

# **Flexible Work and Self-management**

Employee and Employer Expectations in a Changing  
Work Environment

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## ABSTRACT

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This bachelor's thesis was commissioned by an organization, that runs business in banking and insurance sector. The commissioner is on a journey of implementing more flexible ways of work to meet the changing needs of the employees and to meet the increasing demand of the customers. The objective of this thesis was to examine the commissioner's employees' and managers' hopes and expectations on flexible work and self-management and review suggestions of self-management practices, which could result in better performance and improve mutual understanding.

Some of the biggest societal changes in our era have to do with the extreme development of technology. We are living in an information society, in which the diffusion of information has increased the demand for being productive and being within the reach all the time. The phenomenon has developed pressure on individuals, and on the attributes of employment. Therefore, organizations have been forced to re-create their models of operations and processes to come up with an environment which simultaneously satisfies the needs of their employees, their customers and their own aspirations.

The chosen research method is qualitative due to its exploratory nature and it is closely linked with case study approach. The data was collected during May 2019 through observations and online surveys conducted for the commissioner's employees and managers and analyzed using discourse method and qualitative comparative analysis method. These methods helped to study the characteristics and the contextual backgrounds of the case. The results are presented in a narrative form.

Relying on the theoretical background, the research revealed that flexible work and telework is widely used in Finnish organizations. The research also found, that the key element in succeeding at the implementation of flexible work is trust and commitment. The process is more about changing attitudes and norms, which cannot be measured short term. Therefore, it might be challenging to recognize, whether the suggested adjustments are working or not. The process requires commitment and consistency from both parties (employer and employees) and can be supported by number of practices that help to improve mutual understanding.

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Key words: flexible work, telework, self-management, digitalization, information society

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**ERITYISSANASTO tai LYHENTEET JA TERMIT (valitse jompikumpi)**

ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
SDT	Self-determination theory
JCI	The Job Characteristics Inventory
LaaS	Leading as a Service

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the research problem

Rapidly diffused development in the field of information and communication technology (ICT), is challenging organizations to keep up in a changing work environment. Due to digitalization, work and free time are less compartmentalized, and the traditional ways of doing work are frequently questioned. The new kind of demand for balancing work and life seamlessly calls for modernization of working practices in many industries and leads organizations towards a world where it is more common to take a few hours out of the working day for something personal, than it is to sit in the office from 9am to 5pm.

Work can be done from home and scheduled flexibly, allowing employees a certain degree of freedom in deciding how the work could be done. Still, often employees are expected to be available during the regular office hours. (Vikman 2016) This can also be problematic in organizations, where the end customer expects to get service in certain hours.

Letting employees to have the freedom to decide when and where the work is done is dependent on the level of self-drivenness and self-determination and requires skills to manage the work load in daily bases. It also calls for good communication skills within the teams and management, including fluent internal communication across organizational boundaries and between different departments or units.

The commissioner of this thesis is on the journey of implementing more flexible ways of work to meet the changing needs of the employees and on the other hand, to meet the increasing demand of the customers. The commissioner is already running pilot programs to introduce flexible work to the teams. This thesis aimed to support the process through the research survey and by indicating important factors that might be helpful for the commissioner to take into account when it is time to introduce these adjustments to larger audiences.

The objective of this thesis was to investigate how the changing work environment is transforming the ways of doing work, and the study aimed to create insights on how the changes are experienced in the commissioner's organization. Relying on the theoretical framework, the thesis includes information on what flexible work actually means in today's society and provides suggestions on how the new adjustments of working methods could be more easily adapted in an organization. The author wanted to create guidelines and recommendations of methods that could improve employees' abilities to develop self-management skills, and searched information on actions that could be needed from the employer to support the fluent implementation process of more flexible work.

### **1.1.1 The changing work environment**

The culture of work has been drastically transformed during past decades and the speed of the change has been unprecedented. In the 1960's big corporations introduced the opportunity to use computers and only few decades ago, IBM brought first microcomputers to the market. Especially after 1990's, technological development was dramatic, and the revolution of the Internet begun. In 2003, 97% of all companies had the access to Internet. (Mamia & Melin 2006, 28-29) Today, in 2019, even preschools utilize all kinds of technological devices to support educational activities.

Finland is one of the fastest developed information societies in the world (Mamia & Melin 2006, 28-29). Fast technological development together with high-quality education equals the kind of workforce that's in global demand. The concept of Information Society has been frequently used since 1990's, and defined as many ways, for example: "a society characterized by a high level of information intensity in the everyday life of most citizens, in most organizations and workplaces; by the use of common or compatible technology for a wide range of personal, social, educational and business activities, and by the ability to transmit, receive and exchange digital data rapidly between places irrespective of distance" (IBM Community Development Foundation 1997) .

The future of work has been strongly affected by the concept of Information Society. The diffusion of information technologies is increasingly displacing workers and eliminating some jobs, and profoundly transforming the current ways people live. Computers and communication technologies allow individuals to communicate in more efficient ways. Because of the rapid development of technology and digitalization, organizations are facing new challenges which are significantly impacting employment. The new possibilities derived from this evolution can empower individuals and their work communities, putting them more in control of their working lives, allowing them to be more creative and increasingly aware of their rights.

The future of work is rushing towards us in a speed never experienced before. Hansen from Intel Corporation wrote an article (2018) about the topic and pointed out five potential matters concerning the changes that we might have to face in the future of working life:

1. Defining an employee on the cusp of transformation (where, when, and how people work / employee attitudes and expectations on flexibility –
2. Dynamic and agile team structures will become the norm (the traditional structures of employment are in a transition)
3. The location of work will vary widely (derived from the development of technology. Offices will serve social needs and work as temporary anchor points)
4. Smart systems will emerge and collaborate with humans (enables recreation of work and processes)
5. A second wave of consumerization is coming via services (Quick and simple development of services and apps, more efficient cooperation with IT-departments and -organizations.)

With the new possibilities of executing work, the attributes of employment will change as well. Technological innovations and robotization takes over some jobs originally executed by humans, and it may rapidly generate an atmosphere of fear. People are afraid of losing their jobs and not being able to meet the new needs of labor market. In the article (2018) Hansen claimed that the trend seems to be, that jobs will require an increasing amount of interdisciplinary skills such

as problem solving, judgment, listening, data-analysis, relationship building, collaborating and specialization. The challenge for the employer is to solve how to gain the trust from employees for them to stay committed to the employer, and how to educate and develop their skills in a way that guarantees their competitiveness in the labor market. Employers must also decide up on new methods of getting the work done. As moving from place to another becomes increasingly complex and time-consuming, will possibilities like telework and flexible working hours become more and more sought-after. Therefore, a “flexible employer” brand is also an effective competitive tool to attract new talent.

The Ministry of Employment and Economy of Finland pointed out three megatrends that are likely to reshape Finnish labor market in the near future: digitalization and automatization, globalization, and urbanization. The digital technology is going to transform work in all aspects and digitalization will allow reorganization of work despite of the time or location. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland 2019:4)

As the ways of doing work change, so does the office policies – the human interactions involving power and authority. Big organizations often use formality and standards to try to ensure that workers are closer substitutes to one another to make sure they are less vulnerable to threats by individual employees to leave. This is also supported by robotization, which ensures the continuation of processes. In addition, it is usually hard to objectively attribute successes or failures to the actions of particular employees. (Hanson 2016, 234-237) In other words, teams succeed or fail together. This leads us to team formation and teamwork, which will also be fractionally discussed and examined in this thesis due to its direct effect on the success of self-management.

### **1.1.2 Flexible work and self-management**

Increasing productivity and improving employee wellbeing are two important components, that have been emphasized in past research. The fact is that these two go hand in hand; one cannot be accomplished without the other. Adjustable working methods are nowadays commonly used in organizations all kinds and

sizes. Even though changing traditional work practices closer to employees' preferences is voluntary, and the level of flexibility is eventually up to the employer, the omission of these issues can result as a hidden risk in resource development. In the worst-case scenario, the lack of attention on the subject could lead to unexpected resignations and absences from work, higher employee turnover rate and poor relationships between employees and managers (Vartiainen 1994, 25-27).

Another concern that emphasizes the need for more flexible work environments is that job longevity is no longer considered as self-evident. Job hopping is mainly associated with young millennial employees, voluntarily moving to a new company every one or two years. Many workers switch from job to job to find one with more career opportunities and higher salaries. Job hopping can also provide new opportunities to become more versatile and experienced. (People Corner Marketing Team 2016) The question is, could the increased level of flexibility in the organization bring so much value to these workers, that the level of commitment would improve and eventually turn those short-term workers into long-term employees.

More adjustable ways of working can create new possibilities to obtain and retain talent and can provide an interesting opportunity to develop employer branding and become more attractive in the eyes of potential future workers. Based on past research, flexible work can also improve productivity and sustainability, and lower costs.

Flexible work can result as improvement on employee satisfaction through increased level of authority and control over their work. This can be considered as a gesture of trust from the employer to its workers, but it also requires actions and complementarity from the employees, as they need to be able to carry the given responsibility and be flexible in return, and according to the needs of production. Succeeding in this calls for good self-management skills and self-driven individuals and teams in the work community. The development of more flexible work environment is a continuous process and requires commitment from all parties.

### 1.1.3 The commissioner's case

Like many organizations, the commissioner of this thesis is facing new challenges trying to meet the needs of the employees and customers. The desire for more flexible ways of working has arisen from general feedback, and employee satisfactory surveys. The employees wish to be able to manage their own schedules and have the possibility to work from home. At the same time, the customer behavior is changing as well. Consumers are seeking flexibility from service – it should be available when it is needed, and preferably fast. Therefore, it is important to consider what kind of flexible adjustments can be made to meet the changing needs of customers and how the employees should be supported to help them manage their work more independently, yet productively.

The commissioner runs business in the field of banking, and the current research is conducted in the back-office operations of financial services department. The employees are working in the organization's centralized service center, which provides services for independent cooperative banks. The service promise is to deliver the ordered service in a preconceived time range. The challenge is to create new and more flexible ways of working without having to compromise in the level of customer service. This requires control and self-drivenness from the employees and capabilities for good interaction with the teams and managers, as the goal is to improve mutual understanding on the subject and to meet the needs of all parties.

The commissioner is now running a pilot program to investigate more adjustable ways of working, including flexitime and telework possibilities. The pilot groups consist of employees from different departments. Together with the managers, the employees of the pilot program are allowed to participate in the decision-making processes to create new rules and adjustments for more flexible work environment. The purpose is to implement the successfully actualized new methods to larger groups of employees later on.

## 1.2 Research questions and objectives

The aim of the current thesis was to examine what are the hopes and expectations on flexible work and self-management from employee and employer perspective, and how the daily work could be managed more effectively. The goal was to provide an in-depth insight on the increasing phenomenon of flexible work, indicate the differences and similarities between employee and employer responses, and to create suggestions of self-management practices, which could result in higher performance by increasing motivation, self-drivenness, organizational engagement and satisfaction with their work.

The answers from the surveys and the information based on the observation at the meetings were further analyzed using the qualitative comparative analysis method (QCA). QCA is not suitable for use in all situations and has been subject to critique, because issues can arise in how the collected data and the analysis is conducted, which can compromise the results. Therefore, the analysis part was done carefully, and the whole analysis process was documented clearly and in detail. The findings from the analysis were developed by going back to the data to interpret the solutions produced by the analysis (Baptist & Barbara 2015).

The objective was to create content, that will ease the process of implementing flexible working conditions by increasing mutual understanding between employees and managers, and to review potential methods of improving self-management and productivity.

### 1.3 Limitations and structure

Every research is likely to have limitations, but the researcher should try to minimize the range of scope of these. It is also important to explain how these limitations might impact the research findings. According to Dudovskiy (2018) Typical limitations for research could be:

- too broadly formulated research aims and objectives
- The nature of implementation of data collection method is flawed.
- Too small sample sizes which would lead to a situation where significant relationships could not be identified.
- Lack of previous research or studies
- The scope and depth of discussions in the research is compromised and compared to the works of experienced scholars.

The limitations for this particular research are mainly dealt with small sample size and the scope and depth of discussions. It was challenging for the researcher to gain enough responses for the research survey due to the limited amount of time to conduct the research. The days at the commissioner's office were also quite hectic at the time, which also affected to the fact that the sample size was smaller than desired. Also, because the researcher didn't have a lot of experience of conducting researches or producing academic papers of such large size, the researcher had to pay extra attention to not compromise on the depth of discussions and conclusions.

The introduction of this thesis reviews the background of the research problem, the research objectives and introduces the commissioner of the thesis. The research limitations, and the level of the research reliability and validity are also discussed in this chapter.

The chapter of research methodology represents the chosen research method and explains why it is been chosen for this research instead of other potential methods. The chapter also describes the research process steps clearly and in detail. The research consists of primary research and secondary research. Primary research is conducted through online surveys through observation. Secondary research is gathered from the industry literature, articles, websites and former studies regarding the topic of the thesis.

Theoretical framework focuses on the desk research findings and seeks to provide information of the phenomenon. The desk research was conducted from past research, literature, articles and other sources related to the thesis topic. Flexible work, self-management and the development of the work environment were deeply examined in this chapter. The objective of this part was to create hypotheses, which would support the research findings and the creation of the recommendations.

In qualitative research, the analysis of the results calls for re-examining the results and the field notes and requires going back to the theory multiple times. The results were examined through discourse analysis and qualitative comparative analysis to deeply understand the phenomenon. The analysis part of this thesis represented the survey processes and the results in detail. The aim in this chapter was to also create hypotheses based on the research findings.

In the chapter of conclusions, the author aims to represent the research findings and outcomes based on the research objectives. The goal was to indicate valid links between the analyzed data and the research objective, and to create practical suggestions for the commissioner.

#### **1.4 Reliability and validity**

The current thesis is a case study, that will not aspire to prove any kind of generalizations of the research results. The research is conducted according to general research ethics and guidelines.

Research reliability can be divided into three categories (Dudovskiy, 2018): (1) test-retest reliability, (2) parallel forms reliability and (3) internal consistency reliability. According to Dudovskiy (2018), “reliability refers to whether or not you get the same answer by using an instrument to measure something more than once”. The chosen research methods should provide stable and consistent results.

The research data was reliably collected through online surveys from the employees and the managers, using organization’s internal email to forward the links. The observation part of the research was completed through Skype for business, using internal connections. The author of this thesis works in the commissioner’s organization, but didn’t answer to the survey, nor is she against or strongly promotes the subject of this thesis.

The findings from the online surveys were compared to the findings from the observations. Both of these data collection methods provided information that assessed stability and supported the conclusions derived from these methods.

