

REMOTE WORK AND ELEMENTS OF GOOD IMMEDIATE LEADERSHIP

Remote Work Increased in Company X



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Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on tutkia etätyötä ja hyvää etäjohtamista toimistotyössä. Työn toimeksiantajana on yritys, joka toimii Suomessa vähittäiskaupan alalla. Opinnäytetyön tärkein teema on löytää hyvän etäjohtamisen elementit lähiesihenkilölle, jonka tiimit koostuvat toimistotyöntekijöistä.

Teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu kirjallisuudesta, artikkeleista ja tehdyistä tutkimuksista, mitkä koskevat etätyötä, etäjohtamista, valmentavaa johtamista ja valmentavaa esihenkilöä. Myös muutosjohtamisen teoriaa sivutaan työssä, sillä siirtyminen toimistosta etätyöhön tapahtui äkillisesti. Muutoksessa tarvittiin muutosjohtamisen taitoja esihenkilöltä. Teorian pohjalta laadittiin kaksi teemahaastattelua empiiristä osuutta varten. Haastattelut toteutettiin toimeksiantajayrityksen työntekijöille.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että toimeksiantajayrityksellä on ollut hyvä alku etätyön johtamisessa, mutta myös haasteita löytyy. Tiedonkulun ongelmat korostuvat etätyössä, mutta työntekijät olivat tyytyväisiä esihenkilöidensä etäjohtamistaitoihin. Toisaalta esihenkilöt itse kaipasivat lisää koulutusta etäjohtamistaidoista.

Tämä opinnäytetyö antaa tietoa etäjohtamisesta myös muille assistentti- ja asiantuntijatiimien johtajille ja organisaatioille.

Avainsanat Etätyö, johtaminen, etäjohtaminen, valmentava johtaminen

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Abstract

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The aim of this thesis is to research remote work and good remote leadership in office work. Case company in this thesis is a Finnish company working in retail business. The main object of this thesis is to find out elements of good remote leadership for the foreperson of office worker teams.

Theoretical framework was created by examining literature, articles, and research about remote work, remote leadership, coaching leadership, and coaching foreperson. Change leadership was also part of the theory because transfer from office to home offices happened suddenly and needed change leadership skills from the forepersons. Based on the theory was created theme interviews for the empirical research. Interviews were made for the case company.

Research results shows that in case organization remote work has had a good start but has also challenges. Problems in flow of communication is highlighted in remote work. Employees were satisfied of their forepersons work but forepersons themselves wanted to be more trained about remote leadership.

This thesis gives information of remote leading for other forepersons in assistant and specialist teams and organizations.

Keywords Remote work, leadership, remote leadership, coaching.

Pages 41 pages and appendices 1 page

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1 Introduction

Working environment changed radically due Covid 19- pandemic in Spring 2020. Suddenly people started to work from home offices and working tools and methods needed to adapt a whole new way. Remote work has brought many advantages to employees point of view for example commuting, new working opportunities and balancing work and free time. Remote work has also its challenges because teams are more fragmented and digital exhaustion is becoming a problem. In Microsoft's research over 70% of the answerers out of over 30 000 people are hoping to flexible remote working to continue. Still over 65% want's to see more team members face-to-face. (Microsoft, N.d.)

According Microsoft (n.d.) flexible work is here to stay and next step is to move on hybrid model where some employees return to workplace and others continue working remote. Future office is predicted to be cultural space where employees can built and update social connections and learning environment. Offices are lead and planned so that technology advances human relationships. Especially new employees experiences hard to learn unwritten rules and habits when working remote. These are traditionally learnt by following others in the office. Microsoft's reseach find out that amount of short meetings have increased in the remote work and the reason is that people just cant go each others desks and solve problems. These are example of reasons why offices are needed also int the future. (Fayard et al., 2021, pp. 40 – 44)

Communication is big part of future leading. Forepersons part is to give an example that when employees are in the office it is allowed to chat with colleagues and spend time in common events. These encounters are important way to share knowledge and thoughts among employees. (Fayard et al., 2021, pp. 40 – 44)

Tradenomiliitto Ry (2020, p. 9) had a survey for its members in the summer 2020 and the results says that exceptional time has increased need of a managerial work for over 55% of the respondents. Also 72,9% says that working days are longer than before.

