach taken for this study was mixed method and combines both quantitative and qualitative data to give a full understanding for the research questions. The main form of research was an online questionnaire through Webropol. This questionnaire included multiple choice questions Likert scale items (ranging from 0-5) and open-ended prompts. This format was designed to measure both trends and personal experiences.

The Likert scale used in the survey ranged from 0-5. 0 represented a strong disagreement or low satisfaction and 5 would represent strong agreement or very high satisfaction. Using this scale gave the ability to quantify the subjective measures of the levels of trust, productivity and team morale.

The survey was sent digitally to respondents in both the United States and Finland to be able to compare and contrast the differences and similarities between the two in their respective countries and work environments. The goal was to have a diverse representation across industry age and remote work experience.

The questionnaire method was chosen because of its accessibility simplicity and ability to collect perspectives from a wide range of people in a short time frame. By combining quantitative and qualitative information there was the ability to have a deeper analysis of the human element in remote work.

4.2 Data

There were 32 total participants that responded to the survey. The respondents represent a wide range of professional backgrounds which include it software development marketing healthcare aviation education and finance. Most participants were between the ages of 26 and 41. The gender distribution was approximately 62.5% male and 34.4% female. The distribution for country respondents was Finland (58.1%) and fort the United States (41.9%).

The remote work experience varied in the group with 42% having worked remotely for more than three years. A large majority 81.3% worked remotely by choice.

The quantitative results showed a high level of trust average 4.3 out of 5. Productivity produced an average score of 4.3 out of 5 and overall team morale yielded an average of 3.9 out of 5.

The qualitative results (found through open ended prompts) Helped to understand the importance of communication autonomy team goals and in person interaction. All were critical factors amongst remote teams.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the survey was completely voluntary and anonymous. No personal information was collected, and respondents were aware that their answers would be used for academic research purposes. The purpose was to create more reliability and respect the respondent's confidentiality.

4.4 Limitations of the Method

The data collected from the survey does offer a unique and solid look into the experiences of remote and hybrid workers but there are a few limitations worth noting. The research was based on a relatively

small and non-random sample and may include bias due to the nature of the self-reported data. The respondents are also mostly from white collar and digital/remote capable roles which can lead to more favorable answers to remote and hybrid work experiences. Lastly, another limitation is time and how remote and hybrid work environments evolve. What may work and be true now can change as this landscape and work policies are refined. Including follow up interviews over a longer period of time could give us a more full picture. Regardless of the limitations, the findings in both the quantitative data and qualitative insights gives a well-rounded perspective on remote work experiences that can help companies in the United States and Finland support their teams.

5. RESULTS

This section presents the findings from the Webropol survey that was distributed to 32 respondents. The results are divided into quantitative metrics through Likert scale responses and closed ended questions. The qualitative results were found through open ended questions.

5.1 Quantitative Results Measuring Trust, Productivity and Team Morale

The Likert scale was on a 0 to 5 scale. 0 represents strong disagreement and 5 represents strong agreement. The scale represents the perception of trust, productivity and team morale.

Table 1: Average Score of Key Workplace Indicators

Indicator	Average Score (out of 5)
Trust	4.3
Productivity	4.3
Team Morale	3.9

These results suggest that respondents felt well supported in remote work environments, especially in regard to feeling trusted and their productivity. Team morale rated lower, which suggests that this might be an area for improvement.

Table 2: Remote Work Experience (Years)

Duration of Experience	% of Respondents
0-1 years	12.9%
1-2 years	16.1%
2-3 years	29.0%
3+ years	42.0%

A large percentage (42%) of the respondents reported that they have more than three years of remote or hybrid work experience.

Table 3: Remote Work Frequency (Days per Week)

Days Per Week	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	2	6.5%
2	2	6.5%
3	3	9.7%
4	6	19.4%
5	18	58.1%

This table shows that over half (58.1%) of the sample group worked remotely full time.

Table 4: Country of Residence

Country	% of Respondents
Finland	58.1%
United States	41.9%

This table shows the difference in representation from the two example countries. Finland made up 58.1% of the group, while the United States represented 41.9% of the group.

Table 5: Gender Distribution

Gender	% of Respondents
Male	62.5%
Female	34.4%
Prefer not to say	3.1%

The gender distribution shows a majority of the respondents (62.5%) were male, followed by (34.4%) female and one respondent (3.1%) preferred not to say. The table reflects the gender diversity in the survey.

5.2 Qualitative Results

The qualitative results were found through open ended questions. They invited respondents to share personal experiences on their perception of trust, productivity and team morale in their remote or hybrid workplace setting. The responses are categorized into themes: trust, productivity, challenges, morale and suggestions:

5.3 Qualitative Insights

Table 6: Summary of Key Qualitative Themes

Theme	Common Responses
Trust	Importance of transparency, autonomy, clear communication, handling your responsibilities
Productivity	Time blocking, flexibility of their schedule, a quiet home environment
Challenges	Lack of visibility, difficult to build personal/professional relationships remotely, uncertainty of what others are doing/achieving
Work life Balance	Positive, ability to handle personal and professional responsibilities, cuts commute time drastically
Morale	Virtual social interactions, in person meetups, informal communication

Table 6 emphasizes that respondents need clear communication, autonomy and mutual respect to earn and build trust. Respondents also highlighted that productivity at home increased because of fewer distractions and more flexibility in their work arrangements. Work life balance was also a recurring theme, and many appreciated the opportunity to interchangeably manage their personal and professional lives. Less commute time and more availability for family were the leading factors and key benefits of remote work.

5.4 Work Life Balance in Practice

Work life balance was one of the most frequent aspects referenced in a positive light of remote work. Respondents cited that the flexibility and freedom gave them the ability to balance their personal and professional lives more efficiently.

One respondent answered: *It has enhanced my work life balance. I am now able to spend more time with my family and I have the flexibility to shift my work based on my family's needs while still meeting work goals.* (Interviewee) Another said: *Vastly enhanced. Saves 1.5 hour commute. Get to work an additional 1-2 hours.* (Interviewee) Both stressing their positive perception of working remotely or hybrid.

While the overwhelming majority of respondent's had positive responses there was also caution for the freedom it gave them and cited that boundaries need to be kept: *If working from home, you need to be careful not to let work bleed into everything else; clear working times, separate workspace, etc.* (Interviewee)

5.5 Building Trust Remotely

Trust was seen as a foundational element in the results. Respondents wanted autonomy and not to be micromanaged. Respondents were clear with their feelings regarding micromanagement: *I believe*

micromanaging is the biggest challenge with trust from an employee's perspective. From employers perspective it's motivation of the employee combined with misleading or inaccurate reporting of actual hours worked. (Interviewee)

5.6 How Productivity Shows up in Remote Work

Respondents answered that productivity saw a bump, in comparison to working in the office. Less distractions and more control over their work environment were the main leading factors.

Since my job requires me to call people, I find it easier to call people from home, since I dont have to move from office to booth all the time. (Interviewee) Respondents held a similar sentiment to the control over their work environment and having access to the right conditions to do their job.