This study concentrated on the current state of the situation in the commissioner’s organization, rather than tried to detect changes that might have occurred before and after the research process. The information this current thesis provides is customized to support the commissioner’s objectives but can also be helpful for other potential readers of the thesis and can be used as a source to further research flexible work and self-management.

The researcher must take steps to ensure the validity or accuracy of the research findings. In qualitative research, validity is the extent to which the data and the interpretation of the data are credible (Tracy 2013, 1-10). According to Dudovskiy (2018), “research validity in surveys relates to the extent at which the survey measures right elements that need to be measured”.

In qualitative research the validity is more challenging to be measured than it is when doing quantitative research, since quantitative research usually creates statistical information and the metrics have to be as accurate as possible. In qualitative research the results can derive from multiple sources and can be affected

the researcher's past experiences as well. Dudovskiy (2018) divides research validity into five types:

- face validity
- construct validity
- criterion related validity
- formative validity
- sampling validity

The research objective of this thesis was to examine the commissioner's employees' and managers' expectations on flexible work and self-management to improve mutual understanding and review self-management practices that might be helpful for the commissioner to use when implementing flexible work.

The research survey managed to address relevant aspects of the phenomenon, which was essential in this case study approach. The research succeeded to identify barriers between employees' and managers' communication and managed to find self-management practices and other recommendations based on the theoretical framework, that could be incorporated to the commissioner's employee trainings. These results are likely to increase the levels of effectiveness of organizational culture, which means that the research findings provide relevant solutions to the research problem. Therefore, the research validity is on a good level.

## **2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 A model for qualitative research design**

The chosen research method for this thesis is qualitative research. This chapter describes the nature of this particular method in each step of the research process and explains why it has been chosen for this study instead of other potential methods.

Tracy (2013, 1-10) has introduced three core concepts of qualitative research, which are self-reflexivity, context, and thick description. Self-reflexivity refers to the consideration of the ways in which researchers' past experiences, points of view, and roles impact on the process of research. A person's demographic information provides the basic ingredients of a researcher's perspective and helps to absorb, sift through and interpret the world through observation, participation, and interviewing. In this thesis, the methods of observation and interviewing were closely linked with the research.

Context refers to the rich evocations that can be derived from qualitative research. The theoretical resources needed to comprehend a particular idea are themselves interwoven with the context, which allows the researcher to create detailed, in-depth analyses. Context provides a central role for qualitative research, while "theory takes a back seat". Thick description, a concept coined by Clifford Geertz (1973), captures the fact that "researchers immerse themselves in, and report on, before moving toward grander statements and theories". (Tracy 2013, 1-10)

In the early stages of the process, qualitative research aims to explore. The goal is to identify patterns and themes that provide an initial understanding of the chosen phenomenon. Description is the heart of qualitative research. The essential characteristics of description is that it can vase information with the detail inspecifidy necessary to accurately convey the experience. Ultimately, qualitative

research strives to provide a meaningful interpretation of events and phenomenon. With interpretation, the goal is to make sense of what goes on to reach out for understanding and explanation.

As the objective of this thesis is to particularly improve the commissioner's employees' and managers mutual understanding on the phenomenon of flexible work and self-management, the qualitative research method enables the right tools for creating the information on it.

Qualitative data analysis follows three basic steps. First the researcher must prepare and organize the data. This can include transcribing interviews and organizing field notes from observations. Secondly, the researcher reduces the data by identifying themes and creating categories. Finally, qualitative data can be presented in a narrative or graphic form. In qualitative research the data analysis process is flexible and designed to meet each study's needs, but also follows an established protocol and relies on methodological approaches. (Tracy 2013, 1-10)

For the research of this thesis, the data was collected through online surveys and observations during May 2019. The collected data was organized by re-reading and transcribing the survey responses. The process also included organizing field notes from observations that happened through Skype-meetings. The collected data was presented in a narrative form, due to the nature of the survey and the research objectives.

## **2.2 Strengths of qualitative research**

A qualitative research is the right choice when studying contexts, the researcher is personally interested about and it can access deep understanding of the chosen phenomenon. The data provides insights into activities that might otherwise be missed and uncovering these issues they can later be studied using more structured methods (Tracy 2013, 1-10).

Qualitative research can be a powerful tool for social change. It allows people to understand their society in a deeper level and therefore helps to solve societal

issues and questions. Tracy (2013, 1-10) summarizes the strengths of qualitative research as follows:

- is rich and holistic
- offers more than a snapshot – provides understanding of a sustained process
- focuses on lived experience, placed in its context
- honors participants' local meanings
- can help explain, illuminate or reinterpret quantitative data
- interprets participant viewpoints and stories
- preserves the chronological flow, documenting what events lead to what consequences, and explaining why this chronology may have occurred
- celebrates how research representations (reports, articles, performances) constitute reality and affect the questions we can ask and what we can know
- illustrates how a multitude of interpretations are possible, but how some are more theoretically compelling, morally significant or practically important than others.

### **2.3 The research strategy**

The research method in this thesis is closely linked with a case study. A case study is a form of research, that strives to create a deep understanding of a certain phenomenon or people in certain circumstances by collecting data from multiple sources. The aim is to create diverse and useful information of the phenomenon. (Metsämuuronen 2008, 16-17)

The possible advantage in using a case study method, is that it is usually experienced as a “step towards action”. The starting point of the study is functional, and the results or recommendations of the study can be applied in action. A successful case study also allows the reader of the research report to have the freedom to develop their own conclusions of the research results. (Metsämuuronen 2008, 16-17)

In this thesis, the case study is designed to examine the research problem, and to develop a comparative investigation that shows relationships between two parties (employees and managers) and creates deep understanding of the phenomenon.

## **2.4 Compatibility and suitability**

Qualitative research is considered as compatible and suitable for this thesis. The objective of the research is to develop understanding between employees' and employer's assumptions and expectations on flexible work and self-management, and the chosen research method provides essential tools for collecting and analyzing the data.

The researcher is the instrument in conducting qualitative research. Therefore, it is important to consider how the researcher personally will experience the research in certain context, both despite of and because of who they are, because personal preferences might influence the research results. The researcher should try to answer questions like: "How will I make sense of my preconceived notions? Will my being different or similar to the participants be helpful or problematic? What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of my subjectivity?" (Tracy 2013, 1-10)

The context of this thesis lies in the territory already familiar to the researcher. The researcher works for the commissioner in the same department as the participants of the research survey and has access to the site and the key informants. Therefore, the researcher already has a decent understanding of the work society, the cultural practices, rules and ways of being, which is helpful considering the study and the process of collecting and analyzing data.

## 2.5 Data collection methods and research process

This research collected two kinds of data - primary and secondary. The primary data was generated from 2 online surveys, and from observations of Skype-meetings, in which the commissioner's pilot-groups were having discussions on the subject. The secondary research, also known as desk research was conducted through analysis of previous studies concerning the phenomenon, through literature, scientific articles and publications. The goal was to create different strategies and hypotheses based on the theoretical framework.

In qualitative research, the respondents are usually chosen from a certain group for a reason. The data for this thesis was collected through online surveys from the commissioner's employees (12 respondents) and managers (5 respondents). The employee respondents were chosen randomly from groups of the on-going pilot program. The members from the pilot group were chosen for this research, because they had already addressed their interest towards the subject, and therefore were expected to be motivated to answer at least to some extent. The manager-respondents volunteered to answer.

The qualitative research approach is inductive: single observations are comprised into bigger generic meanings. In addition to the data collected purposefully, the researcher must consider using research diary and taking field notes through the whole process. These notes can be an essential part of creating in-depth analyses of the results. Combining and reflecting theory to the notes and other data, allows the researcher to discover meanings that might otherwise be disregarded. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2013, 266-267)

To outline the important factors which might increase the mutual understanding between employees and employer in this research, the researcher conducted two different surveys; one for employees and one for managers. Each survey had 10 open questions, which let the respondents to have more freedom to create a profound answer without being provoked to answer in a certain way and to potentially extend the answer and point out other aspects around the topic.

For the survey, the researcher chose to use a well-known and commonly used platform called SurveyMonkey due to its simple layout and user-friendly experience. The links for the survey were sent to respondents through the commissioner's internal email. To increase the chances on getting as many respondents to answer as possible, the commissioner's shift managers were asked to schedule at least 20 minutes time for the respondents to answer the surveys during their working hours. The time for answering was scheduled for each respondent personally in advance. The researcher contacted each respondent to clarify the directions for answering. These actions were made also because the researcher wanted to create an atmosphere of trust and to make the respondents feel like they are important and chosen intentionally for the survey.

The pilot-groups had weekly Skype-meetings, in which the researcher could participate. The researcher got to observe the situations where the employees were having discussions of the subject (flexible work and other adjustments on working hours) with and without the managers. For the researcher, it was interesting to see how the conversations developed, and how the suggested actions or adjustments were received by their colleagues and managers. The researcher made field notes during the meetings, which generated additional information for the analysis.

### **2.5.1 The research process steps**

In order to meet the research goals, the research followed fundamental steps, which were (1) conversation with the commissioner to sharpen up the research questions, (2) examining literature and past research on flexible work and self-management, (3), comparing methods and past research to find best suitable references for the theory base of this thesis, (4) conducting surveys for commissioner's employees and managers, (5) analyzing theoretical framework, the observation and the responses from the surveys and finally (6) developing conclusions and solutions for the research problem; suggestions, guidelines and recommendations of methods that improve employee's abilities to develop self-management and productivity (and what are the actions needed from the employer to support the process). The research aimed to produce information that is helpful

for the commissioner to use when implementing flexible work and is likely to increase mutual understanding between employees and managers.

## **2.6 Data analysis methods**

The collected data can be analyzed in many ways. In general, the analysis aims to either explain or understand a phenomenon. Qualitative research usually strives to provide a deep understanding among the subject. Qualitative analysis can be challenging to form, since there usually is a lot of disorganized data to analyze and there are no strict rules for how the analysis should be built. There is also a risk of letting the researcher's own assumptions and thoughts affect the analysis too strongly. To ease the analyzing process, the researcher should pick an analysis method that helps to construe the work.

The most commonly used analysis methods for qualitative research are content analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, framework analysis and grounded theory (Hirsjärvi, Remes, & Sajavaara 2013, 224-228). For this thesis the researcher chose to approach the analysis through discourse method, sometimes defined as the analysis of language "behind the sentence" (Tannen, Linguistic Society of America). Discourse analysis pays attention to structures of meaning in the text, like word order, sentence structure, more or less detailed descriptions and the ways acts are described. It aims to reveal sociopsychological characteristics of a person rather than text structure. Re-interpreting is important when conducting qualitative research in the first place, but it is also important when doing discourse analysis. It is about going back and forth between the sentences to deeply understand the meaning and purpose behind it.

This research also uses comparative analysis of qualitative research, also known as "QCA". QCA is a way to study causality in small samples and offers formal methods for analyzing qualitative data about the characteristics and the contextual backgrounds of the cases. It can distinguish what is a sufficient condition for some outcome from what's a necessary condition for some outcome, and analyses the cases by going down to subgroups within them and makes general statements of causality within the subgroups (Olsen, The University of Manchester) In

this thesis, the QCA is used to present additional examples and references of the research problem and to extend understanding of the determinants of the outcome.

### **3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

To create a profound base to compare the research results to, the researcher examined essential topics and theories concerning the subject. Due to the fact that flexible work is a hot topic in our era, and that self-driven attitude (which promotes self-management) is an important quality of character at succeeding in today's society, there were a lot of literature and past research to be found and examined on these topics.

#### **3.1 The changing work environment**

Especially in developed countries, the importance of health and well-being draws a lot of attention. The access to high technology impacts individual's lives in all areas and has also dramatically changed the norms of employment. For instance, in Finland the competition on the labor market has rapidly increased and finding balance between work and personal lives is rather challenging. In majority of the industries, the internet enables access to work and therefore it is easy to "take the work with you" after the actual working hours. This can cause a lot of pressure and stress on individuals, which is why it is extremely important for the organizations to develop new ways and adjustments on working methods if they wish to retain talent and healthy workers. (Kazi 2018)

According to a research conducted in 2013 by Oxford University researchers Frey and Osborne, 47% of jobs in the United States could be automated during the next few decades. The research drew a lot of attention and conversation of unemployment caused by technology increased massively. The risk of automation in each profession was estimated by the level of required education and wage, and the probability of computerization. The study found, that the biggest of risks lies in the fields of logistics, transportation and many jobs in production and office work. (Nuutinen 2017, 16-17)

Pajarinen and Rouvinen from The Research Institute of the Finnish Economy estimated in 2014, that 35,7% of Finnish jobs could be automated in twenty years.

They stated, that jobs in offices and especially in banking are the most “threatened” by technology (Nuutinen 2017, 16-17). Kauhanen from The Research Institute of The Finnish Economy (2016) had also examined the subject and wrote an article about the future of work. In he’s article, Kauhanen stated that “occupational restructuring is one of the most significant changes in the labor markets”. Kauhanen also introduced two reasons for these immerging changes: “(1) technological change has enabled the automation of routine-investive jobs while increasing productivity in non-routine tasks and (2) many clerical and blue-collar manufacturing jobs have been off-shored.” Therefore, employees possessing cognitive and manual routine skills will have to acquire new skills that are more rewarded in the labor market (Kauhanen 2016).

Still, automation and robotization doesn’t necessarily mean that all these “threatened” jobs are disappearing, but they’re likely to change. Tasks that require routine and repeating are already under pressure to be robotized. Everything that has to do with unemployment and especially the things that might be increasing it, easily develops a negative atmosphere among the subject. But the truth is, it is not all negative, or about losing.

In addition to this phenomenon called the destruction effect (job replacement), there’s a growing phenomenon called the capitalization effect. The capitalization effect refers to the demand on new kind of jobs in the innovation field, like in technological development and refinement (Nuutinen 2017, 20-21). Certain jobs and tasks can be done a lot more productively and reliably by robots, which allows more time to be spent on other things that still require human interaction. It is likely to increase the level of employment at jobs that require expertise and specialized skills. From this angle, it is a win-win situation.

According to the theory of Moore’s Law, processor speeds, or overall processing power for computers will double every two years. This might eventually lead to a situation where robots can handle more and more complex tasks, which might develop a risk on employment as some workers have “nowhere left to run”. This refers to the fact that there might be no more chances to educate the staff enough for them to be able to compete with the machines (Nuutinen 2017, 20-21)

In today's work environment, only change is permanent. Here's a few examples of features, that Nuutinen (2017, 20-22) listed as distinctive for the "future work":

- work unattached to time and place
- open offices and mobility
- new information technology
- the abatement of direct and indirect control
- disappearing borders between work and personal lives
- the increased demand for personal development
- the need for information management and specialized skills

### **3.2 Flexible work**

Changes in the labor market and in the nature of work have been a hot topic for decades. How the work has changed, how it will continue to change, how it is expected to change in the following years and most importantly – how that has an impact on our daily lives? These are the questions that many workers, leaders and scientists have been looking for answers and explanations to.