Topic of this thesis is to study remote work and remote leadership in the case company. Study is aimed on the office workers in three different teams and their team leaders and focuses on their experiences of remote work. Thesis aim is to find elements of a good immediate leadership in remote circumstances.

Topic is relevant because remote work increased suddenly and dramatically in working places and information about how long term remote work affects is important to leaders. Usually remote work is voluntary but due the pandemic it is recommendation, some working places even mandatory.

Case company works in the field of retail business and the case team is a auxiliary activity of a logistic warehouse. Teams that are studied consist of a foreperson and two or three assistants and they are a part of a bigger departments. In case teams employees worked mainly in the office, remote workdays were few casual days. In the case company remote work was placed one day a week with a permission from a supervisor before Covid 19-pandemic. All teams in this research have a similar situation with the remote working, so they are good target group to the theme interviews.

1.1 Objectives and the research questions

Objective of this thesis is to find out how remote work effect on immediate leadership and what are the elements of an good remote leadership from the forepersons perspective.

Thesis research question is;

- what are the elements of a good remote leadership

To solve research question, author finds answers also these two questions

- how remote working has changed forepersons working methods and tools
- what are the expectations for the foreperson from employees

With the results of this thesis immediate foreperson can develop its work more suitable for remote work environment. Thesis processes information in general level, so it is suitable information source also for other organizations with office workers to develop remote leadership skills.

Thesis has theoretical and empirical part. Theoretical framework of the study is based on immediate leadership, remote work and remote leadership. Immediate leadership is studied from coaching perspective and has also change management section due the radical change of working method in the case company. Theoretical framework consist of relevant literature, articles and magazines.

This thesis is a qualitative case study. Typical features of a case study are single case, situation, person or a group. Case study examines one particular case in its own environment. Data in case study can be collected with several methods for example interviews, with observation or examining existing documentary. (Hirsjärvi et al., 2008, pp. 130–131) Data in this thesis will be carried out with theme interviews. Interviews will be two and attendees consist of assistants and their forepersons.

Target group in this thesis are three teams and two forepersons of the case company's two different departments. Research does not apply to other offices and departments of the case company.

Thesis consists of six main chapter. First chapter introduces theme of research and research problems. Second and third chapter are the theoretical part of the thesis. Second chapter considers of leadership and coaching foreperson and third chapter is covering remote work. Fourth and fifth chapter are consisting of reseach process and research results. Final sixth chapter is for conclusions of the reseach.

2 Leadership

Leadership is changing from giving instructions and managing to enabling and supporting acts. In old world employees were working for leaders and their job was to carry out orders.

Leaders had all the power, and they did not trust employee's ability to self-direct their work. Traditional work for a leader was to make decisions and managing employee's work. Original goal for hierarchy organization was to eliminate self-direction among employees. If organization holds on these traditional ways of leading, it might lead in significant challenges when working in complex and quickly changing world. Leaders are overworked with problems of employees, employees are feeling undervalued, specialist's knowledge does not get good use and decision-making is slow and stiff. This kind of culture demands constant presence of a leader and working becomes passive. If leaders are constantly solving problems, it is impossible to lead overall view or developing new. (Soback, 2021, pp. 92 – 102)

In traditional way of leading, employees got assignments and directions from their leader and they just perform it. Employees had to ask permission on most of the decisions in the daily work. Nowadays employees usually take this type of leading offensive towards them and their professional skills. If employees had now freedom to direct and make decisions for their work, motivation and well-being will decrease. Traditional leadership expects leader to be the best expert in the team. In past organization this type of leader-employee combination worked, but in nowadays complex world it is unrealistic. (Soback, 2021, pp. 103 – 107)

In new leadership environment leaders become enablers to wise acts and they are working for employers, not the other way around. In new environment employers are the stars and leaders help them shine. New leadership is more service mission than before. New environment demands all employees and leaders more active and independent decision-making skills. Essential in new leadership environment is transition from concentrated power, responsibility and decision making towards practically shared power, responsibility and decision making. When succeeding, new way of leading will give leaders time to lead more complete way. Employees are feeling appreciated, leaders do not have to know everything because team has own specialists, and actions are not depending on presence of a leader. Teams are creating a culture of proactive work and development. Motivation increases when employees have a feeling of freedom to arrange their own work without permissions. (Soback, 2021, pp. 92 – 117)