Other mentioned tools that aid in their productivity, with timeblocking and task lists being two of the more common tools. *Setting focus time blocks in my calendar, working with minimal distractions in the mornings, creating a task to-do list and checking each task off after it's completed. (Interviewee)*

5.7 Keeping Team Morale Alive from a Distance

While trust and productivity rated higher (both 4.3 out of 5), team morale scored lower (3.9 out of 5). Respondents noted that having a sense of connection and feeling like part of a team presented challenges and was found to be more difficult.

One respondent struggled with the human connection that comes with a typical workplace: *I can't deny that being in different locations can make remote work more difficult. While I enjoy the flexibility, there is nothing like meeting face-to-face in the office. In -person team meetings with no lag time like video calls always feels more productive. My workplace has adopted a hybrid schedule because of this, and we schedule our most important meetings in person when most people can attend. (Interviewee)*

Another focused on tools that support and even potentially boost team morale in remote workplaces: *Periodic team events in person - internal messaging - team meetings - virtual coffee breaks - team videos/introductions. (Interviewee)* These statements suggest that team morale is closely linked to a sense of human connection, feeling valued and having support from colleagues and leadership teams.

5.8 Suggestions from Respondents

As an addition to feedback from their personal experiences, respondents were also able to give suggestions on how to make improvements in remote or hybrid workplaces. They are grouped into the three main themes: trust, productivity and team morale.

Table 7: Suggestions Categorized by Theme

Suggestion theme	Common Ideas
Trust	Clear expectations and communication, avoid micromanagement, build relationships through tools and periodic in person events
Productivity	Encourage autonomy, let workers invest in tools/equipment that allow them to do their job better, give options for time management support
Team Morale	Organic personal connection, celebrate team/personal achievements together, hold 1:1 and team check ins regularly, host occasional gatherings

Table 7 suggests that workplaces require a team effort in a plan and tools that helps both employees and leadership in an effective remote or hybrid workplace environment. Respondents prefer to have a

system in place to hold them accountable and to foster ways to improve communication and connection. These are indications on how organizations can make improvements in their remote or hybrid workplace environments.

6. DISCUSSION

This chapter takes a deeper look at the survey results and what they really mean going beyond the numbers to understand the experiences of people working in remote and hybrid work environments. Of work life balance trust productivity in team morale will be broken down individually and we'll also show how they are connected. Those insights will then be tied back to the key theories of organizational psychology to not only help explain what people are feeling but why they are feeling what they are feeling.

The discussion focuses on a few foundational theories: Herzberg's two factor theory, the job characteristics model and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions. These theories help to make sense of how remote work impacts motivation, satisfaction and collaboration amongst different teams in various settings. There is also reference to two different reports on the state of remote work. These reports from Owl Labs and GitLab report up to date in in detail findings on different aspects of remote and hybrid work environments. Both reports align closely with the themes presented in this study.

The following sections will focus on one core topic. The goal is to find out what we can learn from the survey responses both in what's working and going well and what areas might need improvement. Through this discussion the hope is to give organizations actionable insights and practical ideas to make remote and hybrid work better for all parties involved.

6.1 Theoretical Framework Overview

Before getting into each theme, it is important to briefly revisit the key theories that will frame this discussion:

- Herzberg's Two Factor Theory which distinguishes between hygiene factors (preventing dissatisfaction) and motivators (driving satisfaction). In remote work autonomy can be seen as a motivator that benefits employee's freedom while limiting micromanagement can be seen as a hygiene factor that aims to prevent dissatisfaction.
- The Job Characteristics Model focuses on five key elements that make a contribution to meaningful work: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. The model

highlights the importance of having jobs that are worthwhile and keep you motivated. In a remote or hybrid work environment autonomy is often seen quite high, but feedback and task significance may be less addressed.

- Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions focuses on how culture makes an impact on behavior in the workplace. This is particularly relevant in teams that are global. As an example, cultures that rate higher in individualism may thrive when given more autonomy and responsibility while more collectivist cultures might place a higher value on connection and shared team goals. In countries that rate higher in power distance, those people may fare better with more exposure to in person direction from leadership, whereas those in low power distance cultures might fare better because of the perceived equality between ranks in the workplace. These dimensions need to be understood and have a direct impact on how remote or hybrid work teams communicate, collaborate and establish trust.
- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs presents a more personal understanding of the employee experience. Belonging and self-esteem are two needs that are clear examples of psychological needs that need to be met in a remote or hybrid workplace. A recurring theme amongst respondents was the importance of work life balance which points towards the need to achieve higher level needs once the basics were in place. Once the foundational needs are met (having a job/paycheck) then the next natural step to achieve higher level needs like connection or self fulfilment.

6.2 Work life Balance

Work life balance (while not a core topic) came up again and again in the responses. Typically, in a very positive way. The respondents really valued the flexibility that remote or hybrid work gave them. The ability to manage their work time, skip long commutes and have a better balance between work and home responsibilities was highlighted and made a real difference in their lives. One going as far to say *it has greatly improved my work life balance and allowed me to become more autonomous with my work, overall, really improved my mental health and feelings about work in general (Interviewee)*. Another mentioned that their work life balance was vastly enhanced and allowed them to *get to work an additional 1-2 hours (Interviewee)* because of not having to commute. Both comments show that not only are teams that work remote or hybrid able to support their mental health but are also able to spend more time working. This brings us right in line with Herzberg's Two Factor Theory. When people have autonomy and freedom to balance their time, they are more motivated and satisfied. When

we look at the at the Job Characteristics model point of view, when people have control over how and when they work they gain a huge boost in engagement.

With this being said, respondents also mentioned that, at times, it can be hard to separate work life from your normal life. This challenge was echoed in the 2023 Owl Labs State of Remote work which states that while employees do save time, many end up working longer hours overall (Owl Labs, 2023). It is an imbalance that can be seen in the television series *Severance*, where work life and personal life are completely separated. This is an extreme and dystopian view but not the reality we live in and thus have to deal with said imbalance and create ways to draw a line in the sand between the two.

While a majority of the responses show that remote or hybrid work improves work life balance, it is clear that organizations and leaders need to support employees when it comes to respecting work hours and setting expectations. Tools like async communication, respecting others calendars, and even wellness check-ins are appropriate ways to address this.

6.3 The Role of Trust in Remote Teams

Trust was a main and consistent theme found in the responses, especially in regards to employee motivation and engagement. Respondents from the survey that expressed they felt more trusted by their team and managers mentioned they felt more capable. One interviewee noted that if you *Minimize supervision in organization. Remote work succeeds in organizations where everyone is motivated, knows what they should be doing and are proactive with their tasks (Interviewee)*. While some respondents did mention that they haven't faced any challenges, most provided the same sentiment that there are significant challenges to trust in remote and hybrid work environments. Respondents expressed that they felt they needed to show more progress, *you simply don't know exactly what people are doing (Interviewee)*. This aligns well with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Trust is a motivator that allows employees to do better work to their full potential which depends greatly on self-management and reducing things like micromanagement which is seen as a hygiene factor that leads directly to dissatisfaction.

Communication was also seen as a large connection to trust. One interviewee said it is *not as easy to have two-way communication (Interviewee)*. Another mentioned that *with significant time differences,*

remote teams and varying holidays it's difficult to know who is around and when and can become hard to move fast (Interviewee). In Gitlab's Remote Work Report (2021) it highlights how trust, in distributed teams, is built. It suggests that is it based on outcomes not input, clear communication and full transparency. Trust needs to be cultivated in remote work for it to be sustainable.