Technology has developed to great extend during the past few decades and it has changed the ways of doing work in all fields. Work is no longer tied to the regular working hours ant it is not in a database one can only access from the office. People can connect through various means and work productively despite their location. The more control has been given over work means that the more control there is for the worker to have over other fields of life – like family life.

As a part of this theoretical framework, this thesis introduces a study that was conducted in Finland in 2006 (Mamia & Melin 2006). The study consists of three parts: employee survey, employer survey, and background survey conducted in each unit of the respondents. Over 100 organizations attended to the study, which aimed to discover different ways the flexible working methods were used in different organizations and how commonly they were used. The study also strived to understand managers thoughts and expectations on the subject. A study this

size creates an interesting and rather relevant view on the Finnish labor conditions at the time.

Intuitively is easy to agree on the hypothesis, which suggests that in order to succeed, flexible working arrangements and functional flexibility require management that's based on trust. Mamia and Melin found out in their study (2006, 109-112) that this hypothesis holds truth and trust is the key element that combines flexible working cultures in general. The study also found, that the workers who had been more controlled over working hours were less committed and didn't trust the management as much. This supports the assumption of the thought that commitment and trust can be the alternative ways of control or could at least replace direct control to some extent. (Mamia & Melin 2006, 109-112)

Science daily wrote an article about a study conducted by the University of Birmingham Business School, which was published in the journal "Work and Occupations" (2017). 20.000 employees participated to the research and the study found that autonomy in the workplace has positive effects on well-being and job satisfaction. The study also found that from people working in management, over 90% reported having some or a lot of autonomy in their work, whereas other employees, 40-60% reported much less autonomy particularly over the pace of work and their working hours.

Dr. Wheatly from University of Birmingham Business School explained the study outcome in he's article (2017) as follows: "greater levels of control over work tasks and schedule have the potential to generate significant benefits for the employee, which has found to be evident in the reported well-being. The positive effects associated with informal flexibility and working at home, offer further support to the suggestion, that schedule control is highly valued and important to employees enjoying work".

### 3.2.1 Flexitime

As discussed earlier, one of the main features in the development of information society has been the changes in people's lives and schedules, especially when compared to work life. At the same time, the future of work requires more and more interaction and workers are more dependent on their colleague's performances. The harmonization between the individual choices and collective norms can be found as a challenge. (Mamia & Melin 2006, 67)

Work can be flexible in many ways. In many companies, the working hours have become increasingly personalized and better adjustable to other life. An employee can decide to work someday a few hours longer to leave another day a bit earlier, and the opposite. In the study of Mamia and Melin (2006, 67-69), flexible working hours were commonly used. 3 Out of 4 big organizations used flexitime and had the opportunity to do shorter or longer days.

Flexitime is an arrangement that allows employee and employer to agree up on the working hours in a way that allows certain degree of freedom for the employee to decide when to start and end the day. It adds up the level of flexibility especially in the mornings and in the evenings, but sometimes an employee could take a few hours off even in the middle of the day to run errands and go to the gym, or to pick up kids from school.

The more traditional working hours don't flex and are considered as stiff and tedious. If the shift ends and there's work left to be done, the employee has to work overtime and it is mostly just costly for the employer. In a flexible work culture, the working hours flex according to employees' needs, but the employees also act flexibly in return and according to the needed level of capacity if it was required. (Mamia & Melin 2006, 78-80)

When implementing flexitime and telework possibilities, an employer might be worried about the workers shortening their days or loosening up their intensity of doing work. Yet, many studies have shown that the situation is actually the opposite and its more common that workers increase their working hours and their intensity.

Usually the reason why organizations end up using flexitime, is the fact that the employees were hoping for it. Therefore, to increase job fulfillment, an employer might introduce this opportunity. Even though the intentions of implementing flexible working hours are usually good and based on the reasons of bettering well-being of the employees, the study (Mamia & Melin 2006, 77-79) found that implementing flexitime might actually increase the risk of added stress and burnouts, because it can generate challenges on separating the time between work and personal life in daily bases, especially if the person is not good at time management. Therefore, it is important that in the early stage of the process and during the implementation, the managers need to guide and support the employees to improve their self-management skills in order to avoid these unintended outcomes.

### **3.2.2 Teamwork and functional flexibility**

“You don’t inspire your teammates by showing them how amazing you are. You inspire them by showing them how amazing they are.”

- Robyn Benincasa, World Champion Adventure Racer

Teamwork means many things to people. Being a part of a team is a social bond to a group of people, who are working together to achieve shared goals. Finnish companies are active users of teams as a form of organizing work and resources. The level of autonomy and authorization in teams differs in organizations and depends on the initial purpose of the team. In general, Finnish organizations tend to have rather comprehensive rights to decide up on certain actions within the teams. According to a study conducted by Mamia and Melin (2006, 67-69), more than four out of five teams were entitled to organize their work the way they considered best and could rank the level of urgency between the daily tasks. The teams could supervise the quality of work themselves and had the opportunity to utilize functional flexibility – putting the team’s internal know-how and other capabilities to places they were most needed at.

Functional flexibility refers to team’s ability to manage variety of tasks, due to high level of educated workforce and know-how in the team. (Mamia & Melin 2006,

24-25). This high level of autonomy within the team allows its members the ability to utilize and further develop their work skills, self-management and interpersonal skills. When interacting, teams are sharing knowledge to each other over work issues. In other words, teams become more self-oriented in the long run, compared to a situation where the teams are told to take orders from management and to follow specific sets of regulations. The more teams have authority, the better the teams are likely to perform and work together. The team's internal autonomy is essential when it comes to succeeding.

A team can be formed in number of ways and for number of purposes. The team can be built to support the managerial operations; the members of the teams might be randomly picked to be easily manageable (like certain sized teams), and some organizations might also see important to form teams that are equal in terms of gender – half woman and half men, or close to each other location wise. In the study (Mamia & Melin 2006, 24-26), the teams had less authority to have an influence on the composition of teams. The teams were mainly formed according to the management's decisions, which arises a question – does it matter who's in the team? To be able to answer to the question, one should first consider what actually is a team.

In her article (2018), Heathfield stated that a team is “an interdependent group of employees who unite around a particular task, project or objective”, and “a way of organizing different people with different goals and plans into a cohesive whole” (Heathfield 2018). According to this statement, it seems like the members of the team should have at least something in common, like a certain project, a shared task or objective.

The way a team functions and interacts with each other, impacts directly on individual's performance. Therefore, it is important to make sure that the ground rules, values and objectives of work are made clear to everyone. The study (Mamia & Melin 2006, 81-86) stated, that the more a team has authority, the better are the estimations on the team's outcome. Also things like team spirit and trust reflects on team's and individual's performance.

### 3.2.3 Telework

Telework has been seen as a fast spreading way of doing work over the past three decades but the truth is that until this day the possibilities to use telework are not so commonly used after all. In the study discussed earlier (Mamia & Melin 2006, 17-19), it showed that managers and specialists were more likely to have the opportunity to work from home compared to other workers of an organization. Although, the common opinion within the management seemed to be that there's a lot of potential in expanding the telework possibilities to pertain other workers as well. (Mamia & Melin 2006, 17-19)

Stanford University economics professor Nicholas Bloom conducted a study, that ran for ten months in a 16.000-employee firm. The study found that call-center employees working from home increased their productivity by 13 percent, unlike the colleagues working in the office. The firm found important things from the experiment. They learned that working from home improves performance and even allowing people to have that choice generated a great effect on it. The experiment also showed that 50% of the employees who attended to the experiment *changed their minds and decided to work in the office* after the end of the experiment, mainly for social reasons. Yet some of the employees decided to switch to work from home after seeing the success of their peers who worked from home. (Bloom & Liang & Roberts & Ying 2013).

Other identified benefits from the use of telework are: increased well-being and coping at work, improved level of concentration and commitment, a competitive advantage in terms of recruitment, and a way of lowering costs (as the employer doesn't necessarily need as large premises). In general, there's a lot of potential to increase the number of teleworkers and there's demand for it. Still, these arrangements require changes in attitudes and in ways of organizing work, and continuous development of technology. (Mamia & Melin 2006, 64-65)

### 3.3 Managing work

As organizations move towards more self-oriented practices in the workplace, the traditional relations change. Employees are expected to be more independent, dedicated and productive, whereas employees expect more trust, credit and encouragement from their managers. Change doesn't happen on its own, no matter how precise the plan is. Change always requires drive, motivation and willingness in every aspect and is a continuous process that calls for development and modification.

The need for better self-management and self-drivenness derives both from the change in the work and employment in general, but also from the changes in individual behaviors and their daily lives. Especially the millennial-generation – now entering to labor market has emphasized the urgent need for change in the traditional mind-set of work. The millennials are sometimes described as self-centered, entitled and accused to be “tough to manage”. They're even claimed to confound leadership. If the leaders of today would ask the millennials what it is that they actually want, a common answer from a millennial might be, that they want to work in a place with purpose and do meaningful job.

Self-management and being a self-driven person are two different things, yet they have a lot in common. Self-management is a life-long process of learning how to “be your own boss”. At work, it usually refers to the employee's capabilities to manage the work and schedules, to be able to judge and prioritize the tasks and to find out which methods and tools work for the person to develop productivity and skill. It is also a matter of will to develop the organizational structures and personal networks and finding the path which will help the employee to succeed and meet the goals. In our era, self-management also refers to the capability to manage life as a whole, since finding balance between work and personal life is becoming increasingly challenging.

Self-drivenness is more of an attitude than a skill. It can be learned, but it is usually an internal tendency to voluntarily move towards different objectives, whatever they might be. A person who is considered as self-driven, usually gets things done efficiently and doesn't need much guidance to proceed. The level of self-

drivenness can still vary depending on the environment and the culture the person is surrounded with. If the culture does not support independently working employees, the person who was previously considered as self-driven might accept the situation and take orders from someone else. Therefore, in organizations which wish to promote self-drivenness, the orders and rules should be dealt horizontally and not vertically, so that the employees felt like they have control over things and they get to decide and choose how to perform.

Seppälä from Sitomo wrote a blog post (2018) concerning the increased demand of self-driven employees in today's work environment. Seppälä stated, that the changes require actions on a lot larger scale, than anyone in the organization would have thought in the beginning. It calls for re-creation of the traditional structures, processes and models, and a new kind of mindset from everyone. To succeed an organization needs to have a clear idea of what it stands for and how it seeks to be seen and experienced.

According to Seppälä (2018), the increased demand for self-drivenness derives from the agility and development of working methods, as the organizations wish to be more flexible and efficient. More authority and responsibility are given to the employees in situations where decisions must be made fast to improve the performance. Having more responsibility and freedom can be empowering for the workers, and it is likely to increase motivation and meaningfulness of work. She also warns, that the consequences might be the it is act opposite, if the workers were left alone with their work in the work community, because the managers expect to see *the increased level of self-orientation happening on its own* with no guidance or support to develop the required skills with. (Seppälä 2018)

As on all journeys of change, a variety of questions arises that need to be answered in order to create mutual understanding of the things that are required for the change to happen. Seppälä (2018) listed some questions that are common to many teams that are implementing more self-driven environment at work:

- What are the ground rules for the things I initially get to decide on?
- What are the boundaries and who oversees those?
- From whom can I ask for help?
- Am I been given the time to learn new things?

- Where from I get the skills, the power and the support for my personal change?
- How do I know that I'm going to a right direction? Who gives me feedback?
- What if I don't want this change to happen? What happens to me if I don't?

People have an internal aspiration to understand their role as a part of a bigger picture. If this need is disregarded, it may create a feeling of lacking boundaries in the organization. According to Seppälä (2018) this can happen for two reasons: (1) the organization's vision, purpose and goals are not made clear (what kind of workplace this is, what is our purpose and definition of meaning, what our employees want to become and how they are supported toward that) and (2) the models of guidance and interactions are poor (which disables dialog), the communication is too narrow or is about the wrong things, the data is stuck somewhere in the middle and people are not skilled enough to interact with each other.

Uusitalo from Soikea Solutions Oy also pondered the phenomenon of self-oriented work in his blog post for Sitomo.fi (2018). He claims, that guiding the teams towards self-driven environments, calls for more than to lead with the combination of the Excel, a stick and a carrot. It is not just about some actions made differently and then waiting for the change to happen, but it calls for motivating and supporting the employees and above all else, it requires time. When the organizational values and goals are crystal clear to everyone, the teams are one step closer to succeed. (Uusitalo 2018)

### **3.3.1 Motivation moves us to act**

SDT is an extensively researched self-determination theory developed by psychologists Deci and Ryan. The theory introduces three core needs of human, that require attention in order to support the natural human tendency to move towards growth, performance optimization and job satisfaction. (Deci & Ryan, 2011)

SDT has been said to be "helpful for employers to better understand how best to develop and engage their people and can help individuals understand how they can be successful personally". (Deci & Ryan, 2011)

The three core needs according to the self-determination theory are:

1. Competence – “The need to experience our behaviors as effectively enacted, to feel like we’ve done a good job”
2. Autonomy – “The need to experience behavior as voluntary and reflectively self-endorsed, to feel like we have control on what we do”
3. Relatedness – “The need to interact, be connected to, and experience caring for others, to have meaningful relationships and interactions with other people.

SDT separates two different types of motivational behavior, which are closely linked to the needs discussed earlier: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation has to do with our internal needs and them giving satisfaction and enjoyment – the “tendency to move towards growth”. Extrinsic motivation relates to the external experiences we gain from achieving goals and getting rewards, like a salary rise. (Deci & Ryan, 2011)

Rigby and Ryan examined self-determination theory in human resource development. The study introduces recent trends in relations between organizations and workers, one of them being a phenomenon called “copernical turn”. The copernical turn is explained as follows: “Once institutions set the rules for engagement, individuals are now more empowered as the center of their personal and professional lives, pulling experiences to then dynamically based on their individual needs and desires”. It describes the change that has occurred in the ways the employees need to be motivated through. Instead of motivating them from the outside, the managers should think of how they can effectively support the motivation that comes from within employees – the intrinsic motivation. Only that could lead to organizational success and employee satisfaction. (Deci & Ryan 2000)

This phenomenon supports the three core needs in the self-determination theory. The changes in the relations and behaviors require understanding in a deeper level to build engaging work cultures that benefit both empowered workers and the organizations in which they work.