New leadership environment demands examining concept of leadership. Traditional managing based formal position is changing to virtue that means competent and approachable ability to confront itself, others, and the world with wise and responsible way. Leaders of the new environment wants to collect pro-active co-leaders around instead of followers and this is the core of new type of leadership. Co-leaders are team members, and they are each demanded independent reacting and responsibility to develop own work. Leaders still have the final responsibility on decisions in the bigger picture, like it has always been. (Soback, 2021, pp. 117 – 123)

2.1 Immediate leadership

Foreperson is an individual person who is working as a leader for a group. Forepersons are found on all organization levels and usually are experts on that area that they are leading on and is the person that can give best and most effective solutions to the team's problems. Most researchers think that leadership is an influencing process for an individual or a group action. Common feature for a leader is that they are active and initiative. Leadership can be based on the role theory, which means that besides the foreperson, also the employees affect how the leadership is formed. (Jalava, 2001, pp. 8 – 15)

Foreperson's role as a leader can be formed with four parts. First part is how person notices and recognizes expectations towards oneself. Expectations are made by organization, employees, and customers. If the expectations are much different than forepersons current act, it is wise to rework action, otherwise it might later cause criticism and resistance for example by employees. Second important part is forepersons competence. Foreperson must take part also to the hard parts of the job. Third part is foreperson's personality. There is not only one right type of personality for a foreperson, but key is also what kind of competence mix foreperson builds around its personality and strengths. That is the fourth part, ability, and desire to evaluate own action and develop it continuously. (Jalava, 2001, pp. 18 – 19)

Jalava (2001, pp. 20 – 21) separates forepersons duties in seven different parts. First duty is clarification of goals and working methods. Employees are aware of the goals and how goals are achieved. Employees also know what organization expects from them and how their work is evaluated. These are the basic information that employees should get, so that they can do their job with quality. If the goals are not clear, it is foreperson's job to make them clear.

Second duty is achievement tendency, and its goal is to encourage employees to good performances. Foreperson's job is to set up goals that are challenging enough, trust that employees can achieve those goals and developing operations. (Jalava, 2001, p. 21)

Third duty is supporting employees and this duty is highlighted when conditions are physically or psychically loading. Foreperson's job is to create comfortable working environment and be on track with the employee's well-being. Work performance can be increased especially if foreperson can combine second and third duty, since it improves relation between foreperson and employees and decreases workload. (Jalava, 2001, p. 21)

Fourth duty is developing team's interaction and it means that foreperson should be able to solve conflicts, support communication in the team, and make sure that everyone's opinions are heard. It is also important to maintain good relations between employees and underline meaning of cooperation. (Jalava, 2001, p. 21)

Fifth duty is group focused decision making. It means, that foreperson not always comes with the answer rather encourages employees to participate in conversation and making decisions themselves. This usually helps team to accept decisions and decisions are more qualitative. (Jalava, 2001, p. 22)

Sixth duty is working with public relations. Foreperson's job is to present its team and work in a positive way for different organization levels. Seventh and last duty is a value-based behavior, and it is based on how ideological goals are expressed. Usually, these forepersons are willing to do everything for the team and they are determined and trustful for the vision. (Jalava, 2001, p. 22)

Foreperson needs to take enough time for leading duties and sometimes it means refusing other projects or roles that might sound interesting. Also, if the foreperson is hired to lead the team where person used to work itself as an employee it is important to recognize what are the old duties and what are the new duties. That does not mean that foreperson cannot participate teams work if situation demands it. Foreperson also needs time to think about decisions in peace. Some decisions are wise to delegate to the team. It saves foreperson's time but also gives responsibility and trustful feeling to employees. This also prevents foreperson becoming irreplaceable because it is situation that should not happen in good leadership. Although it is good to delegate assignments, it is also important to keep up with all the needed information. Foreperson is often information intermediary for and from employees. Good way to transmit information is group and individual meetings. Too often meetings are "mandatory bad" but at their best meetings helps foreperson and team to organize and plan their work better. Especially in remote work meetings are important. (Jalava, 2001, pp. 52 – 55); see also Peeling, 2006, pp. 50 – 51)