6.4 Tools for Better Productivity

Productivity was present in both the quantitative data and in the open-ended questions with high ratings. Most respondents reported that they felt more productive at home. Citing things like fewer distractions, more control over their environment and flexibility. One interviewee said *being alone without distraction of a busy office help. Tools I have found helpful are time blocking, setting reminders in my schedule and turning off notifications (Interviewee).* This touches on each of the points. According to the Job Characteristics Model (in regard to autonomy), when employees are able to freely manage their time and environment, productivity will likely follow.

Tools and routines were also hot topics that were mentioned by respondents. Many references time blocking, creating and sticking to task lists and clear calendar organization were ways to help employees stay on track. *Setting focus time blocks in my calendar, working with minimal distractions in the mornings and creating a task to do list and check each task off after its completed (Interviewee).* Owl Labs State of Hybrid Work 2024 reported that more than half (58%) of employees used time blocking to protect their time. This practice helps workers not only manage their schedules but ensures that they have dedicated periods of high focus and helps them stay on track. These self-imposed structures, as opposed to top-down orders, help recreate the routine of the office setting while giving people the personal responsibility and flexibility to choose how they work. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs states that when workers safety and stability are secure then they can focus on esteem and self-actualization which are areas that focus on performance and satisfaction and key to productivity in the workplace.

6.5 Team Morale and a Sense of Belonging

Team morale, alarmingly, scored lower (3.9 out of 5) than trust and productivity (both 4.3 out of 5) in the quantitative data and also produced concerned in in the open-ended prompts. Many respondents expressed the benefits that remote and hybrid work had benefits but that it sometimes left when feeling

disconnected from their teams and workplace. Respondents stated that *it can get lonely sometimes (Interviewee)* and that *it is hard to build real connections with people (Interviewee)*. Respondents seem to agree that there is no replacement to the in-person connection. Citing that *challenging situations are more difficult to manage and are best managed face to face*. This presents both a personal and professional challenge and both should be taken very seriously. Morale relies heavily on social connection. The respondents suggested that periodical in person events, virtual team building events, 1 to 1 meeting, recognition for achievements and team competitions were some ways to alleviate the missing social connection. Team morale in the remote or hybrid workplace presented obvious concerns, but respondents did appreciate measures taken to bridge that gap. From the Self-Determination Theory perspective, humans need to feel connected and have a sense of belonging. And even if productivity is high, team morale can still suffer.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions can also play a role in understanding some of the differences. In cultures that are more collectivist (like Finland), collaboration is seen as very important and the absence of that can be more pronounced. This suggests to organizations that are more culturally diverse that there needs to be intention around building team morale.

Team morale does not just focus on be positive and happy but also on connection, feeling recognized and having a sense of community regardless of distance or team set up.

7. CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis was to explore and understand workers experiences in remote and hybrid work environments and how they shape the modern workplace. The focus was on four main key areas: trust, productivity, team morale and work life balance. Through a mix of psychological theories, real life experience, survey data and interview responses from workers in Finland and the US, I wanted to get a full understanding on what workers in these environments were really feeling outside of the traditional office set up.

From the beginning, the work was centered around people and the human aspect. I did not want to focus on output or their personal results but about how they felt. Remote and hybrid work is not a trend but a large shift in how we work, live and connect. Tech makes it possible, but the human aspect is what makes it meaningful. While results are important and needed, it is emotion and human connection that allows us to thrive. The responses made it clear that when people feel trusted, have autonomy and ownership of their work and have clear support they win in all of the key themes: trust, productivity and team morale.

The study did have limitations. The survey sample was quite small and based on workers in the United States and Finland and may not reflect the experiences of those who are not Finnish or American but working in those countries. Also, most of the respondents had roles that lent themselves to adjusting to remote and hybrid work settings more easily. Despite the limitations, the thesis gives a strong foundation on how to meaningfully impact remote and hybrid work teams and presents key themes that are universal for all teams.

Flexibility presented itself as one of the top benefits. Remote and hybrid work gave people the ability to manage their time, skip long commute times and be more present for their family and friends at home. This makes a huge difference in how people viewed their jobs and ultimately their lives. This aligns with suggestions from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg Two-Factor Theory that while money is nice and we need it, we need more than a paycheck. They need purpose, ownership and for their work to fit into the bigger picture of their life. Respondents recognized the importance of the convenience of remote and hybrid work because it gave them a sense of control and self-esteem.

Trust might be the backbone of the entire thesis. It is clear that when people are micromanaged, their motivation drops. Transversely when they are trusted they are empowered to do their job effectively. Building trust is more than just tools or workflows. It requires a culture that advocates for respect, clarity and mutual accountability. Respondents suggested that it is not just about being online all day but that you are getting the job done and excelling in your role

Productivity was found to improve for many people. Fewer distractions and more control over their work set up and environment was cited multiple times. It is unique to each person how they focus and work. With this freedom, I believe people are able to focus deeper and build routines that work for them and are effective. Respondents stated that it was easier to be in a “flow state” and do their best work at home than in an office. Others mentioned tools like time blocking or flexibility in their schedules gave them more structure in their day and allowed them to be more efficient. Though productivity was applauded and seemingly approved greatly, it doesn’t exactly paint the entire picture. It has to be paired connection, recognition and meaning.

Team Morale, when compared to trust and productivity, was more complicated. While the majority expressed their appreciation for the independence that comes with remote and hybrid work environments, they also admitted that it was easy to feel disconnected from their teams. It really is a case of the “little things”. Having short conversations with colleagues, asking how people’s days are going, receiving a compliment or bonding over a shared experience are what makes up a lot of our connection and this is very hard to do online. Typically, you get right to business and skip the formalities. In this case, the “formalities” are important and a large factor in how we connect. We need to have a shared energy to be a great team and the teams that do best are the ones who make space for these moments.

Creating the right culture and intentionally planning for these set ups is paramount. Hofstede’s Cultural dimensions can help us to understand how different teams, based on culture have different experiences to remote and hybrid work environments. While some might thrive with independence, others might miss the collaboration that comes with an office. There is not a one size fits all approach but there are better ways to adapt and as the word “adapt” suggests, we need to constantly be revising our approach to this. We need to understand people at their very core. Who they are, where they come from, their goals, their needs and how to get the best out of them. One respondent put it best *there are different preferences for remote working. Some people want to work remotely all the time, others want to work in an office all the time and some want a mix of both. You need to discover the size of these groups in your organization and make sure everyone is catered for, instead of deciding a “right way”*

in top management” (Interviewee). Once we understand that, we can devise a plan and shape how remote and hybrid work is designed and managed.

The goal for this thesis was first to understand and learn from people working in remote and hybrid work environments and second to use that information to create a playbook and roadmap for companies to consider when creating policies, considering tools to use and their overall approach to dealing with remote and hybrid work environments. Based on what I have learned, here are some ideas that companies can consider.