SDT is an exceptional tool to understand the needs derived from the phenomenon of Copernican turn. Instead of representing tons of different ways of motivational behaviors or worker just having more or less motivation, the theory concentrates on the three core needs that help to increase motivation in general: competence, autonomy and relatedness. Understanding these three core needs, managers and supervisors can arrange more effective and empowering training for their workers and facilitate the adoption of a common motivational language in the organization.

Employees nowadays want to experience their work as meaningful and tend to engage to organizations that are capable of creating that feeling kind of culture. Also, letting employees be part of the processes of creating new tools for motivational assessment, can itself increase organizational commitment and company pride within the workers.

### **3.3.2 Attitude of an entrepreneur**

“Society, jobs and the working life is changing all the time. The trend in the change emphasizes knowledge, skills and psychological processes more than ever before. Therefore, people need to be pervasively civilized. The professional abilities and know-how calls for flexibility, creativity, and proactive skills to learn and to communicate.” -Ministry of Education (Nuutinen 2017, 110-111)

The challenge for the workers in keeping their jobs – and for the employers to retain talent, is how to be able to keep up in the rapidly changing work environment. It is more a matter of an attitude, rather than a matter of willingness. The changes are happening in all fields of businesses and affecting the jobs of humans.

There's a lot an “average” worker could learn from an entrepreneur. Luckily entrepreneur education has been recently added to many study programs and even slightly handled in early childhood education. Future work is described as individual and personal, because the core of the professional skills consists of qualities of personalities and personal skills and knowledge. The attempt to succeed in the

labor market, requires self-branding and marketing – the ability to sell your skills and professionalism. (Nuutinen 2017, 114-115)

The vacillating boundary between work and free-time also requires an entrepreneur-like mindset – as if you were your own boss. It is said that the most successful workers in the future are the ones with creativity and capability to compete and move towards change. The worker has to be able to control and supervise oneself. How much work should be done and where it is done, will depend on the worker. The balance derives from self-management and entrepreneur skills.

“Entrepreneurship is an individual’s ability to put words into actions. It includes creativity, innovation, risk-management, as well as capability to plan and manage the work to meet the desired goals. These qualities support the everyday life of an individual in education, work, free time, and in other societal activities” (Nuutinen 2017, 116-117).

### **3.3.3 Self-Management practices**

As desirable as it would be to create rules and methods of actions that improve productivity and can be measured, it is not so easily done when it comes to developing self-management skills. Self-management consist of personal motives, habits and qualities of personality and can only be developed if the person was willing to do so. Willingness on the other hand derives from personal interests and motivation, and in terms of work, motivation is something that *can be* externally supported.

Self-management has to do with habits and like in creation of every habit, a person first needs self-discipline. To know in which areas the person needs self-discipline at, one must first become self-aware. Self-awareness is about recognizing the ways of behavior, like how one reacts or responds on things and events. Krista Brubaker wrote a blog post for bizlibrary.com (2018) and talked about how to utilize self-awareness in developing self-management. Brubaker stated, that self-awareness is crucial, for the person to “use that awareness to consciously and intentionally choose their responses”. Brubaker also added that “self-management is all about responding and not reacting”, and that “it means

handling emotions appropriately, rather than pretending they're not there or acting out of reactive instinct. The goal is to respond in a way that helps people or situations, rather than hurting them". Therefore, practices of self-awareness (for example in team meetings) can improve the development of employees' self-management skills as well. Asking and giving feedback to each other is an important part of the process as well.

Like mentioned earlier, the development of self-management calls for different kinds of skills and qualities, of which some can be practiced and supported externally, and some can't. Businessphrases.net has listed four things that might have a positive effect on self-management skills: (1) self-confidence, (2) stress management skills, (3) time management and organizational skills and (4) self-motivation. They even created a set of tips and techniques which can help to develop these skills:

## Self-Management Skills and Tips

### Stress management

- exercise your body;
- enjoy yourself, rest yourself as regularly as possible;
- go to vacations and holidays with the people you love;
- take walks in nature;
- do hobbies.





### Self confidence

- get rid of the negative thoughts in your head;
- think positively;
- be happy with small things;
- do not forget to tell yourself that you are smart and intelligent;
- chat with positive people;



### Self-motivation

- find and list your motives (needs and desires);
- find different sources of motivation and inspiration (music, books, activities);
- think expansive thoughts;
- live fully in the present moment;
- dear to have big dreams;
- dream often – every day;
- remember that nothing is impossible.





### Time management and organization skills

- set and prioritize your goals
- create a schedule;
- make lists of tasks;
- use different optimization tools
- break large tasks into smaller tasks.







### Have a healthy lifestyle and a balanced diet

Heathy eating and physical activities are extremely important when it comes to increasing your mind and body power



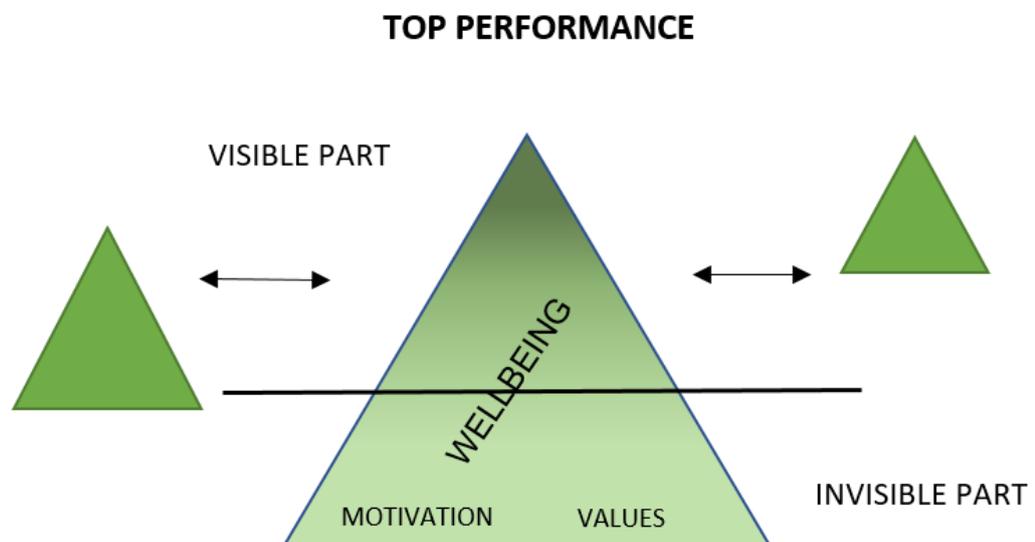
[www.businessphrases.net](http://www.businessphrases.net)

Picture 1. businessphrases.net, Self-management skills: List, Definition, Tips & Techniques

As seen in the picture, wellbeing has everything to do with being able to achieve top level performance at work. Being in control is often incorporated with the concept of wellbeing. Reaching for balance between work and personal lives also contributes to the feeling of having control and thus in that way to wellbeing. That is one of the reasons why flexible working hours might have an indirect effect on an individual's capabilities to manage their work.

As discussed earlier, we are living in a society where it is important for people to cherish their values and feel like they're doing a meaningful job. The values refer to things that make the life worth living and being able to live according to these values improves wellbeing and leads to top performance. Creativity, inspiration and passion are the basic elements of top performance and they're all derived from the same source. (Mäkirintala 2011, 28-31)

The model that unites top performance and wellbeing can be visualized through an iceberg design:



Picture 2. Top performance and wellbeing (Mäkirintala, 2011. 30-31).(Translated)

In this picture Mäkirintala (2011, 28-31) demonstrates the interactions between people, as our actions are affected by others. The smaller triangles demonstrate these effects that comes from the outside. The visible part of the iceberg is a symbol of the situations where we wish to do our best. The invisible part of the

iceberg represents all the other parts of our lives, like our motivations and values. These different parts of the iceberg are continuously interacting with each other.

In other words, our actions are constantly affected by number of things like our attitudes, experiences, the actions of others and the culture and atmosphere we're living in. These visible and invisible things can also be considered as intrinsic and extrinsic motivations like discussed in chapter 3.3.1 – motivation indeed moves as to act. The top of the iceberg requires support from the whole ecosystem. Efficient interactions within the ecosystem provides a solid base for productive work, according to the principles of a win-win situation. (Mäkirintala 2011, 30-31)

The ability to take all these different parts into account is what separates the top performances and the average performances. This phenomenon is called as metacognition – the awareness of one's own thought processes. It allows the individual to observe the situation from the outside and allows to see what happens in their minds at the time: how the chosen actions are working in a situation and how helpful those actions were in achieving goals and objectives. Therefore, individuals with high metacognitive skills are more often better and faster learners. (Mäkirintala 2011, 30-31)

Metacognitive skills can be developed through improved self-awareness, and calls for practices which support self-evaluation, self-assessing and self-correcting in response to the self-assessment. Developing these skills also improves creativity and allows individuals to find out their most efficient ways of learning and working, so that they can better concentrate on the things that matter and help them further evolve and move towards growth. "Practice makes a master and a master always practices" (Mäkirintala 2011, 37).

Practicing on self-management at work requires guidance, support and motivation in order to meet bigger goals in the long run, but the learner should also set personal goals to make the bigger ones more realistic and "reachable". Mäkirintala (2011, 65-68) introduced five principles to follow when creating personal objectives:

1. A goal is not an intrinsic value. It is a tool.

The purpose of a goal is to lead the actions towards the desired destination in a way that is flexible and not forcing.

2. Goals and sub goals are needed to construe the bigger objectives into small, more manageable parts.

3. A good goal is within our sphere of influence. For example, these skills require no talent: work ethic, being on time, being optimistic, being prepared and encouraging, putting in effort and doing extra. It is not always about what is done, but how it is done.

4. A good goal is tangible. A measurable goal is easier to achieve provably.

5. A good goal has a positive tone to it – pay attention to the desired state at the end.

When setting goals and sub goals, it is helpful to envision the situation after the goal is achieved. Envisioning strengthens motivation and might uncover methods that would be helpful during the journey. In this current research the survey respondents were asked that in what kind of work environment they would like to work in five years. The employee respondents envisioned their future work environment as trusting, flexible and open minded. The managers described their idea of work environment as self-driven, productive and supportive. These descriptions alone help to identify the sub goals and actions, that might be needed to achieve these visions. Also, the possibility to share these envisions with colleagues and managers not only strengthens the atmosphere in the work community but creates a trusting work culture that moves towards shared objectives together.

Creating goals is about trying, failing and succeeding. Being able to start trying in the first place, requires allowance to take control and carry the responsibility. But the permission to make decisions alone is not necessarily enough to create a feeling of autonomy. Traditional organizational structures and procedures might affect to that feeling as well. Therefore, it is essential for the management to

strongly support the culture of testing and trying. It is often better to go ahead and try, then it is to plan for months and only proceed when the plan is complete – because well planned is not half done – it is not even started. (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 258-262)

### **3.4 “A great place to work”**

Vincit is a Finnish-based software development and service design company. The company has been rewarded as a “great place to work” in several years. Vincit won the title of the best workplace in Europe in 2016 and the best workplace in Finland in 2014, 2015 and 2016. How they did it?

Vincit is a forerunner when it comes to self-driven employees. Instead of the traditional models of management, the company does not have superiors at all. They offer their employees a platform called LaaS – “leading as a service” which allows them to focus on their employees’ individual needs. The platform introduces four areas from which the employee could choose services from: wellbeing, substance training, career and business activities. Their workers are reminded to sign in to the platform every three months to tell if they need any of these services. The employees also have the opportunity to answer “no”, if they felt like they didn’t need any guidance at the time. The point was that the employees had a possibility to get the help if they needed by creating this tool with an especially low threshold for asking it. (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 280-295)

After choosing the service, the employee could even choose whom to proceed forward with. All these four areas had specialized services and people to ask guidance from if an employee needed the service. The employees also have a choice called the WTF-button in the platform. By pushing the button, the employee is able to leave a question to the management, and the question (including the answer) is visible for all the users of the platform. That again created a low threshold for finding out what’s going on in the organization. These actions improved the employee satisfaction drastically and are for sure some of the reasons behind the success. (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 293-294)

## **4 ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS**

This part of the thesis is basically the core of this research of finding out hopes and expectations of employees and managers considering the phenomenon of flexible work and self-management. It provides primary data, which is the most important content in this case study approach, and in accumulation of the results. The data for the survey was gathered from group of employees and group of managers, through online surveys. Online surveys were conducted due to the fact that the respondents were located in different parts of Finland, and because the time for collecting the data was limited. Also, since the author of this thesis happens to work for the commissioner in the same department where this research was conducted, the data collection through interviews seemed rather questionable option. Interviewing colleagues face to face, or even through online could have developed a risk of the respondents altering the truth and not being entirely straight with their answers. An online survey enabled anonymity, which in this case was important in receiving honest and straight responses. Therefore, an online survey was the most efficient and reliable method of gathering data for this research.

The observation for this research was made during Skype-meetings with the commissioner's pilot groups. The researcher attended to six meetings and made field notes of them. The observation process created an interesting angle to the study and allowed to examine the reactions and interaction within the pilot groups. It was also interesting to see how the managers reacted to the suggestions of actions or adjustments, and if they went any further from there. The work of the pilot groups is a continuous process, and therefore the research does not concentrate on the things the groups managed to accomplish or change but focuses on the information that the observations generated.

### **4.1 The survey process**

The survey for this thesis was conducted in an online platform called Survey-monkey.com. The platform was easy to use, user-friendly and reliable in terms of anonymity of the respondents. An online survey also enables automatically

stored answers to survey database providing easier handling of data and flexibility of the survey design and response format. Probably the biggest disadvantage of an online survey is the absence of an interviewer, which prevents additional, more intuitive questions to be asked, and further exploration of the respondents' answers. Another disadvantage of an online survey is the risk of survey fraud, in which some people might answer the survey but not with a desire to contribute the advancement of the study. (Explorable.com) In this particular research the risk of survey fraud is rather irrelevant, since the survey links were sent to the respondents through organization's internal email and were not available to other audience.

The commissioner had been running a pilot program, to come up with ideas on how flexible work could be adapted to the organization unit. Voluntary employees from different teams participated to these pilot groups. The respondents for the employee online survey were chosen from these groups through lottery, because the groups were already shown their interest and willingness towards the subject of flexible work. Therefore, the respondents were more likely to provide in-depth answers to the survey questions. The manager respondents volunteered to answer the survey.