Ristikangas & Grünbaum (2014, pp. 14 – 15) are describing management and leadership in different periods with three manager generation (Figure 1). First generation is based on authoritarian management where manager focuses mainly on managing things and processes. Foreperson says what to do and employees obey. This kind of organizations are very hierarchy and foreperson work as a specialist who knows best, tells and delegates assignments. This type of managing does not courage employees to make own decisions or dedicate to work because it would be meaningful.

Second generation is focused on leading people and dividing clear assignments individually. This trend changed radically foreperson's job focus at the end of 1990's. Organization is based on teams and goal was to make self-guiding as possible where foreperson's role is minimized. New way of leading might be hard to implement because now team member oneself must take responsibility on team's work. So many organizations failed on implementing new leadership style. This great idea of delegating leader and sharing responsibility was still good base on equal teams. (Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014, pp. 14 – 16)

Third generation is example for coaching foreperson. Focus is to use team's knowledge and energy to achieve shared goals. Work is planned and carried out together and it is kind of shared leadership which cornerstones are very simple and rules and goals clear and based on all work. Third generation is not based on hierarchy, heart is cooperation. Simple decisions do not need permission from foreperson, communication is more coaching and creative together with the team. All team members are taking responsibility and usually that also makes commitment to the work. Essentials in this leadership model are good processes and inspiring cooperation. (Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014, pp. 14 – 17)