Focus on the outcome, not on the hours work or activity metrics. The emphasis needs to be shifted from monitoring if you are online or completing a certain amount of activity (emails sent, calls made e.g.). As an example, Basecamp uses an async model that evaluates success on clear goals and delivery not on hours working. This gives flexibility and maintains accountability (Faguiar 2022). Our first approach should be to see what is produced, everything else is secondary unless it is detrimental to the workplace or team members. We all work in unique ways but most agree that micromanagement (tracking emails, phone calls, etc.) produces an adverse effect and causes us to lose time, effort and thus performance. Use data to back this up. Are people hitting their numbers or on track with all their progress? Let them be. If they aren't then conversations need to be had.

Create a collaborative structure. We need to understand that chaos is not the answer. It would not be ideal to let everyone do whatever they would like. Communicate a clear structure with your team that aligns with your team set up and personnel and allow each level to add suggestions on how to best do this. For example, in Google's Calendar you are able to time block and create events like “focus time”. This will allow you to do just that: focus. Incoming messages or meeting invites will be silenced or automatically declined. Workers will see this as a way that aligns with the structure and also gives them the freedom to work within that with specific tools.

Keep it human centric. Create an environment that focuses on the human first. Foster an environment that allows for impromptu non work conversations and interactions. This can be in the form of separate time for mental health or sharing accomplishments. Because our world is more and more digital each day, this is paramount to success and creates a better environment for all those in it. Share experiences, reach out to people and be genuine.

Understand and learn from your team's individual cultures. It can often be hard to understand every aspect of each culture. That shouldn't stop us from trying. The first recommendation would be to speak to them and find as many similarities as possible. Connect on every possible level and then see where you differ. After that, I recommend getting into the literature. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions is a great way to get an overview on how different cultures react to different aspects. Not only as managers or leaders but also as colleagues. It is imperative to understand where one another is coming from, their holidays and work habits.

Respect boundaries. Honor people's quiet hours or online status. As an example, Dropbox has implemented no meeting blocks and companywide hours to support deep focus and work life balance. It is easy to get caught up in today's world of easy access and instant responses. Bring real life office working conditions into play. You wouldn't just walk into a meeting room to speak with someone, you would wait until they are available and then approach them. Practice this same approach in a remote or hybrid work environment.

Ask often and listen more. Don't leave things to surprise and be proactive. Create frequent and transparent feedback loops. This can be done through 1 on 1 meetings or anonymous surveys to gauge the temperature in a safe environment where people aren't afraid to give real feedback and perspective. Leaders and employees can use this data and create actionable adjustments. We are all likely inundated with messages, meetings or surveys. Express that these things matter and build time into the day to facilitate for this.

Execute. With all of these recommendations in mind, if we don't live and breathe by them then they are meaningless. They are just writing on the wall or posters of values that don't hold weight. Execution means embedding these practices and input into company goals, daily workflows and company culture. Teams should be encouraged to revise these from time to time depending on the result. Go back and look at what worked and what could be improved. This is a constant work in progress but should be upheld according to your specific agreement and time frame. The organization should create a system where feedback is welcome and heard because if it is just a top-down approach then most won't feel connected and thus are less likely to embody them.

Remote and hybrid work are not just trends. They are quickly becoming the norm and even expected by new talent. The companies that create an environment that leads with empathy, gives workers flexibility and focuses on people first will be more successful and attract more talent.

This thesis has been more than just research, it has been a chance to reflect on the kind of workplace that people want to be part of and thrive in. It is about creating a space where people are seen, supported and trusted, how work fits into life and not the other way around and how everyone, regardless of where they are from, can feel like they are on the same team working toward a common goal.

My hope is that this contributes to making remote and hybrid work environments more sustainable and to help create a place that people enjoy and truly feel proud to be part of.

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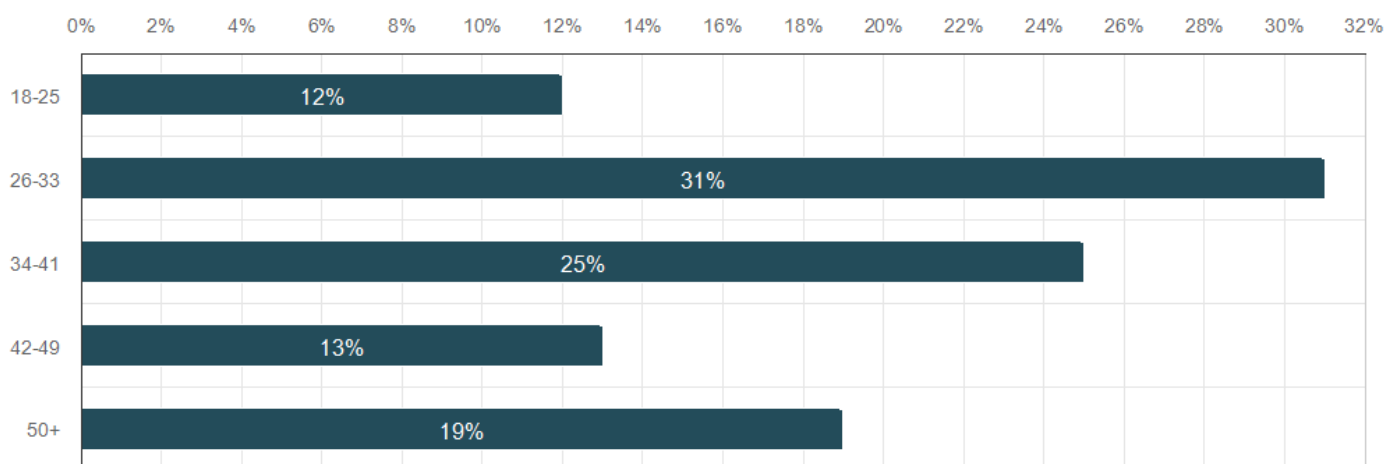
Basic report

Trust, Productivity, & Morale in the Remote Workplace

Total number of respondents: 32

What is your age?