The aim for this research was to get 15 responses from employees and 10 responses from managers. Due to the hectic days at work, the researcher only managed to receive 12 responses from employees and 5 responses from managers. In qualitative research, only a few responses could be enough to form a research case because the aim is not to create generalizations or statistical information, but to understand the phenomenon. In this case, the aim was to examine the hopes and expectations on flexible work from employee and employer perspective, to improve the mutual understanding between them. Therefore, it was important to gain at least a few survey responses from both parties, to be able to compare and objectively analyze the results.

Due to the fact that the respondents had a limited amount of time to be spent on the surveys, there could have not been too many questions. Because the research was qualitative, and the goal was to create an in-depth insight on the subject, the researcher wanted to use open questions. Each survey included 10 open

questions, which was a maximum amount considering the time (20 to 30 minutes) that each respondent was allowed to use for the survey. The surveys were conducted in Finnish to lower the risk of misunderstanding the questions and the lack of language skills to answer profoundly. The answers were translated into English to be used in this thesis.

As mentioned earlier, the employees returned 12 survey responses, and managers returned 5 survey responses. Considering the quality of the research method, the data derived from these survey responses provided a quite relevant base for the process of analyzation. After the surveys were closed, the researcher read the answers through multiple times and made notes, then compared the answers to each other, and again made notes. The researcher paid regard to the framing of the sentences, the selection of words, frequent words and phrases, the repeating of certain words and the first and second impressions that arised after re-reading the answers, and again maid notes of those impressions. The notes were an essential part of creating an understanding of the answers – the “meaning behind the sentence”. The two surveys (employees’ and managers’) were mostly similar to each other, but slightly modified to some extent in order to deeply examine the thoughts from employees and managers (appendices 1 & 2).

In qualitative research there’s always a risk of letting the researcher’s personal preferences and ideologies to have too much effect on the research outcome. In this particular research, the researcher experienced that the possibility to get two different perspectives (employees and managers) around the subject helped to deliver and to analyze the results objectively. Also getting familiar with past research and literature allowed the researcher to create conclusions that were initially conducted through the use of multiple sources.

## **4.2 The changing work environment**

The processing of subjects like flexible work and self-management require an understanding of the phenomenon they are dealt with. Therefore, it was important to first make clear of the thoughts the respondents had over the current state of

the work environment in the society and in the office, they worked in. The questions concerning work environment were:

*What is a flexible work environment?*

*Why the possibilities to work flexibly are important or are not important in today's society?*

*In what kind of work environment would you enjoy working in five years?*

In their responses, the respondents seemed to have rather unanimous views and speculations on the current and on the future situation of the work environment. The respondents stated that due to the rapid development of technology, digitalization and globalization, people's lives at work and on their free-time is getting increasingly hectic in the society. A certain degree of concern in the answers was also noticeable. Choices of words and phrases like "societal pressure", "24/7 availability", "being on time within minutes", and "adjusting to constant changes" were continuously repeated in the answers. In some of the answers the respondents stated, that the work society is actually not as flexible, as employees are expected to be. According to the expectations of the respondents, the future didn't seem to appear any more tranquil.

In the responses there was also mentioned some thoughts concerning millennial generation and its increasing demand for more flexible work. The respondent stated, that in order to attract new workers and to retain talent the work environment inside the organization has to become more flexible. If there weren't adjustments made to the current procedures and policies, the employees might be tempted to switch to work for another employer with more possibilities to work flexibly.

The employees hoped that in the future work environment, they would be able to have more authority on the decisions concerning work. As finding balance between work and other social life becomes increasingly demanding, in their responses *all of the employees* wished to have a freedom of choice: an opportunity

to decide when to work and where to work. They also wished that the work environment would be more self-oriented and self-driven and that their employer was genuinely driven to ease the processes of adjusting work and personal lives together. According to the responses, the ability to fully utilize their expertise within the teams – the use of “functional flexibility”, would also increase the level of satisfaction and engagement of the employees.

In addition to the descriptions of the work environment with more flexibility and self-authority, the respondents envisioned their future work environment as equal in terms of wages, rewards, and other fringe benefits. Also, the fact that work is a place where they were pleased and happy to arrive (or choose not to arrive because they could also work from home) seemed to be a crucial factor for the employees.

Last but not least, another frequently mentioned word was trust. The majority of the employee-respondents thought, that in order to work successfully in the future work environment, the indispensable assets between employees and managers should be mutual trust and understanding. The respondents stated, that the managers need to trust the employees to get the work done with less control and surveillance, and the employees need to trust the managers to be on their side on keeping their jobs and skills up-to-date.

#### **4.2.1 Manager perspective**

The manager’s expectations and points of view on the phenomenon of changing work environment seemed to be mostly in-line with the employee responses.

The managers as well, expected the trend to move towards more flexible methods of working, but emphasized the fact that flexibility is needed from both parties.

The employees need to commit to work independently in a way that ensures a good level of customer service. In many responses, the managers stated that customer centrality has to be the starting point for all decision-making in the future – including the considerations of adjustments on the working methods. The needs of the customers will be prioritized in the future as well.

The managers also seemed to recognize the urgent need to adjust work and personal life together more seamlessly. According to the responses, working *together* and understanding the shared goals ensures the possibility to allow more freedom for the employees to manage their work and schedules. The managers experienced flexible work as a new possibility to pay more attention on coaching and training, since it is likely to decrease the need of completing administrative tasks. They also suggested that flexible work would potentially increase employee satisfaction and motivation, as they feel more trusted and in control of their work.

When the managers were asked in what kind of work environment they would like to work in five years, many of the respondents hoped for more self-oriented and self-driven environment, in which both parties had the possibility to work in a culture of openness and trust. Training and education would ideally be available for all the employees who wished for it and the goal is to have self-driven, multiple-skilled workers in the organization. Another frequently mentioned concept within the manager's answers was telework, and the hope to expand the possibility to all of the workers.

### **4.3 Flexible work**

Flexible work is a large concept and can be understood in many ways. In this research the concept of flexible work seemed to mean rather similar things to all of the respondents. Flexible work was mainly understood as flexitime or flexible working hours, telework and possibilities to manage one's own work and schedule in daily bases, instead of receiving orders from managers. The questions concerning flexible work were:

*The work conversation in our era consist of employer's and employee's hopes and rights. Often, the discussion has to do with time sovereignty, freedom of choice, and individualized and self-managed working hours. What are the possibilities and threats in terms of getting the work done, if more flexible work or telework was introduced to the employees?*

*Could the possibility of flexible working hours or telework generate an effect on employee's effectivity and coping at work? If so, explain how and why.*

*More flexible way of working is a gesture of trust between employer and employee. What would you like to promise to your work community to reach the shared goals in a more self-oriented way? The things you're about to write down should be (1) realistic, (2) considered as so important that you would want everyone commit to it and (3) you would be ready to commit to it yourself.*

According to the responses, the respondents saw the potentially biggest threats or challenges in flexible work to be dealt with the management skills of daily work and keeping the customer service level high. Some of the respondents were also worried about some workers potentially slacking on the daily work and not getting it done like they would have done if they were working according to the existing rules or in the office instead of other location. Considering telework, things like work ergonomics and security risks were frequently mentioned as well.

The employees saw many positive sides in flexible work and in the things it could generate, such as improved employee performance, happier staff, deeper level of trust between employees and managers and better worker experience. The respondents also mentioned, that flexible work would allow the employees to work more efficiently if they had the freedom to choose the location of work according to personal preferences. The employees also thought, that they would gain more energy if the work environment became flexible or they could work from home and increase their level of concentration.

All the respondents thought that flexible working hours and telework were likely to generate positive results in an individual's productiveness and coping at work. Especially the possibility to work shorter and longer days depending on the work load was seen as a reasonable adjustment and would potentially ease the process of managing work. The employee-respondents understood, that not only these adjustments gave more freedom to the employees, but the employees were also expected to act flexibly in return. Flexible work would let the employees work for longer on busier days and on the other hand work shorter hours on "easier" days. This opportunity also measures the employees' capabilities to manage the

work independently and carry responsibility of the actions and decisions they made.

#### **4.3.1 Manager perspective**

The managers were worried, that if flexible working hours and telework were widely implemented to the teams, not everyone would understand the rules the same way. Customer centrality was yet again mentioned in the answers, referring to the fact that there might be times when many workers are leaving early at the same time. The problem in this scenario was how to guarantee the level of customer service if there weren't enough human resources available at all times. In addition to the risks threatening the organizational performance, some of the respondents also mentioned the risks that might threaten the health and well-being of the workers, like not taking enough breaks during the day or not having enough social interaction with the rest of the team.

According to the manager's responses, the positive sides of flexible work might include things like better worker experience, improved performance, improved employer brand, and the workers getting the feeling of having the possibility to have an influence on things and that they are doing a meaningful job.

The managers emphasized the fact that in order to successfully manage the work more flexibly, there must be joint rules on how to use this opportunity of freedom – just like the employees thought as well.

#### 4.4 Self-management

*“If you want to teach people a new way of thinking, don’t bother trying to teach them. Instead, give them a tool, the use of which will lead to new ways of thinking.”*

- Richard Buckminster Fuller

Self-management is a necessity in a flexible work environment. One cannot be fulfilled without the other. This research found, that probably the biggest differences between employee and employer thoughts and expectations immersed on this particular subject. The questions concerning self-management were:

*Self-management and self-drivenness is about an individual’s ability to voluntarily work towards set goals without external control, observation or surveillance. What are the areas of self-management that you find yourself to be good at? What are the areas of self-management you would have to work on?*

*Evaluate the level of self-orientation and self-drivenness within your current team. How it shows in your daily work or how do you think it should?*

*What are the managers for in a self-oriented organization?*

*What are the methods or tools you use to self-manage the workload and schedule in daily bases? What are the methods or tools of support you get from your manager or from your work community to develop self-management and self-orientation?*

*Self-management and self-drivenness calls for good social skills and efficient interaction within the team. How does the current formations or compositions of the teams work from the perspective of team’s internal self-orientation? Could there be made any changes to the teams that would potentially improve interaction and trust within the team?*

The respondents seemed to have quite clear opinions on what is their personal level of self-management skills. Majority of the respondents thought they were

already self-driven mentally and were capable of managing the daily work load. They also seemed to understand what are the daily, and long-term goals they need to be reaching for and on the other hand, what is the consequence of their performance if these objectives were neglected or not reached. The areas of self-management the employees saw as their strengths were effective working, planning of the day and schedules, and the ability to take responsibility of their actions.

According to the answers, the areas of development were at things like concentration, taking enough breaks, and developing professional skills and know-how. Though not all respondents found any areas to be further improved but seemed to think their skills of self-management were on a top level due to long experience in the organization and in previous, more self-oriented organizations.

The respondents also identified the importance of teamwork on self-management. The survey found out that the employees were hoping that the whole team could work in a more self-oriented way, which would improve the atmosphere of trust within the team. For the teams to be more self-driven, the leaders should set clear boundaries and rules for the framework, in which the employees would feel free to make their own decisions. One of the respondents stated that *“if the rules and objectives were made clear to everyone, the responsibility of acting according to those belongs to everyone as well. No-one wishes to intentionally cause problems for their team mates, because people usually have an internal tendency to work well and move towards shared goals”*.

As mentioned earlier, teamwork was often mentioned within the answers. When the respondents were asked how self-oriented or self-driven their teams were, the answers were a bit variable. Some of the respondents stated that there were many competitive and self-oriented individuals in the team, but the team as a group is quite not allowed to work self-drivenly, since every member of the team is told what kind of tasks and how much of certain task is needed to be done during each hour of the day. Self-management in the team at its current state seemed to mean that the members of the team responsibly take care of the daily work they were addressed to and no-one is likely to shrink one's responsibilities.

When the respondents were asked what the managers are needed for in a self-oriented organization the answers were as follows: “to support and “translate” the vision, to mentor and generate enthusiasm, to improve strength in unity, to manage the big picture, to lead by example, to give feedback, to trust the employees, to take responsibility of keeping the employees possibilities to develop their skills easy to access and up to date, to internal surveillance and to hire and retain talent.”

The respondents seemed to agree on the fact that in general, the leaders in a self-oriented organization are needed to set the ground rules and policies for work. Even more they are needed to support and mentor the employees. Some of the respondents stated that currently the rules were incoherent, and the managers didn't encourage or guide the employees enough to work in a more self-driven way but expected them to accomplish the tasks they were given to.

The respondents hoped to experience the managers more as a supportive asset, rather than as commanders. Some of the respondents referred to the current state at the organization and stated, that there's sometimes a lot of bureaucracy in the organization and at the same times the employees are expected to work more self-drivenly – this according to the responses created a contradiction within the office policies. Some of the employee-respondents seemed to think that the general rules (including the physical directions and guides for work) are indefinite and hard to read. The relevance of rules and the correctness and unanimous of guidelines were experienced as necessities, when developing self-management skills and self-oriented attitude in the first place.

The current methods of managing the daily work varied a lot within the respondents, but all of the respondents used at least some kind of methods to track and control their efficiency. Some of the respondents used Microsoft Excel to track the tasks they had done and the tasks they still should complete before the day ends. Some preferred the use of Microsoft Outlook, because it reminds the user to do certain tasks at certain times. Some respondents mentioned they followed their progress during the day to stay on track. The employees also told they read the organization's internal informative channels and use apps like Skype to contact the team mates. Many of the respondents mentioned, that they tend to prioritize the daily tasks first when they arrive to work. The respondents also said that

the way they track their performances during the day, depends on the task they are doing at the time. It seemed like the multiple-skilled employees would appreciate the opportunity to utilize their personal expertise more frequently and flexibly.

Still, many of the respondents stated that they don't feel encouraged or guided enough to work self-drivenly. One respondent said, that their team is not encouraged to work more independently or self-drivenly at all, so he or she doesn't understand why one should use any more tools for self-management and expects to get the directions of organizing and prioritizing the work as given from the managers.

According to the answers it seemed like the respondents would already have quite good capabilities to manage their work more independently, but they need to be more encouraged to improve their skills further.

#### **4.4.1 Manager perspective**

According to the manager's answers, there seemed to be different views on how self-management shows within the teams – or how it should. Self-management was considered as an ability to concentrate on things that contribute the achievement of shared goals, and as willingness within the team to develop the work and have the courage to question the traditional models of doing the job. In many responses the managers also stated, that in their teams the workers are already capable of prioritizing different tasks and able to recognize strengths and weaknesses in other team members. In few responses, the managers experienced the level of communication and self-orientation in their teams to be on a good level already. One manager stated, that the ability of workers to move between different tasks (for example according to the urgency level) independently has improved but could be a lot more active. The manager expects more of being in charge from the employees and thought that too often the workers are waiting to be told what to do next.