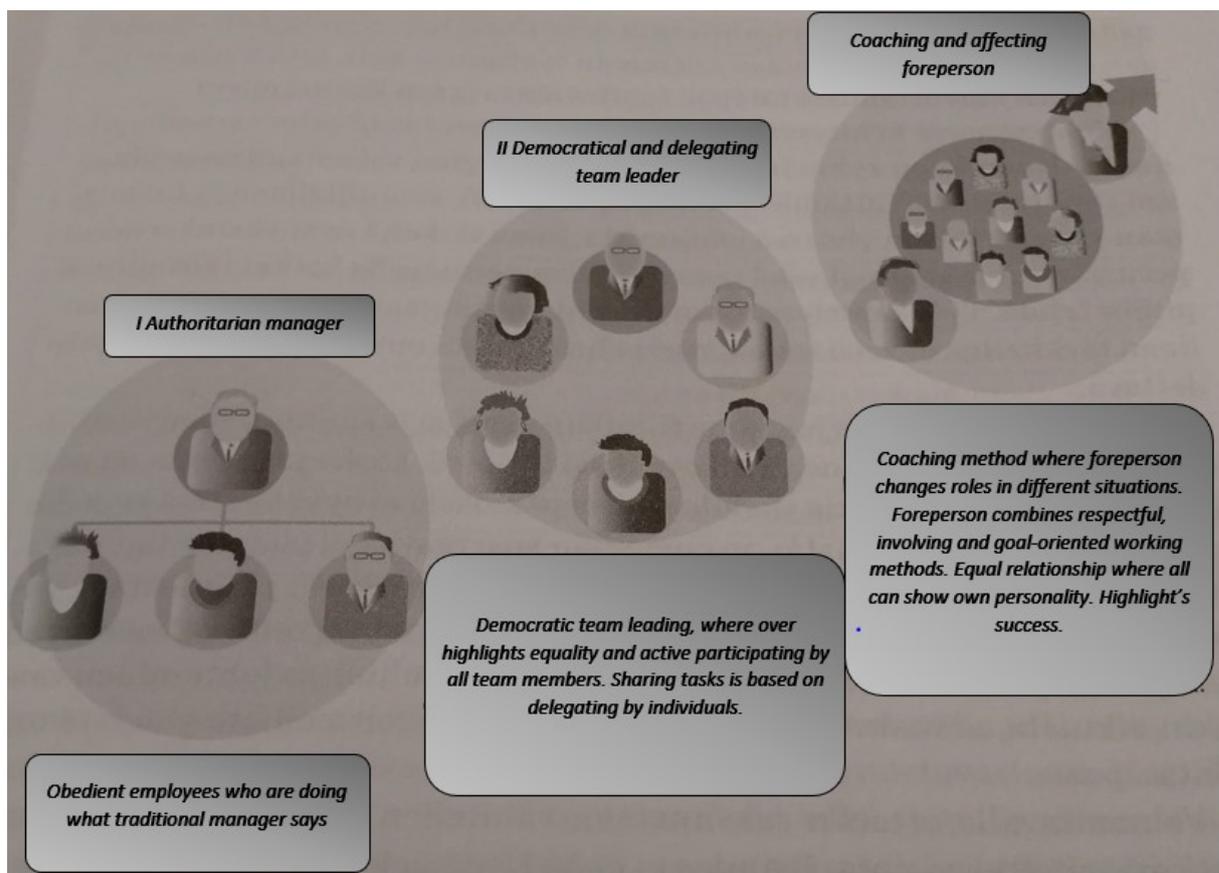


Figure 1. Manager generations (Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014)

2.2 Coaching leadership and coaching foreperson

Coaching leadership can be compared to good teaching. Passioned teachers have a vision for helping their students to succeed and build good elements for adulthood. Teachers rarely get "thank you"-feedback and it is not motivator to them; they get motivated because work

is meaningful for them. Same thing is for leaders and they need strong and complete self-esteem so they can genuinely think their employees best. In coaching leadership leaders want to see employees to develop and realize that other's success is not loss from oneself. (Ristikangas & Ristikangas, 2019, p. 15)

Coaching leadership is goal oriented leading method where team and individuals make commitments related to developing work. Coaching leadership as a concept is a way of thinking and acting and it is more than just foreperson duties, but the concept is excellent surface for foreperson's work. Coaching foreperson's goal is to grow all the team members more competent and cooperative persons, who has willing to succeed shared goal. Goals are essential in coaching methods and that is why it is important to discuss goals, so shared understanding is clear to all in the team. Organization's goals are the big picture, but the team should also have their own goals. (Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014, p. 13, pp. 26–27)

Leadership can be seen as an hourglass where upper part job is mainly based on expertise. It means knowledge, skills, and specialist competence. In this part leader wants to develop specialist skills, not leadership skills. In bottom part job is based on leadership and is based on employees and working together. Work will be successful when organizations basic duty and goals fits together with employee's individual needs. This type of cases working together has a meaning. In hourglass model sand will flow down, from expertise to leadership and the more foreperson focuses on leadership to more will achieve good results. This journey has challenges, for example stress and feeling of inadequacy and lack of time of doing everything. These are pictured as the narrowest part of hourglass. Journey to coaching leadership is more significant than result. Continuous learning and development are giving an experience where individual can be part of the group and have effect on things. Trying, making mistakes, question and by getting excited on things foreperson will strengthen identity of a leader. Leader who has a will to be and work as influencer, foreperson, and leader of people. (Ristikangas & Ristikangas, 2019, p. 17)

Coaching leadership is empowering and enabling where people get excited and inspires others, be innovated and plan current time and future. Coaching leadership can divide on five section and first is the way of reacting others. It means that coaching leader sees all

employees as equal, appreciative, and human individual. Reacting others is a base for supporting personal and professional development. (Ristikangas & Ristikangas, 2019, pp. 43 – 44)

Second section is the selection of ways to get to the goal. Coaching leader is interested also developing itself, improving own interaction skills, coaching individuals, and team. To coach others it requires proper self-knowledge and interaction skills so coaching can be process and goal-oriented development. Selection varies depending on the goal. Goal can be activating group, make good use on dissimilarity, confronting someone or just focusing on the current time. (Ristikangas & Ristikangas, 2019, p. 44)

Third section is focusing on group. Coaching leadership is all about on groups and coaching leader aims on getting out of full potential of the group. Building of functioning team happens together because learning alone is unnatural in coaching method. The more people are working together, the more development happens. Usually, groups success inspires others to aim their best work. Group and its members become stars, whose success coaching leader can be delighted. (Ristikangas & Ristikangas, 2019, p. 44)