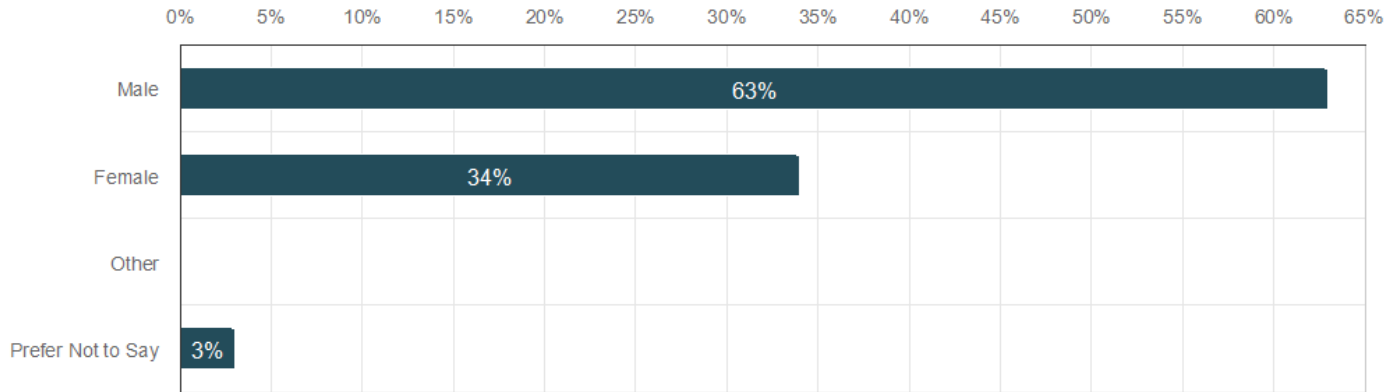
Number of respondents: 32



	n	Percent
18-25	4	12,5%
26-33	10	31,2%
34-41	8	25,0%
42-49	4	12,5%
50+	6	18,8%

What is your gender

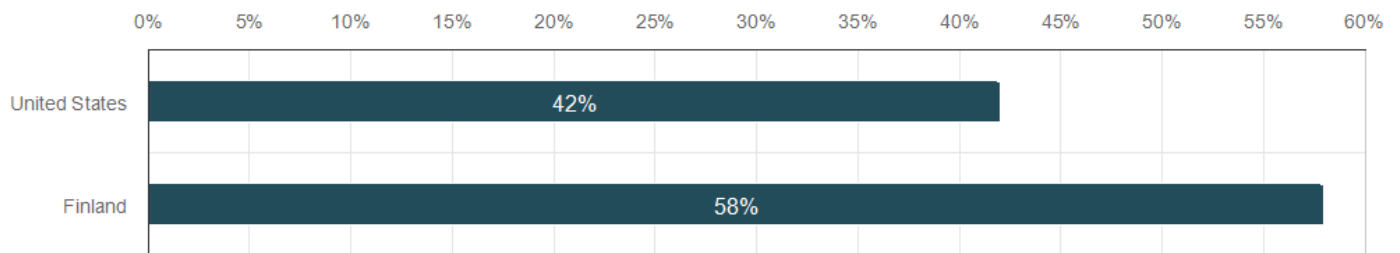
Number of respondents: 32



	n	Percent
Male	20	62,5%
Female	11	34,4%
Other	0	0,0%
Prefer Not to Say	1	3,1%

Country of Residence

Number of respondents: 31



	n	Percent
United States	13	41,9%
Finland	18	58,1%

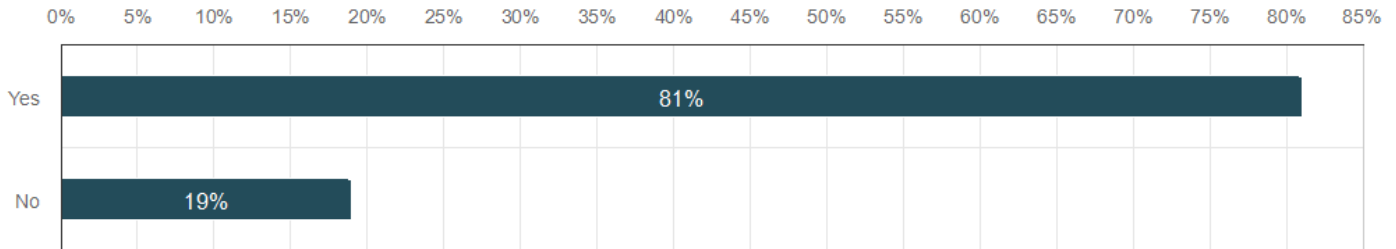
Which Industry do you work in?

Number of respondents: 32

Responses
Software
IT
Financial Services
Environment
Marketing
Telecommunications
Software
IT
IT
software
Information Technology
IT
IT
Software
Tech
IT
IT
Software
Marketing
Aviation
Marketing - CPG
Veterinary Medicine
Commercial Real Estate/Private Investments
Technology/Sales
Airline
Healthcare
Educations
IT/Sales
Tech Sales
Pre-Sales
Journalism
Software Development

Do you work remotely by choice?

Number of respondents: 32



	n	Percent
Yes	26	81,3%
No	6	18,7%

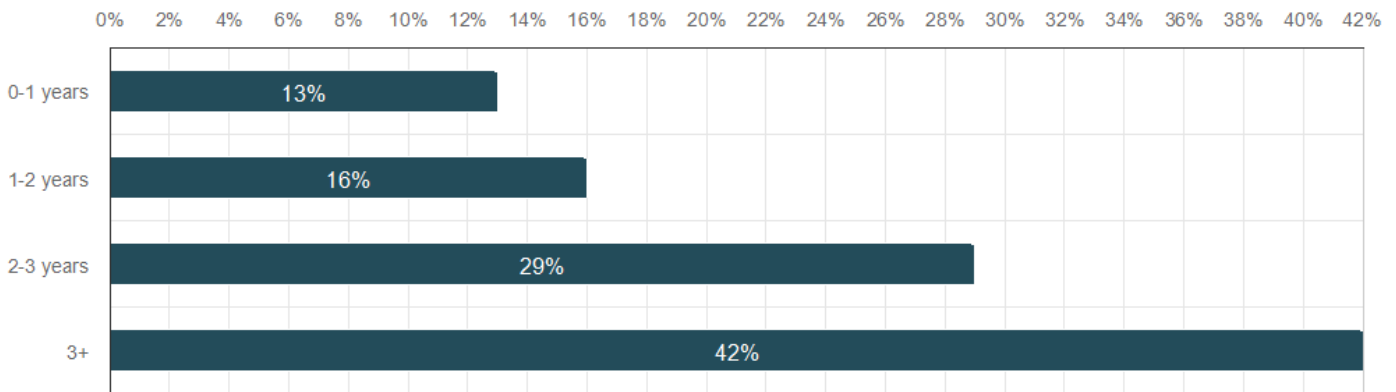
How many days per week do you work remotely?

Number of respondents: 31

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
1,0	5,0	3,8	4,0	118,0	1,4

How long have you worked remotely?

Number of respondents: 31



	n	Percent
0-1 years	4	12,9%
1-2 years	5	16,1%
2-3 years	9	29,0%
3+	13	42,0%

How much do you feel trusted by your managers/colleagues when working remotely?

Number of respondents: 31

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
1,0	5,0	4,3	5,0	134,0	1,1

What practices contribute to building trust within your remote workplace/team?

Number of respondents: 30

Responses
Transparency of calendar. Timely replies to email/Slack. Seeing teammates in person regularly. Responsive to deliverables. Weigh in on Slack threads with meaningful replies.
There is no minimum amount of days you have to visit the office.
Clear communication. Autonomy. Feedback. Consistency
Clear instructions, meetings
Teams Meetings. No tracking of activity
Check ins with colleagues. 1 on 1 meetings.
Communication, collaboration, etc.
Everyone takes responsibility of their tasks/roles irrespective of where they are working from.
handling everything in a timely manner
Active communication, mutual respect
I've worked with them at the office earlier.
Not treating remote workers as second class citizens. Company management also working remotely. Regular, not strictly formulated meetings with the team for casual chat and work updates.
Entire team is distributed to remote is the default.
Have worked in the office with most team most team mates previously.
Open communication, the company culture, the leadership style of my manager
Periodically meeting face to face. Maintaining personal relations (go for a beer, talk about non-work, do non-work activities). High-fidelity remote meetings.
I think it just boils down to everybody delivering what they're expected to deliver. Daily or weekly meetings where plans and accomplishments are discussed probably help too. And in a remote-first company, trust is kind of a necessary condition anyway.