The research participants were also asked what they would like to promise for their workers or for their work community on a journey towards a flexible and self-oriented organization and achieving the goals in a more self-driven way. The respondents were asked to write down things that were (1) realistic, (2) so important according to the respondent that he or she would want everyone to commit to it and (3) they would be ready to commit to it themselves. Through the responses, the managers unwittingly answered to the hopes the employees had in terms of getting more of support and encouragement and answered as follows (disclaimer: these quotes are only an additional part of this research project used for its informative purposes, and are not representative of the general opinion within the commissioner's managers or planned actions in real life):

*“As a manager I promise, that making mistakes is ok. One should not be afraid of failing but be able to overcome the challenges and learn from the mistakes. Self-organization enables operational development on a new level and as a manager I promise to allow an atmosphere of doing and trying, without getting too much involved to it – as long as the actions are measurable so that the positive results can be actually evidenced.”*

*“I promise to trust and give responsibility. I truly believe that our employees are doing their best and wish to succeed in achieving our shared goals.”*

*“I promise to be present to support and guide my team to help them organize their work yet letting them do the decisions themselves unless their asking for guidance. I promise to encourage, motivate, and to enable new possibilities the more I get familiar with my team members. I promise to celebrate the advancements of the team and show gratitude for the success of individuals.”*

*“Trust is the keyword to accomplish the change. The communication and reporting must be open and efficient, and not a single member of the team should be left alone. I promise to give feedback and support in different circumstances.”*

*“Reaching set goals opens up the possibility to telework. I promise to keep up with employee training and support positive mindset.”*

Also the employees were asked to write down things they would like to promise to their work community in a more flexible work environment, where the tasks are done and the goals are met more independently and self-drivenly:

*"1. I promise to get the work done. 2. I promise that my efficiency won't decrease even though I had more freedom. 3. I promise to be flexible in busy situations and when there's a need to work for longer."*

*"I promise to perform at work as well as I did before. The trust should already be earned."*

*"I promise to do my best and commit to my work. I promise to give more suggestions, opinions, and ideas of improvement."*

*"I promise to maintain the level of my performance even though I was given more control and freedom, or the performance could even improve."*

*"I promise to manage my work as well as I can like I've done until this day."*

*"I would wish to see the employer to give the employees the opportunity to show that they are worth the trust. If my employer would be flexible at things that result positively on my wellbeing and coping at work, it would increase my level of commitment and willingness to be trustworthy."*

*"I would promise to reach for the shared goals and wouldn't ignore urgent tasks just because I would like to leave a bit early."*

*"I'd like to promise to be more efficient, if I was given the chance to choose the time of working according to my best energy level."*

*"I would promise to focus on work with full energy, especially if I had the possibility to telework. I would be flexible in situations where it is needed (like busier days)."*

*“I would promise to perform at least as efficiently as I’ve performed so far. I would be reasonable with the use of flexible working hours. I would promise to smile more and promote the employer to my acquaintances.”*

*“If I thought my employer was being flexible in a realistic and reasonable way, I could promise that my efficiency would improve, my impressions on my employer and its abilities to run business according to the modern standards of the century would improve, and my enjoyment at work would improve if I got the chance to be more in control of my life as a whole.”*

Based on these promises, it is easy to agree on the hypothesis that if flexible adjustments were introduced to the work community and these promises were kept as they were given, the mutual understanding between the employees and managers would become better and the organization’s performance would improve in the long run. The achievement of these requires changes to happen in the attitudes as well as in the organizational structures. Asking the employees to work self-drivenly is not enough - the employees need to be told how to accomplish it. The managers need to come up with solutions which would free more time for mentoring and supporting the employees. It is realistic to say, that as the managers are already busy completing their daily tasks, they won’t be able to focus on these previously mentioned things that require presence without letting go of some other tasks. That is why the change has to happen in an organizational level, and not only in the ways the employees work. Self-driven employees need to be pushed into the right direction, so they better understand the purpose of their actions, and that’s what the managers are for – to lead the way.

#### **4.5 The observation**

The commissioner had been running a pilot program, with the purpose of letting the employees attend to the decision-making processes of the new potential adjustments made to the working methods. The researcher had the opportunity to attend to some of the meetings these pilot groups had through Skype.

During each meeting the researcher made field notes of the meeting. The notes were made to understand the ways the groups proceeded, how they interacted with each other and how their managers reacted to the suggestions and questions the pilot group members had. Each meeting lasted from half hour to one and a half hour and consisted of 10 to 15 members on average. Even though some of the group members “met” first time during the Skype-meetings, the atmosphere was trusting and positive. During first meetings, the employees seemed a bit shy to open up their mouths and give opinions, but the further the process went, the more the members were encouraged to speak.

After the members got familiar with the subject and each other, they started to develop suggestions and procedures of actions considering flexible work, which could possibly be utilized in their own units. Some of the members were quite careful with their hopes and expectations on the things they might be able to convince the management on, and some of the members were ready to question everything.

During each meeting the group spirit was good, yet there were some members who didn't always attend. When the group had their first meeting with more managers in it (including the head of the unit), the group was supposed to have a sketch of a plan they would like to proceed with. Not many of the suggestions were instantly “sold” to the managers and the situation seemed rather difficult. The researcher found that either the management is not ready for giving much authority to the teams or individuals, or the pilot group members weren't profound enough with their suggestions. It seemed like none of the group members nor the managers had clear understanding of the ground rules the pilot groups were supposed to follow during the process of creating new rules and adjustments. Therefore, the group had to take a step back and come up with a new plan.

The described meeting is a good example of a situation, where there's control and responsibility given to the employees, but the employees don't know what to do with it due to the lack of communication and clarification of rules. In a changing work environment, this kind of situation is not rare. It is good that the employees were given the opportunity to explore and question the traditional operations and models, but it seemed like there could have been more detailed framework given

to the group. With a clear set of rules, the group would have possibly been able to come up with better suggestions more efficiently. As discussed earlier, even though the employees are looking to have more control over their work, there must be a certain level of guidance and support, and ground rules to follow. A mutual understanding of the framework is a necessity in the creation of new rules and work culture.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

"A boss says "go and make sure you do it"; a leader says "let's go and make it happen". Bosses control people; leaders involve them,"

- Israelmore Ayivor, Leaders' Ladder

The objective of this thesis was to provide information that might generate better understanding between employees and managers on the phenomenon of flexible work and self-management in the changing work environment. The goal was to deeply understand the hopes and expectations of employees and managers that were associated and experienced within the subject. The study also aimed to provide practical suggestions of actions, which could help the employees to manage their work better.

Although the research failed to collect as much data from the respondents as the researcher had hoped for (because not everyone returned the surveys), the received answers were profound enough to generate conclusions and recommendations for the research problem.

The study found, that the commissioner's employees and managers seem to agree on the factors and societal changes that are affecting the current and the future situation of the work environment. The environment was considered as increasingly hectic, automated and digitalized. The employees experienced the phenomenon of 24/7-society as a challenge to find a balance between work and personal life. The managers more editorialized the changes the phenomenon generates from two perspectives: how to meet the increasing demand of customers and the changing needs of workers.

In the employees' answers considering the changing work environment, a tone of worry was noticeable. The employees were mainly worried about the pressures that the society, and their work puts on their shoulders; of being within the reach all the time. The employees strongly hoped for more flexibility at work to be able to deal with the pressure and understood that it requires actions and commitment from both parties (employer and employees). The employees were also worried

that their managers didn't quite support their teams enough to work more independently, and they felt like they didn't get as much guidance and examples of tools with which they could develop their skills to become more self-oriented and self-driven workers. On the other hand, the employees recognized that there were already quite self-oriented individuals working in the teams, but they expected to get more specific ground rules and boundaries, in which they knew they could work flexibly in. Still, the employees seemed to be rather optimistic towards the potential future adjustments that might be made to the working methods.

As mentioned earlier, the biggest concern in the managers' responses seemed to be the challenge of combining the employees' needs and the changing customer demand. As the trend in the 24/7-society is moving towards more flexible (probably longer) service hours, there will be a need for more flexible workers as well (to work during different hours of the day). The problem is how to solve the situation in a way that won't have a negative effect on the workers' satisfactory level (as the purpose is to increase it in the future), nor on the customer service level.

In addition to the changes in social behavior, some of the employees pointed out the changing attitudes towards work in general. The employee-respondents referred to the millennial generation – the masters of technological communication. The millennials were described to have a slightly different kind of approach and mindset towards work, for example compared to the generation of baby boomers (which for now is the largest generation of active workers).

The other changes in attitudes have derived from many influential factors as discussed earlier, but it is surely something that should be considered when adjusting and re-creating the ways of doing work. The need for the feeling of having an impact and doing a meaningful job, in addition to an extremely social mindset has to do with these new era workers, who are seeking to change the attributes of work and wishes to redefine how the work gets to be done.

According to the employees' responses related to the current state of working methods in the organization, the respondents seem to agree that the procedures have not been modernized to meet the workers expectations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Therefore, the employees hoped for changes that would make the work more pleasant and easier to access to be able to find better balance between work and personal life.

Also the managers hoped for more flexible work environment in terms of working hours, telework and functional flexibility. All the managers emphasized the fact that the achievement of these adjustments requires mutual understanding and capability to carry the responsibilities and consequences together. They also hoped to see the employees more included in the decision-making processes in the future.

In terms of flexible work, all the respondents seemed to have mutual understanding on the fact that in a big organization that provides variety of services and has multiple-skilled workers, there has to be a clear set of ground rules of operational models that guarantee the good level of customer service and equal treatment for the employees. They also seemed to agree that the current rules and conditions in the organization are not up to date and need to be modernized to meet the changing needs of employees and customers. Although, the employees were more extensively underlining the fact that there are big challenges ahead to overcome in terms of guiding and monitoring work.

The biggest misconceptions between the managers' and employees' expectations seemed to be in the areas of organizing and managing the work. They didn't see eye to eye on the actions that were needed from the parties to develop these areas. There were also differences within the perspectives of what the "drivers" of the change are: customer satisfaction or worker satisfaction. Nevertheless, the mutual understanding prevailed on the fact that some things need to be changed for better.

The difference between the managers' and employees' outlook had to do with the fact that some of the managers seemed to expect the workers to already work self-drivenly, but some of the employees didn't feel like they were advised or encouraged to manage the workload in a self-driven way. According to the responses and to the nature of the employees' answers it seemed like the employees were told what (and how much) had to be done in daily bases (quite precisely)

but weren't showed enough of ways or given enough tools for how it could be done more productively.

Three factors seemed to be repeatedly mentioned in the managers' responses considering the requirements for more flexible and self-oriented way of working: (1) the mutual understanding of the rules and objectives, the meaning of work and its goals, (2) the supportive office culture that stands for open conversation and equality and (3) the ability to take responsibility and commit to the fact that customer centrality has to be the foundation for all the suggested actions and decisions. In addition to these three factors, the managers also recognized the need for understanding what is expected from a worker, and the fact that mutual trust is a necessity. A few of the managers also stated that letting the workers to have more control over their work calls for self-discipline and a systematic way of working, and that the worker should already be proven to work successfully and meet the set goals in order to be given more freedom.

It seemed that according to the managers' answers, the teams' level of self-management and –driveness was considered to be on a good level. One of the respondents stated that *"my team handles their problems themselves and takes care of them. My team is already self-oriented"*. The managers were also asked how they supported and motivated their staff to develop their skills of self-management and advanced the attitude of self-drivenness. The respondents mentioned things like motivating through personal feedback, through development discussions with the workers, by shearing each other's success and through workers' personal achievements which alone generates better motivation. The possibility of having more flexibility at work and doing a job that is meaningful for the worker was also mentioned as a source of motivation. Pretty much all of the methods the managers mentioned in their answers, were actions that happened *after* the worker's performance; giving credit for succeeding, giving feedback and having development discussions. Not many of the responses included things that were done in advance or proactively to support the workers or their motivation level.

The employees' responses slightly differed from these thoughts above. As already mentioned, some of the employees didn't feel like they were encouraged

to work self-drivenly or at least they felt like they didn't get any help on developing their skills of self-management. The positive side of this current situation is that the employees are already showing a certain degree of skill in self-organization in the eyes of the managers, but referring to the employee responses of not getting enough support to utilize it, it seems like the development towards more self-oriented organization will not go any further without clarifying the ground rules, giving more training for the workers and motivating and supporting the workers proactively for them to develop and have the courage to use these skills.

In the survey the researcher also wanted to know what the employees and managers thought of the current compositions of teams and if there was a chance that some changes made to these teams might generate better communication and trust within the team. The managers' responses on the subject varied quite a bit. Some of the respondents thought that the compositions of the teams didn't have an impact on these things, and they can be achieved anyway - despite who's in the team or what size is the team. Yet some of the managers thought that it well might have an impact on the level of communication and trust and there could be some changes made to the teams that require examining and re-consideration. Some of the managers were certain, that the compositions of the teams are very important in terms of internal communication and trust. Some of the respondents stated that there could be smaller teams or "cells" within the current teams, which would enable more efficient decision-making processes. With multiple-skilled workers in each team, the teams could more easily agree on their own rules of how the work gets to be done each day, from start to finish. The managers behind these responses thought that this might potentially be a way of creating better trust and efficiency within the teams.

The employees' responses related to teamwork seemed to be rather similar with the managers' responses. Many of the respondents were quite happy with the current situation in the teams, but they thought that smaller teams could potentially create a deeper level of trust and communication. The employee-respondents also mentioned, that because the teams consist of workers of which some have been working for the commissioner for a long time and some for only few months, it would be nice to have more meet-ups to get to know the team members better personally, and to create a bond within each other. The respondents

thought that the technological tools for contacting the team members are good, which enables easy communication within the team even if the members worked from a different location.

The observations of the meetings slightly supported these different outlooks discussed earlier. It seems that there are challenges in communicating the rules and understanding the rules the same way. According to the survey results, some employees didn't feel guided or supported enough to work self-drivenly or they felt like they weren't given enough tools to develop their skills of self-management. The managers on their behalf already expected self-driven behavior and didn't recognize the fact that the employees felt discouraged. In other words, the employees expected actions from their managers on something their managers thought the employees already got covered.

As a conclusion of the study it seems like the mutual understanding between the managers and the employees is coherent in terms of work environment and the changes they expect to see happening in it. The biggest differences between the parties' perspectives were in understanding of what is needed from the parties to achieve the desired change. The employees and managers agreed on the fact that more flexible work environment is needed in order to perform better and for the workers to become more satisfied with work. The rules and conditions for creating the new environment seemed to be unclear at least for the employees, whilst the managers sort of expected the workers to already be moving towards that on their own. It seemed like both parties had a quite positive mindset towards the level of self-drivenness and self-management skills of teams and individuals, but the employees expected more support and guidance for developing those skills, whilst the managers didn't recognize that need.