Fourth section is assumption that coaching leadership belongs to everyone. Coaching leadership can be formal or unformal and it does not have to stay between foreperson and employee. In group situations everyone can built own coaching role and help team to make its goals. (Ristikangas & Ristikangas, 2019, p. 44)

Fifth section is importance of trust. Trust is a base on everything and there cannot be coaching mentality and actions if trust is missing. Amount and quality of trust is depending on how well people are holding on agreements, how open communication is and how well people are trusting each other's work. If there is trust, there is also freedom to enjoy success and courage to say also critical points. (Ristikangas & Ristikangas, 2019, p. 44)

Coaching leadership can be successful only in suitable organization culture. Organization culture needs positive development mentality and systematic work towards set up goals. Organization culture changes slowly and to succeed all departments must commit to the change. It does not help if strategy is planned well if leaders will not follow the strategy.

Change needs encouraging attitude to learn and strengthen new ways of working.
(Ristikangas & Ristikangas, 2019, p. 268)

Traditional leadership can be pictured as a funnel where in the top are the management and they are defining where organization is going, what are the values and tells how to act. Top management will run decisions to the middle management, and they will inform employees. Coaching leadership needs new way of leadership model and it is pictured as a tube. In this model employees join in decision making from the very start. Information flows between leaders and employees and it is open and free. (Ristikangas & Ristikangas, 2019, pp. 270 – 271)

2.2.1 Coaching foreperson

Coaching foreperson has different roles to use in different situations. Traditionally foreperson's job has divided to leading people as a leader and managing things and processes as a manager. Coaching leadership gives a third role as a coach. Three roles might vary in different situations (Figure 2). Sometimes is needed one role more than the other. Still, effective action usually needs role as a coach. (Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014, pp. 26–27)

As a manager foreperson takes care of quality of processes, supervising that activity is legal, and that team is doing things right. Concrete results can be seen when all employees are following the organizations processes. Typical tasks for a manager are administrative work for example planning holidays, taking care of salaries and other employment relationship related things. (Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014, pp. 26–27)

As a leader foreperson guides team for a wanted direction and makes sure that all individuals are going towards shared goal. Leader works as an example and is leading with goal-oriented methods. Leader also wants that information of changes is reached everyone in the right time and right amount. Setting up goals and observing goals are equally important as setting up boundaries if activity is going on wrong direction. Leader connects

goals and assignments to team's shared tasks, not only organizations common goals.
(Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014, pp. 26–27)

As a coach foreperson spurs and inspires team members to fulfil oneself as going towards goals and found their unique personalities. Coach helps individual to find out persons own strengths, resources, and potential to work. All team members competence should be used by team and be useful to whole organization. The most important tasks for the coach are showing interest, listen, ask and being present in a moment. Coach aim is to that the team would become independent and full of inspiration, commitment, and responsibility to make cooperation to succeed in work. (Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014, pp. 26–27)



Figure 2. Foreperson's three roles (Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014, p. 26)

Coach role is very different than leader and manager roles. It is often thought that when foreperson is doing task that needs other roles, coach role cannot be used. However, coach role should be in the background all the time. Coaching is more an attitude and way of thinking and should be seen all the time in foreperson's work. The more coaching attitude is seen foreperson's work, the more employees take responsibility of their own work and team's good cooperation. At best cases relationship between foreperson and employee is a

creative cooperation, where personal and professional competence can be used from both. Pure coaching moment can be bilateral discussion moments where foreperson can inspire with powerful questions, or coaching moments with the team. These pure moments are still rare in the daily work but are important. Foreperson can train how to balance these roles in daily work and especially if work changes. First foreperson needs to challenge oneself and ask support from others. Foreperson needs practice and feedback from its actions. It is important to have persons whose strengths are the ones foreperson lacks. Then it is possible to have conversations and simulate actions. Many forepersons have also own coach or mentor. (Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014, pp. 27 – 29)