Remote-first meeting policy: If one member participates remotely, everyone participates remotely.
Virtual coffee breaks. Daily meetings.
They can see my production/activity on a team dashboard.
Emailing regularly and being “available” on Microsoft Teams
NA
Being reliable and communicating with team members. Proving and earning your trust through hitting goals and numbers while working remote.
Not being micromanaged, giving help freely and without judgement, following through on tasks/questions from coworkers or managers
Building trust takes a lot of effort. It’s important to have open communication and clear expectations from management and employees.
Supportive leadership and periodic in-person team gatherings (2x year)
No micromanaging. Freedom to choose workhours
team building and staying in contact via Slack
Communication & private activities.
We have small team meetings with no set agenda once a week over Zoom. They help to build morale and trust between managers and coworkers, even if we are not all together in the office daily.
Asynchronous schedule - actually living our company values - the ability to work remotely in the first place -

Describe any challenges to trust in a remote work environment

Number of respondents: 28

Responses
Asynch communication. With significant time differences and remote teams, varying holidays its difficult to know who is around, when and can become hard to move fast.
Sometimes getting bored to being just at home and seeing the same walls. Coming to office gives you a different kind of feeling and vibe. Just staying at home makes work and leisure time hours feel too much same. Also tasks which need brainstorming are more effective to do face to face in my opinion.
Lack of visibility. Micromanagement. Isolation
I don't see any challenges in trust in a remote work
Not as easy to have two way communication
You simply don't know exactly what people are doing and if they are being productive
Quick feedback/response is key.
Havent faced any trust challenges yet
nothing specific
Challenges? Not seeing any activity for days erodes trust in work progress. Other than that, no issues.
Some people may be regularly offline / not available during workdays.
Sometimes I feel that I need to show progress more clearly when working remotely compared to working from office. At the office everyone can see that you came to work, but working from home, there is no similar evidence that you're being productive.
none
Trust has half-life, and the worse fidelity/quality your meetings have, the more often you need to replenish trust in person. To understand this phenomena: most who work with customers have had some friction go away once you meet in person; there is something in us that clicks "this is a human, we're te same", a.k.a "trust", but this trust fades away.
Never had challenges while remote that I wouldn't have had in-office.
Extra attention is needed to define metrics and exact phrasing for deliverables. You can't just walk up to someone and talk about their current status and potential roadblocks, you need to have something concrete (such

as a list of completed and pending tasks) written down, or either you need to schedule excessive status meetings.
It is hard to know what people are actually doing
You can't see where people are and what they're doing.
Others can see what you are doing and believe you only do things on your own time
NA
Focus shifts elsewhere. Instead of working, some people tend to do more house chores, etc. while on the clock.
Forming workplace relationships, especially when the company is global, it can be hard to form a bond via Google Meets and Slack. It sometimes feels like it's not a real person on the other end of it.
Sometimes I miss the lack of face-to-face interaction and everyday camaraderie in an office.
Micromanagement, ie asking for a list of completed tasks for each day when that is not asked for those working in-person.
I believe micromanaging is the biggest challenge with trust from an employees perspective. From employers perspective it's motivation of the employee combined with misleading or inaccurate reporting of actual hours worked
A proper schedule, not getting distracted too much
At times, I feel managers don't always trust that I am getting my work done because they cannot see me in the office. It may not be true and it could just be based on my own feeling.
Do coworkers/managers believe that you are actually getting your work done. Easy to be away from your work while at home or not at your workplace

How would you rate your productivity while working remotely?

Number of respondents: 31

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
2,0	5,0	4,3	4,0	134,0	0,7

What tools or practices have you found that enhance your productivity while working remotely?

Number of respondents: 31

Responses
Clear list of tasks and priorities. Scheduled time for each. Other team members that are on a similar time zone or physical location
Trying to take lunch and coffee breaks properly. Maybe going outside of home for lunch to get little bit variety to day and not just sitting at home.
Time blocking. Quiet workspace. Clear priorities
Being able to choose my hours to do my work and being able to take active breaks like go for a walk during lunch etc.
Following calendar schedule. I am a talkative person so it is easier to concentrate at home
Timeblocking. Turning off personal devices. Utilizing my home office
Nothing out of the ordinary. Same thing as working on-site, just more peace and quiet.
Less interruptions. Can control the noise in the environment much better at my own place.
working when it feels most effective during the day, during weekends, taking breaks, shorter or longer, not losing time commuting
Spotify for constant background music, taking breaks in the living room, kitchen or outside, taking the occasional nap if necessary to improve focus.
Call colleagues to discuss.
I change my location in the house during the day. On warm summer days I can even work from outside. During the work hours, I consider myself being away from home and won't do any house chores.
Allow yourself to have a flexible schedule with e.g. a longer walk during lunch. Ad-hoc video calls when necessary
No distractions

Productivity / todo type tools, clear plans & goals, meet with team regularly (e.g dailies).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scheduling my own tasks so that I do the most demanding tasks when I know I can work undisturbed. - Muting notifications for a couple of hours to avoid distractions. - Taking longer breaks when needed (which is actually easier when remote than at the office)
Frequent small breaks
Slack. Google drive.
Time management it at an all-time high and there are little to no distractions.
Turning off tv, keeping personal phone in other room
NA
Setting up a home office. Having a space I can focus and not be easily distracted.
Setting focus time blocks in my calendar, working with minimal distractions in the mornings, creating a task to-do list and checking each task off after it's completed.
Having really good internet is extremely important. Also I find having a daily routine helps me stay on task.
Being able to take a break to take my dog for a walk - both meets my needs for a break and completes a household task of dog walking. I am more productive for both parts of life.
Peaceful and quiet workplace
Working out before work.
Phone on do not disturb mode.
Communication Platforms such as Slack and Google Meets have facilitated quick communication and collaboration with the team
Since my job requires me to call people, I find it easier to call people from home, since I dont have to move from office to booth all the time
I start work at the same time every day and try to stick to a similar schedule as when I'm in the office. If I do errands or chores around the house, I make sure it fits with my meeting schedule. I also take regular breaks to go outside or step away from the computer, just as I do at the office.
Being alone without distraction of a busy office helps. Tools I have found helpful are time blocking - setting reminders in my schedule - turning off notifications

How has remote work impacted your work life balance?

Number of respondents: 32

Responses
In a very positive way. The flexibility of remote work allows for a more seamless integration of work/life balance
Little bit negativity as getting bored to same scenes, but as I have small child who just went to school. Working remotely saves me time and helps keeping up with the schedules.
More flexibility in personal and professional responsibilities. But that also makes it harder to disconnect
It makes a good change in work week as changing a daily schedule
Largely positive.
I have time to take care of things at home during short breaks and allows for more time with family after work
Positively. Saves a lot of time (2h+) going to/from work.
It is important to still have a semblance of work/life separation when working remotely.
Overall, work life balance is pretty much the same regardless since I live near my workplace. So commute is not an issue.
Having full control over the work environment however makes me more productive when working remote.
Improved a lot
It has had a very positive effect on the balance, not being tied to office hours.
Mostly positively, though it's hard to get the wife to understand that I'm not just slacking off at the computer when at home, and as such I'm not available for chores at any time the whim strikes her.
Not at all.
I don't need to commute which is a great with small children. I can voluntarily work longer on some days and shorter on others, which allows me to better adjust the work life balance.
No significant impact
Improved it, easier to manage home and kids
If working from home, you need to be careful not to let work bleed into everything else; clear working times, separate workspace, etc.