Mutual understanding cannot be created in a situation where the managers lead the employees based on the assumptions of their workers' skills, since in a complex work environment these assumptions are rarely true. It is not enough for the employees to have a few conversations concerning results, objectives or personal development, nor is it enough for the managers to receive a few employee satisfaction surveys to find out if they've done a good job or not. Both parties need constant feedback and encouragement from each other, and this can only be

accomplished in a work culture that stands for openness, trust and equality. According to a manager's response on the research survey "not a single member of the team should be left alone".

## 5.1 Results

This research was delivered to investigate the hopes and expectations the commissioner's employees and managers had over the phenomenon of flexible work and self-management. The study concentrated on the current state of the situation rather than tried to detect any changes that might have been occurred before and after the research period. The aim was to create an in-depth insight to these issues mentioned above, and to provide information based on the research surveys and observation, that would improve mutual understanding between the commissioner's employees and managers. The goal was to also provide recommendations or suggestions of actions that might be helpful for the commissioner and its employees to use.

In the study conducted by Mamia and Melin (2006, 16-23), flexible working hours were commonly used. 3 Out of 4 big organizations used flexitime and had the opportunity to do shorter or longer days. The commissioner's organization is in a situation where the employer is implementing more flexible methods of working, whilst trying to grow and improve the level of customer service and customer centrality. The challenge is how to combine the changing needs of the workers and the increasing demand of the customers in a way that won't result negatively either on the employee's well-being or on the level of customer service.

Keeping the customer service level high and allowing more flexibility of work for the employees at the same time, calls for good leadership skills from the managers and self-driven attitude from the employees. The achievement of these depends on the level of mutual understanding of the shared objectives and rules between these two parties.

The researcher conducted two online surveys for the commissioner's employees and managers. The surveys included open questions of work environment, and

the concepts of flexible work and self-management. The study found, that the parties seem to have rather coherent understanding of the changes that are happening in the work environment, and they both seem to stand for more flexible work. Majority of the respondents also had quite positive attitude towards change in general. The researcher also used a method of observation and attended to meetings in which the commissioner's employees discussed about the potential changes that could be made to move towards more flexible work community.

The research found that in terms of mutual understanding, there are areas of development that could be improved. The employees didn't feel supported or guided enough to move towards more self-organized work environment, and according to the answers, the managers didn't recognize that. Some of the manager-respondents found their employees as quite self-driven workers already but hoped for improvement on that attitude. The employee-respondents on the other hand, didn't feel like they were encouraged to manage their own work the way they wanted to, but were given orders from above. Both groups of respondents agreed on the fact that if the level of flexibility in the work environment would improve and the employees were given more control over their work, the well-being of the employees, the level of commitment and motivation, the employer brand and the willingness to work would improve as well. Committing to put in thought and effort in ways that guarantee continuous development and coaction is also needed from the parties. This eventually, would lead to better mutual understanding and trust, improved performance and efficiency and more satisfied groups of workers.

The challenge is how to develop the interaction and communication between managers and employees in ways that would take these concerns into account. As a conclusion the research found that the managers should support and motivate the workers to develop their skills more proactively and in advance, in a way that made the employees feel like they are encouraged to work more independently. The employees should develop ways or tools of managing their work more self-drivenly and promote open conversation within the work community. The compositions of the teams could be re-created to improve the team's internal self-orientation skills and the teams should get more training on developing these

skills. Trust, courage and openness are the keywords towards more flexible and self-driven culture of work.

The objective of this thesis was to find out the employee's and managers' hopes and expectations on flexible work and self-management in a changing work environment. The goal was to provide information, that would improve mutual understanding between these two parties and be helpful for the commissioner to use in the future when implementing flexible ways of working in a larger scale.

As mentioned earlier, the research failed to collect as much data from the respondents as the researcher had hoped for (because not everyone returned the surveys) but still, the received answers were profound enough to generate conclusions and recommendations for the research problem. The answers were detailed and included a lot of thought. It seemed like majority of the respondents were really motivated to answer the survey and wanted to bring forth their thoughts, ideas and opinions. It showed, that the general atmosphere towards change is positive.

The research managed to find out the similarities and differences between the employees' and managers' thoughts and expectations towards flexible work and self-management and therefore succeeded to provide information that is likely to improve mutual understanding and support the process of implementing flexible work and developing self-management.

Relying on the theoretical framework, the research also managed to find commonly used methods of improving self-management at work. These methods can easily be incorporated with employee training and skill development in the commissioner's organization.

### **5.1.1 Recommendations**

This part of the thesis is a recapitulation of the research outcome and is based mainly on the theoretical framework but from the perspective of the survey results. The aim was to provide recommendations that according to the survey responses could be beneficial for the commissioner when planning on employee's

self-management-practices and trainings. It also provides a thorough base for improving communication between employees and managers and for further examining these issues.

As previously discussed, the commissioner is implementing more flexible working methods to its employees. This study was conducted to examine the hopes and expectations the employees and managers had towards the subject. Based on the research outcome the researcher is able to point out some matters that could be taken into account during the implementation process.

According to Dr. Wheatly's article (2017) "greater levels of control over work tasks and schedule have the potential to generate significant benefits for the employee, which has found to be evident in the reported well-being. The positive effects associated with informal flexibility and working at home, offer further support to the suggestion, that schedule control is highly valued and important to employees enjoying work". The online survey found that the commissioner's employees were looking forward of having more flexible ways of doing work and addressed that there's an urgent need for these adjustments. Implementing flexible work to the commissioner's workplace is very much likely to improve the employee experience to great extent.

A study conducted by Stanford University Economics Professor Bloom (2013) found that working from home improves performance and even allowing people to have that choice generated a great effect on it. The survey responses showed that the commissioner's employees and managers both saw potential and possibilities in expanding telework opportunities to all of the workers. Therefore, introducing telework to the commissioner's employees would probably increase employee satisfaction and individuals' performances if there were clear ground rules and boundaries for it.

Implementing flexible work and telework into environment that has been following more traditional procedures and policies for years calls for trust, commitment, open mindset and change in attitudes. This process might slightly differ from the standard change management framework and requires a lot of actions that can't be measured in short term, because measuring organizational performance does not show the success of people side of the change right away. Though these

changes will show on the organizational performance in the long term if the implementation of flexible work succeeded.

Measuring individual performance is more closely linked with the process of implementing flexible work and improving self-management and could consist of satisfactory surveys, observations of work and behavioral change, adoption metrics and employee feedback, but since the nature of the process is about giving more freedom to the employees the actions shouldn't create an atmosphere of increased surveillance or control.

Brubaker (2018) stated that practices of self-awareness (for example in team meetings) can improve the development of employees' self-management skills. The thing is, that developing self-management skills and especially the tendency to become self-driven, requires a lot of supportive actions from managers which are less about setting personal goals and deadlines and giving feedback from past performance, but more of motivating and supporting the process in advance and in its early stage through actions that again, can't be measured short term. Asking and giving feedback to each other is an important part of the process as well. (Brubaker, 2018)

Chapter 3.4. introduced the "Vincit case" (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 288-295). Vincit has designed a platform called LaaS – "Leading as a Service". The platform helps managers to focus on the individual needs of employees more sufficiently by providing different "services" of leadership to the employees. The LaaS-platform introduces four areas from which the employee could choose services from. As discussed in the chapter 3.4 the four areas were wellbeing, substance training, career and business activities. Their workers were reminded to log in to the platform every three months to tell if they needed any of these services. The employees also had the opportunity to answer "no", if they felt like they didn't need any guidance at the time. The point was that the employees had a possibility to get the help if they needed by creating this tool with an especially low threshold for asking it. This kind of thinking could also be adapted to the commissioner's organization. The managers could find out more frequently (for example through surveys) the needs and aspirations the employers had and then react to those

needs accordingly. If these needs only arise in formal development conversations, they might easily be forgotten. Consistency and frequency are essential in measuring and developing the workers' performances short term and especially during change. It allows the managers to respond fast to the employees' needs and adjust the plans if it was needed.

As discussed earlier, the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) differentiates the concept of goal-directed behavior. It separates motivation into two: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation has to do with activities that people do naturally and spontaneously and have an internal tendency to move towards when they feel free to follow their interests. Extrinsic motivation is something that is affected on through rewards, but it can also be activated through threats. Past research has shown, that "events such surveillance, evaluation and deadlines often led to the undermining of intrinsic motivation, presumably because they also prompted a shift toward a more external perceived locus of causality. In contrast, providing choice and acknowledging people's inner experience prompted more of intrinsic motivation, and augmented people's confidence in their performance." (Deci & Ryan 2000)

Flexible work is usually introduced by increasing the level of autonomy within teams and employees. It allows more freedom to plan the day more independently and to become self-driven, which is something that derives from intrinsic motivation. As already mentioned intrinsic motivation can be affected through extrinsic motivation and especially in this case the actions should be encouraging instead of threatening. According to the research survey the employee-respondents felt like they weren't enough encouraged to become more self-driven. This supports the fact that the extrinsic motivational activities should be more positive when it comes to increasing self-drivenness. These three characteristics should be taken into consideration when planning the extrinsic motivational activities (Deci & Ryan 2011):

1. Competence – "The need to experience our behaviors as effectively enacted, to feel like we've done a good job"

> motivating, encouragement, leading by example

2. Autonomy – “The need to experience behavior as voluntary and reflectively self-endorsed, to feel like we have control on what we do”

> less control and surveillance, more trust and supportive actions

3. Relatedness – “The need to interact, be connected to, and experience caring for others, to have meaningful relationships and interactions with other people.

> daily conversations, being interested in how the employee is doing instead of how the employee is performing

Due to the fact that the key element to succeed in the implementation of flexible work is trust, all of the actions require teamwork and allowing all parties to participate to the decision-making processes. The commissioner is already involving some groups of employees to the process, which is a good start for the implementation. In best case scenario, it allows the employees to feel like they had a possibility to have a word on the new rules and adjustments and they probably understand the reasons behind the decisions more deeply.

In addition, there’s a lot of other methods that could be adapted to continuously support the process of change. Job Characteristics Inventory survey (appendice 3.) provides an outlook on how the employees experience their work before, during and after the change (if conducted continuously). JCI surveys helps the managers to see the situation at its current state and allows to compare the results if the survey was done repeatedly. (Vartiainen 1994, 164-170)

As already mentioned, self-management can be improved through multiple methods and it calls for support and guidance from managers (Uusitalo 2018). Still, the employee alone is eventually responsible for taking the actions towards these improvements. The survey responses showed, that the employees used tools like Microsoft Excel and Outlook to track their day and make sure they knew what the daily goals were and how they were doing. In addition to these tools, self-management can be improved in many other ways as well.

According to the theory, it is essential that the employees take good care of their wellbeing in general to become better in self-management. Self-confidence, stress management skills, time management and organizational skills and self-motivation are all areas which require attention and self-awareness from the employee (businessphrases.net). The research also introduced things that require attention but zero talent in terms of improving one's performance: work ethic, being on time, being optimistic, being prepared and encouraging, putting in effort and doing extra. Practices of self-awareness can also help to understand employee's strengths and weaknesses.

The study conducted by Mamia & Melin (2006, 81-95) found, that the more teams have authority, the better the teams are likely to perform and work together. The team's internal autonomy is essential when it comes to succeeding. The employees felt like they could handle the work load more effectively if they got to decide how the work was executed in daily bases. An individual's work in the commissioner's organization is depending on the colleague's performances, and therefore it is important for the teams to create clear rules and conditions in an atmosphere of trust and openness. According to the managers' and employees' survey responses, the compositions of the current teams could be re-created into smaller groups or cells, which would still have enough of multi-skilled workers to execute the work from start to finish.

According to Uusitalo (2018) the development of self-management calls for motivating and supporting the employees and above all else, it requires time. When the organizational values and goals are crystal clear to everyone, the teams are one step closer to succeed. In the survey, the managers and the employees agreed on the fact that a manager's role in a self-oriented organization should include actions to support, guide, and motivate the employees, to give feedback and to be present for the employees, which requires a lot of work from one person. Currently, the managers also surveil, track and observe the work of their employees. Observation in its best state allows the person to identify the strengths and weaknesses of an employee and creates a moment for discussion on the things the employee might wish to work on. Based on these factors, the employee could be able to have a *personal development plan* in which the person who completed the observation and the employee together could come up with

ways and tools and sub-goals the employee could utilize to improve and to move towards growth and bigger objectives.

Creating a new role into the teams, could free more time for the managers to focus on the supportive side of things. A team could for example introduce a role of a “team coach”, “tribe guide”, or “team mentor” to do the observations and to stay on track of how the team members are doing and how the team is performing. The person could be chosen from the team members and the role would not be permanent but could be passed to another member of the team for example in every four to six months or so. The itinerant role could potentially improve interaction within the team and improve understanding of the team’s internal skills, which would potentially allow the team members to share information with each other more efficiently.

Finally, to somehow measure the development of self-drivenness, it could be added to the employee’s annual performance card as one measurable factor through which the employee could have an impact on the reward that’s been paid every year. It could work as an extrinsic motivator (Deci & Ryan 2000) but could also change attitudes towards the card in general and allow the employee to better understand the expectations of not being just productive but being self-driven - which eventually would lead to increased productiveness and more self-oriented organization.

## **5.2 Personal learning experience**

A qualitative research process demands a lot of work from the researcher. It requires hours of examining, reading, writing and deliberation. The researcher found that especially the field notes were an essential part of the research process and helped to construe the results. The notes included memos from different parts of the process (especially during the observations) and ensured that the conclusions were created through diverse sources. The analyzing process took a lot longer than the researcher had expected, due to the massive amount of unorganized data. It required a lot of re-reading the surveys and going back to

the theory. Also, the written output had to be read through multiple times to make sure the topics were not described unilaterally.

The whole experience of planning the research, designing the surveys, collecting the data and analyzing the results was an interesting and instructive journey. Not only the research topic itself was intriguing to the researcher in the first place, but it also provided a lot of new information and different aspects concerning the subject. It also encouraged to further investigate the researcher's own skills of self-management and assumptions on flexible work and inspired to utilize the learnings in real life. The process also enhanced the researcher's professional expertise and gave new perspectives to the goals (and sub-goals) the researcher wishes to accomplish in her career.