<p>On the other hand, it gives much more flexibility, and the ability to work around logistics with kids etc. Can save commuting time, but abrupt change from work to not work can leave your mind lingering; a small "wind down" or signalling work has ended might be needed.</p>
<p>There are pros and cons in that regard. On one hand the boundaries become very blurry. On the other hand I can more easily take time off in the middle of the day to run errands etc, and recoup the lost work time later. I definitely feel that remote work been a net positive on the whole.</p>
<p>Not significantly; I live reasonably close to the office, so commuting is not a big deal. If I had a longer commute, remote working would be a significant improvement (other factors notwithstanding).</p>
<p>Substantially. I am able to get my work done and things around the house</p>
<p>It allows me to handle personal tasks with ease.</p>
<p>Miss social interactions but enjoy freedom to get personal things done</p>
<p>NA</p>
<p>Vastly enhanced. Saves 1.5 hour commute. Get to work an additional 1-2 hours.</p>
<p>It has greatly improved my work life balance and allowed me to become more autonomous with my work, overall really improved my mental health and feelings about work in general</p>
<p>I really prefer working from home because it allows me to be more available to my family.</p>
<p>It has enhanced my work life balance. I am now able to spend more time with my family and I have the flexibility to shift my work based on my family's needs while still meeting work goals.</p>
<p>Nothing</p>
<p>Positively. Much more time on my hands for hobbies, friends, family and travel.</p>
<p>It has provided greater flexibility in managing my work schedule, which allows me to better accommodate personal commitments and spend more time with family.</p>
<p>To the better. I feel way more flexible.</p>
<p>It has improved my work-life balance, because it gives me more flexibility. If I have a doctor's appointment scheduled in the morning, I can shift my schedule back later and attend, while still working a full day. I also feel like I can complete personal tasks around the house on my breaks during the workday, which leaves me with fewer chores to do when I am not working.</p>

It gives me the ability to be with my family when needed but also the ability to focus on work

How would you describe the morale among your remote team?

Number of respondents: 31

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
2,0	5,0	3,9	4,0	122,0	1,0

What activities or practices help in maintaining or boosting team morale?

Number of respondents: 31

Responses
Regular in person time, coupled with clear goals and priorities.
Having remote meetings weekly and/or bi-weekly.
Recognition. Wellness programs. Virtual team building events
Being able to reach out to people through teams and everyone has their tasks assigned
Trust. Team projects. 1-on-1 short meetings
Working together on projects. Trying to stay connected via huddles
Meetings, collaboration, outside work stuff.
Regular connects and team building activities. Getting to meet the team face-to-face every few months and doing something fun together.
team meetings, 1:1 discussions
Positive feedback when it's available. Occasional casual get-togethers. Gifts/trophies when something goes well.
Regular and open discussions, not only instant messaging.
Weekly team meetings that are not too structured. We also organize events where we meet each other in person roughly every two months. Everyone is responsible for their own work and no-one is watching over one's work.
Overcommunicate
Allow some non-professional banter in team meetings and slack channels
communication, daily catch ups
Dailies, periodical face-to-face activities.
Remote team events (e.g. online games). Dailies and other weekly or biweekly meetings where we can discuss challenges etc.

<p>Meeting face-to-face a few times per year. We also tried to have daily remote coffee breaks, but attendance wasn't very high. I also try to remember to show my appreciation of work others do. (I feel that you need to be a bit more proactive with that when remote – it comes more naturally when face to face.)</p>
<p>Frequent team meetings and 1-on-1.</p>
<p>Connecting as much as possible</p>
<p>Monthly team meetings and monthly huddles to discuss current events in the industry and any challenges we're facing.</p>
<p>N/a</p>
<p>NA</p>
<p>Open communication and trusting teammates are all working towards a common goal.</p>
<p>Team competitions, talking as coworkers without a manager present, supporting each other's accomplishments each week</p>
<p>Employee recognition and ability to discuss any issues with team.</p>
<p>Weekly team meetings where part of it is dedicated to personal "wins" not just work. Also, periodic in-person meetings about 2x a year.</p>
<p>Spending time together at the real workplace</p>
<p>Performance of the team is most important. Remote team activities usually don't have the desired result. Communication between team members is important for morale while being remote.</p>
<p>Keeping everyone aligned and providing a platform for open communication in regular team meetings.</p>
<p>Constant communication</p>
<p>As previously noted, regularly schedule, small team meetings with no set agenda help to make the team feel connected even if we're not physically in the same place. These meetings can be longer or shorter, depending on whether we have anything to discuss. I also reach out directly to my manager and coworkers over messaging or the phone as needed, which helps us feel closer even if we're remote.</p>
<p>Periodic team events in person - internal messaging - team meetings - virtual coffee breaks - team videos/introductions</p>

What challenges have you faced relating to team morale in a remote work setting? How were they addressed?

Number of respondents: 30

Responses
Hard to tell via remote calls if team mates are struggling with anything personal or work related
Not any serious ones that comes to my mind.
Fewer informal convos
Sometimes some people are not available and hasn't said a reason
It's hard to connect not being in person. We try to find ways to make things more human
Nothing is quite like in person interaction
None. Morale AFAIK have had nothing to do with remote work.
It can get lonely sometimes. I just visit the office more frequently when I feel alone in my remote work setting.
no challenges in my team
Team morale is negatively impacted whenever company policies are changed and they require alterations to our routine.
Challenging situations are more difficult to manage, as they are best managed face to face. Taking time and dicussing multiple times helps.
When facing difficulties, those are still best sorted non-remote setting. We haven't experienced any challenges with morale as everyone appreciates flexibility and are creditable for their own work.
Unbased rumors can linger for longer compared to a regular office setting when such things are overheard from coffee table discussions. No solution in mind.
none
It's hard to see if someone starts getting low morale, or what might be the reason if e.g productivity starts to seem sub-par. Still working on this; talking about it 1:1 best I've got so far.
I've found that engineers and designers are mostly happy as long as they get to work on something that feels interesting and meaningful, which remote work doesn't really affect.
It can be difficult to notice if someone is silently struggling with something - either work-wise or in their personal life. It requires a lot of attentiveness and open communication to make sure those things won't be missed.

It is hard to build real connections with people. Periodical in person events help
Those who are not in the office are not as close with the team.
Passive aggressive emails
NA
None in particular but I do think depending on company size, team morale can decrease when everyone is remote. Nothing can beat in person face to face communication, idea sharing, etc.
It can be hard to make people feel as though they are a team when they have never met face to face and the job is hard, but bringing the team together in person helps & having small competitions to push each other & congratulating each other helps
I sometimes felt not connected to my teammates and a now we have a weekly "meeting" where we share what we did over the weekend and then we start our business meeting.
Our teams are across coasts so challenges arrive with different time zones. We can only meet for certain hours of the day together. But we make it work and then the benefit is work coverage for longer times.
I dont know
It's easier to avoid any challenges that may arise with your colleagues; which makes it easier to feel excluded as there is no need to talk things out. They were addressed in person.
/
I can't deny that being in different locations can make remote work more difficult. While I enjoy the flexibility, there is nothing like meeting face-to-face in the office. In -person team meetings with no lag time like video calls always feels more productive. My workplace has adopted a hybrid schedule because of this, and we schedule our most important meetings in person when most people can attend.
Human connection. It is tough to build those critical relationships with people virtually.
We try to address them by holding events and other online interactions

How does your organization support remote work?