In addition to the research content and results which allowed to obtain practical knowledge, the researcher gained a lot more information on research processes in general. Through the surveys and the interpretation of the results, the researcher found out what kind of questions worked best for the qualitative research and on the other hand, which questions could have been formed slightly differently to possibly bring forth "better" answers. If the researcher wasn't working for the commissioner, the chosen data collection method would have probably been interviews. The interviews would have allowed the possibility to re-frame some questions and ask additional questions to create even deeper understanding of the respondents' thoughts. But still, the researcher was convinced that in this case the anonymity through the surveys better enabled more truthful and honest answers, since the respondents were colleagues to the researcher.

Considering the amount of collected data and the time range of the research process, the researcher was satisfied with the research outcome. Though there could have been more respondents to the survey to improve the reliability of the research, the outcome can still be considered as a thorough description and as a profound solution to the research problem.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendice 1. The employee survey

#### Flexible work and self-management – Employee survey

1. What is a flexible work environment?
2. The work conversation in our era consist of employer's and employee's hopes and rights. Often, the discussion has to do with time sovereignty, freedom of choice, and individualized and self-managed working hours. What are the possibilities and threats in terms of getting the work done, if more flexible work or telework was introduced to the employees?
3. Why the possibilities to work flexibly are important or are not important in today's society?
4. Could the possibility of flexible working hours or telework generate an effect on employee's effectivity and coping at work? If so, explain how and why.
5. Self-management and self-driveness is an individual's ability to voluntarily work towards set goals without external control, observation or surveillance. What are the areas of self-management that you find yourself to be good at? What are the areas of self-management you would have to work on?
6. Evaluate the level of self-orientation and self-driveness within your current team. How it shows in your daily work or how do you think it should?
7. What are the managers for in a self-oriented organization?
8. What are the methods or tools you use to self-manage the workload and schedule in daily bases? What are the methods or tools of support you get from your manager or from your work community to develop self-management and self-orientation?
9. Self-management and self-drivenness calls for good social skills and efficient interaction within the team. How does the current formations or compositions of the teams work from the perspective of team's internal self-orientation? Could there be made any changes to the teams that would potentially improve interaction and trust within the team?
10. What would you like to promise to your work community to accomplish tasks and objectives in a more self-driven way? The things you're about to write down should be considered as (1) realistic, (2) so important that you would want everyone to commit to it and (3) you would be ready to commit to it yourself.

## Työn joustot ja itseohjautuvuus – Kysely työntekijälle

1. Minkälainen työympäristö on mielestäsi joustava?
2. Aikakautemme työaikakeskusteluissa vedotaan paitsi yritysten myös työntekijöiden toiveisiin ja oikeuksiin. Puhutaan aikasuvereniteetista, valinnanvapaudesta, sekä yksilöllisistä ja itsevalituista työajoista. Mitkä ovat etätöön ja joustavan työajan näkökulmasta suurimpia työstä suoriutumiseen liittyviä riskejä ja mahdollisuuksia?
3. Miksi mahdollisuudet työn joustoihin ovat tärkeitä, tai eivät ole tärkeitä nyky-yhteiskunnassa? Minkälaisessa työyhteisössä tai -ympäristössä haluaisit itse työskennellä viiden vuoden kuluttua?
4. Voiko joustavalla työajalla tai etätöillä olla vaikutusta yksittäisen työntekijän tehokkuuteen ja työssä jaksamiseen?
5. Itseohjautuvuudessa on kyse henkilön kyvystä toimia omaehtoisesti kohti tiettyä päämäärää ilman ulkopuolisen ohjauksen tai kontrollin tarvetta. Millä itsensä johtamisen alueella koet omat valmiutesi hyväksi? Missä asioissa tunnistat kehittämistarpeita?
6. Arvioi omaa ja tiimisi itseohjautuvuutta. Kuinka se näkyy päivittäisessä työssäsi tai kuinka sen mielestäsi pitäisi näkyä?
7. Mihin johtajia tarvitaan itseohjautuvassa organisaatiossa?
8. Minkälaisia keinoja tai työkaluja käytät oman työn johtamisessa päivittäin? Entä minkälaista tukea saat esimieheltäsi tai työyhteisöltäsi kehittääksesi itseohjautuvuutta ja oman työn organisointia?
9. Itseohjautuvuus vaatii hyvää vuorovaikutusta tiimin sisällä. Kuinka nykyiset tiimirakenteet toimivat tiimin sisäisen itseorganisoinnin näkökulmasta? Voisiko tiimirakenteiden muuttamisella olla vaikutusta paremman vuorovaikutuksen ja tiimin keskinäisen luottamuksen kehittymiseen?
10. Työssä joustaminen on eräänlainen luottamuksenosoitus työnantajalta työntekijälle. Mitä sinä haluaisit luvata työyhteisöllesi yhteisten päämäärien saavuttamiseksi itseohjautuvasti? Kirjattujen asioiden tulee olla sellaisia, että (1) lupaus on realistinen, (2) pidät asiaa niin tärkeänä että haluaisit kaikkien sitoutuvan siihen ja (3) olisit itsekin valmis sitoutumaan siihen.

## Appendice 2. The manager survey

### Flexible work and self-management – Manager survey

1. What is a flexible work environment?
2. The work conversation in our era consist of employer's and employee's hopes and rights. Often, the discussion has to do with time sovereignty, freedom of choice, and individualized and self-managed working hours. What are the possibilities and threats in terms of getting the work done, if more flexible work or telework was introduced to the employees?
3. Why the possibilities to work flexibly are important or are not important in today's society?
4. Could the possibility of flexible working hours or telework generate an effect on employee's effectivity and coping at work? If so, explain how and why.
5. Behind every successful organization is a group of people that can manage their own work and more importantly – they are willing to do it. Self-management and self-driveness is an individual's ability to voluntarily work towards set goals without external control, observation or surveillance. What it requires from an employee to be able to work this way?
6. Evaluate the level of self-orientation and self-driveness within your current team. How it shows in daily bases or how do you think it should?
7. What are the managers for in a self-oriented organization?
8. Self-management and self-driveness calls for good social skills and efficient interaction within the team. How does the current formations or compositions of the teams work from the perspective of team's internal self-orientation? Could there be made any changes to the teams that would potentially improve interaction and trust within the team?
9. A team's shared objective often has to do with the results the organization seeks to accomplish, and the employees experience as worth reaching for. How do people commit to shared objectives and how do you motivate your employees to achieve the goals?
10. What would you like to promise to your employees on a journey towards more self-oriented organization? The things you're about to write down should be considered as (1) realistic, (2) so important that you would want everyone to commit to it and (3) you would be ready to commit to it yourself.

## Työn joustot ja itseohjautuvuus – Kysely työnantajalle

1. Minkälainen työympäristö on mielestäsi joustava?
2. Aikakautemme työaikakeskusteluissa vedotaan paitsi yritysten myös työntekijöiden toiveisiin ja oikeuksiin. Puhutaan aikasuvereniteetista, valinnanvapaudesta, sekä yksilöllisistä ja itsevalituista työajoista. Mitkä ovat etätöiden ja joustavan työajan näkökulmasta suurimpia työstä suoriutumiseen liittyviä riskejä ja mahdollisuuksia?
3. Miksi mahdollisuudet työn joustoihin ovat tärkeitä, tai eivät ole tärkeitä nyky-yhteiskunnassa? Minkälaisessa työyhteisössä tai -ympäristössä haluaisit itse työskennellä viiden vuoden kuluttua?
4. Voiko joustavalla työajalla tai etätöillä olla vaikutusta yksittäisen työntekijän tehokkuuteen ja työssä jaksamiseen?
5. Menestyvän ja hyvinvoivan työyhteisön perustana ovat itsensä johtamiseen kykenevät ja sitä haluavat työntekijät. Itseohjautuvuudessa on kyse henkilön kyvystä toimia omaehtoisesti kohti tiettyä päämäärää ilman ulkopuolisen ohjauksen ja kontrollin tarvetta. Mitä itsenäinen työskentely ja työajan suunnittelu edellyttää työntekijältä?
6. Miten itseohjautuvuus näkyy tiimisi päivittäisessä toiminnassa tai miten sen mielestäsi pitäisi näkyä?
7. Mihin johtajia tarvitaan itseohjautuvassa organisaatiossa?
8. Itseohjautuvuus vaatii hyvää vuorovaikutusta tiimin sisällä. Kuinka nykyiset tiimirakenteet toimivat tiimin sisäisen itseorganisoitumisen näkökulmasta? Voisiko tiimirakenteiden muuttamisella olla vaikutusta paremman vuorovaikutuksen ja keskinäisen luottamuksen kehittymiseen?
9. Tiimin yhteinen päämäärä voi liittyä esimerkiksi tuloksiin joita organisaatio tekemisensä kautta edistää ja jonka sen jäsenet kokevat tavoittelemisen arvoisena. Päämäärä voi liittyä myös niihin itsensä toteuttamisen mahdollisuuksiin, joita organisaatio jäsenilleen tarjoaa. Miten sitoutuminen yhteisiin päämääriin tapahtuu ja kuinka motivoit henkilöstöäsi saavuttamaan ne?
10. Työn itsenäinen suunnittelu ja johtaminen vaatii tukea ja motivointia myös esimieheltä. Mitä sinä haluaisit luvata työntekijöillesi matkalla kohti itseohjautuvampaa organisaatiota? Kirjattujen asioiden tulee olla sellaisia, että (1) lupaus on realistinen, (2) pidät asiaa niin tärkeänä että haluaisit kaikkien sitoutuvan siihen ja (3) olisit itsekin valmis sitoutumaan siihen.

### Appendice 3. The Job Characteristics Inventory questions in English

In every process of change, it is important to understand the situation in its current state. The Job characteristics index includes series of questions on characteristics of the respondent's current job. In the Finnish version of the survey the answer options are scaled from 1 to 7 (1 = very little, 4 = average/averagely common and 7= very much/ very common). The survey is a good base for creating a general view of a current situation in a work community. As an example, here's a list of JCI-survey questions (translated in English from the book of reference (Vartiainen, 1994. 158-166):

1. How variable are the tasks your work includes?
2. To what extent you have the possibility to have control over your own work?
3. How likely it is that you're able to see a certain process flow from the beginning to the very end?
4. How well you're aware of how well you're doing at your job?
5. Is it likely to meet people at your work, whom you'd like to build a friendship with?
6. To what extent your work is dependent on your colleague's performances?
7. What is the level of repeating tasks at your job?
8. To what extent you're capable of working and not needing your manager's attention on it?
9. How much you get feedback from your manager on your performance?
10. To what extent you're allowed to talk with your colleagues of things that are not work-related?
11. To what extent you're involved with human interaction at your job?
12. How similar are your daily tasks to each other?
13. To what extent you're capable of completing your tasks independently?
14. Feedback from my manager based on my performance.
15. The gestures of friendship from my colleagues.
16. The possibility to "chit-chat" during my day at work"
17. The possibility to do variety of things.
18. The freedom of doing quite a lot of what I like at my job.
19. The possibility to complete the whole task (instead of doing a certain part of it, after which someone else finishes it)
20. The possibility of finding out how well I'm doing at my job.
21. The possibility of getting to know new people at my job.
22. The level of variance at my job.
23. The possibility to think and act independently.
24. The possibility to finish what I've started.
25. The feeling of knowing whether I'm working well or poorly.
26. The possibility to create close friendships at my job.
27. The socializing with others during the work day.
28. The possibility to decide up on my own work speed.
29. The possibility to complete the task from start to finish (the opportunity to complete the whole task)
30. To what extent your job requires interaction with someone else than your manager?

#### Appendice 4. The Job Characteristics Inventory questions in Finnish

Jokaisen muutosprosessin edessä on tärkeää tunnistaa ne tekijät, joista nykyinen tilanne koostuu. JCI-kysely sisältää listan kysymyksiä vastaajan työn nykytilasta. Kyselyn suomalaisessa versiossa vastausvaihtoehdot on pisteytetty asteikolla 1-7 (1=hyvin vähän, 4=kohtalaisesti/kohtalaisen tavallista ja 7=hyvin paljon/erittäin tavallista). Kysely on hyvä pohja nykytilan tunnistamiseen ja tuottaa hyödyllistä tietoa jatkotutkimuksiin ja kehittämissuunnitelmiin. Alla esimerkki tutkimuksen kysymyksistä (Vartiainen, 1994. 158-166):

1. Kuinka vaihtelevaa työsi on?
2. Missä määrin sinulla on mahdollisuus tehdä työsi omin avuin?
3. Missä määrin näet projektit tai työt alusta loppuun?
4. Missä määrin olet työsi aikana selvillä siitä, kuinka hyvin onnistut?
5. Missä määrin työssäsi on mahdollisuus tavata henkilöitä, joiden kanssa haluaisit ystäväystyä?
6. Missä määrin työsi onnistuminen on riippuvainen kyvystäsi työskennellä muiden kanssa?
7. Miten toistuvia ovat tehtäväsi?
8. Missä määrin voit työssäsi työskennellä esimiehestäsi riippumatta?
9. Missä määrin saat esimieheltäsi palautetta työsuorituksestasi?
10. Missä määrin työn aikana on mahdollisuus keskustella työhön liittymättömistä asioista toisten työntekijöiden kanssa?
11. Missä määrin joudut työssäsi tekemisiin muiden ihmisten kanssa?
12. Kuinka samanlaisia töitä teet tavallisen työpäivän aikana?
13. Missä määrin sinulla on mahdollisuus tehdä työsi toisista riippumatta?
14. Palaute esimieheltäni työssä onnistumisestani.
15. Ystävyyden osoitukset työtovereiltani.
16. Mahdollisuus keskustella niitä näitä työssäni.
17. Mahdollisuus tehdä monia erilaisia asioita.
18. Vapaus tehdä melko paljon sitä mitä haluan työssäni.
19. Mahdollisuus tehdä koko työ (sen sijaan, että teen osan työstä, jonka joku toinen sitten tekee loppuun).
20. Mahdollisuus saada selville, miten hyvin työskentelen.
21. Mahdollisuus tutustua muihin ihmisiin työssäni.
22. Vaihtelevuuden määrä työssäni.
23. Mahdollisuus itsenäiseen ajatteluun ja toimintaan.
24. Mahdollisuus tehdä loppuun aloittamani työ.
25. Tunne, että tiedän työskentelenkö hyvin vai huonosti.
26. Mahdollisuus solmia läheisiä ystävyys-suhteita työssäni.
27. Seurustelu muiden kanssa työaikana.
28. Mahdollisuus päättää omasta työskentelytahdistani.
29. Mahdollisuus tehdä työ alusta loppuun (tilaisuus tehdä koko työ)
30. Missä määrin työsi vaatii vuorovaikutusta muiden kuin esimiehesi kanssa?