Number of respondents: 31

Responses
Regular meetings and activities while remote, plus dedicated times to get together in person.
A lot. No minimum amount of visits to office. You can get office equipment like desks and chairs to your home if you need it.
Flexible hours. Tech tools. Equipment support. Wellness initiatives
We are able to take a work computer to home
Allowing flexible work hours
We are remote by trade. They believe the best talent shouldn't need to only live in the big cities
Very well.
Full freedom to take responsibility of my work regardless of where I am working from.
Home internet is also provided by the organization so I do not have to worry about infrastructure related issues.
8.5/10 level
equipment, home internet, google meetings
Allowing flexible work hours and placing enough trust in us to do our jobs. End result matters. Speed of delivery matters. Anything else is irrelevant.
Provides office furniture, IT equipment, arranges regular meetups at the office to meet colleagues.
Really well. We have full freedom to choose the time and place of working. Company covers for devices and will support setting up a home office.
Fully. Video all is the default for all meetings. Support for purchasing office equipment for home use.
Supports fully, I work in a remote first company
Fully, own choice. Can get internet, furniture, etc equipment. Arranging face-to-face meetings on a regular basis.
It's a remote-first company, so it's not just supported but more or less the norm.
Benefits like a home office budget, home broadband, etc, help too.
All full-company meetings are done with remote meeting technologies, even if most of the people are physically present.

The primary company communication channel is a chat tool.
Teams are encouraged to organize online events
Allowing us to choose when we work from home or in office
Full computer set up with two monitors and all hardware.
Equipment and driving stipend
NA
Very supportive. Very flexible if anything ever comes up last minute and need to stay home
They fully empower remote work, helping to set up the office space & allowing us to do our work whenever it is best for our schedules, as long as we attend the necessary meetings
My company provides me with tools(computer, phone, boosted internet). They trust me to do my job as I complete my daily and weekly tasks. We get together once a quarter for fun team building.
They send remote workers gift cards for lunch when in person gets lunch. They also sent us with desk chairs so that we can have office-quality and stipends for cellphone bills and wifi.
Allows it at all times from anywhere in the world.
Our organization is committed to supporting remote work to ensure our team can work effectively from anywhere.
My job does not require me to be in office so they let me decide completely where I work. I can even work from a foreign country.
My organization has made sure I'm equipped with the technology I need to make remote work as easy as possible. Our IT team has ordered me additional monitors that I set up at home, and they are always available for remote sessions to troubleshoot any problems. My manager has made it clear that they want us to have the flexibility to work remotely, but they also stress the importance of in-office face time. I agree that in-person meetings feel more productive, but on days when I don't have any group meetings, I can do my job sufficiently remotely. My manager seems to know and support that.
My workplace gives us the freedom to work 100% remote and also offers the ability to work from the office. They trust they we are getting the work done as we should.

What suggestions do you have for enhancing trust, productivity, and team morale in remote work settings?

Number of respondents: 27

Responses
Get together regularly in person. Have clear goals and values. Create time to discuss not just work items but personal goals and activities
Nothing specific really comes to my mind. Maybe remembering to have some meetups within a year where everyone gathers together.
One on one check ins. Time management training. Transparency. Feedback loops
Give more days than just one day/week to be able to remote work. Being able to remote work from other city or place other than home.
The team must work together and constantly be on the same page
Talk about what is expected. Going over the expectations before you start is crucial
Same thing as on-site: "show up", do your job, be responsive/accountable. Nothing out of the ordinary, really.
Its imported to have trust in the team. Regular face-to-face connects helps in bonding.
Everyones needs are different so remote working allows us to orgnaize my environment exactly how I like it.
I find my productivity does not really depend on my work location. Group brainstorming activities are although better in when done face-to-face.
For morale, I believe the option to come to the office when needed/wanted is very beneficial.
none
Do not be a helicopter boss, do not encroach on employee privacy, do not subject employees to arbitrary metrics and surveillance. If job security is tied to job performance and job performance is tied to arbitrary or irrelevant metrics, the actual work suffers as employees strive to satisfy those metrics to the exclusion of actual work.
Daily meetings, agreement on working times / availability, regular in-person meetings.

<p>Minimize supervision in organization. Remote work succeeds in organizations where everyone is motivated, knows what they should be doing and are proactive with their tasks.</p>
<p>Trust that people do what is expected of them. If the position is remote, make it clear in recruiting what it means.</p>
<p>Invest in good equipment (=fidelity). Everyone needs to be "remote" in meetings if someone is, otherwise the remotes are "run over" by the "locals". Meet face-to-face from time to time. Try to facilitate personal relations, i.e meet for some non-work discussions / activities. Track work, be extra clear, use collaborative tools = ensure everyone is on the same page.</p>
<p>I think it mostly boils down to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hiring the right people 2. Giving them sufficiently clear tasks that are a good fit for their skills and interests 3. Daily or weekly calls to discuss work 4. Trusting them to do their thing
<p>There are different preferences for remote working - some people want to work remotely all the time, others want to work in an office all the time, and some want a mix of both remote and on-site. You need to discover the size of these groups in your organization and make sure everyone is catered for, instead of deciding a "right way" in top management.</p> <p>Make sure on-site workers also have opportunities to withdraw from noise and distraction when they want and need to do so. Just because you work in the office, it doesn't mean your performance won't be affected by distractions!</p>
<p>Leave it to the discretion of the employees.</p>
<p>Schedule a weekly meeting to catch up, otherwise leave everyone alone</p>
<p>NA</p>
<p>Set up weekly team meetings to talk about shared struggles or accomplishments, bringing the team together in person if possible occasionally, staying supportive of team members</p>
<p>If the company you work for can recognize the importance of flexibility and work-life balance. As an employees my work and life commitments, are important and my company recognizes that and it put me more at ease that I can come to them and work out any issues that come up.</p>
<p>Don't try to manage the day-to-day or worry if their status goes to inactive. Remind leadership this also happens in person. Performance will be seen over time and if projects are being completed on time - then success is achieved, both with completed work and a satisfied employee.</p>

I dont know
Transparent communication, clear goals and expectations and last but not least acknowledging individual and team achievements can enhance trust and productivity as well as team morale.
Always stay in touch with colleagues even if not necessary.
I really think it is important for team members to meet in person on occasion to make build trust and morale. That being said, I think depending on workers' styles, some people are just as productive or even more when working remotely. It is important for managers to know their team members' strengths: Which team members are self-starters who can be productive alone? Which thrive in an in-person setting? Which are successful in both? If a manager knows their team, they can build trust and morale in the remote workplace, while still ensuring maximum productivity.
There needs to be a top down approach and a clear understanding of what is expected. Clear communication/understanding is also key.