In successful team its members are guiding also coaching foreperson. It means, that team's daily works are a base for foreperson different ways of action and behavior towards on team and employees. These are called positions of a foreperson as marking the place related to the team. There is three positions. First is pathfinder in the frontline. Foreperson makes goals clear, sets up rules and clarifies basic processes. Guiding principles can be seen in three questions: where, why, and what. These three questions should foreperson have an answer. How and when instead are that kind of questions where foreperson should not answer without the team. If foreperson answers alone, it takes the responsibility out of the team and it is not the wanted situation. It is important that foreperson is committed oneself to the goals, without commitment it is hard to team make its work properly. Foreperson job is to tell team where team is going and why. Without shared goals team has no future. Leading in the frontline foreperson gives employees enthusiasm and trust even harder situations and gives courage to act instead of paralyzing. (Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014, pp. 70 – 78)

Second position is together with the team. Be a part of the group and get to know people, be present and make decisions together with the team. It is important to create a culture of feedback and evaluate actions of a team. In this position can succeed in two different ways. Foreperson is an expert who works alongside with the team for a benefit of client. This makes relationships inside the team closer, and they learn how to cooperate in a coaching way. Employees see that foreperson takes part also the regular tasks as an equal team member. It is important foreperson to notice expert role, although it should not take too much role from the leading because then the coaching method might suffer. Other way is

systematic communication and evaluating members in an appreciated way. Then the point is in learning and succeeding. This is the way especially when foreperson is not an expert on team's tasks. Shared rules are important for team to succeed, so everyone in the team acts towards same goals with same rules. Rules should be discussed regularly and match together with the whole team, so they do not turn assumed standards. Giving and having feedback is great tools to develop work and cooperation both foreperson and employees point of view. Basic rule for maintaining positive feedback culture is to give three times more positive feedback than constructive feedback. (Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014, pp. 78 – 115)

Third position is enabler at the background where foreperson observes, involves, makes someone else to shine, gives responsibility and trusts. Enabler does not teach; its role is to help other to learn and be glad together with the teams succeed. Foreperson is an observer so when necessary, it can effect on team's action. Aim is to build working methods where every team member can participate and become heard. At best cases team speaks and develops itself when they notice something to improve. Productive and enthuses team is cooperative each other to complete the best solution. If the cooperation is working only part of the team members, it usually makes team inefficient. That is why foreperson needs to observe each employee's interaction, cooperation, and goal-orientation. (Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014, pp. 115– 129)

These three positions are all foreperson's daily work and are before anything different dimension of coaching method. Foreperson's challenge is to learn when transfer from position to another. Competence of switching positions is highlighted in change. Insecurity will decrease if foreperson is in the frontline and still works alongside with the team. Also, discussions are important because even foreperson might not know what is coming. (Ristikangas & Grünbaum, 2014, pp. 70– 129)

2.2.2 Leadership for learning

Learning is in central of coaching leadership and its best it is comprehensive way of lead learning and successful action in every day problem solving, group interaction and individual development. Coaching leadership method helps employees to find solutions on work

problems themselves if information and other resources of employee are enough. This develops employee's ability to self-direct their own work better. When employees have a chance to lead their own work, functioning is less dependent on foreperson. Sometimes forepersons help is needed but independent employees are prepared possible solutions already for the foreperson. Regular coaching develops especially employee's courage to make decisions themselves and ability to carry responsibility of their own work. When problems are solved in their original place, becomes decisions-making more efficient in whole organization. (Soback, 2021, pp. 174 – 179)

Community learning develops in coaching leadership method because all decisions are made in the group. Group discussions develops employee's ability to wider thinking and situation related action. Coach can guide these group discussions to a different perspective with good questions. For a coach it is important to listen, ask and give own thoughts trough discussions. Coach encourages and thanks employees and gives room also for surprising ideas. In its best all specialists in the team are using their full potential in these group discussions. Coach gives employees feeling that they and their expertise are important and valued. (Soback, 2021, pp. 179 – 183)

Individual learning in coaching leadership is a way of deeper encounter with an employee which boost employee's self-confidence and personal development in work. Coach's job is to create safe space to self-reflection. This helps employee to step into personal growth and development path. Coach can support development on being present and genuinely interested on employees and their well-being. Coaching leadership gives employees experience of being heard and met as comprehensive person, not just a resource of a company. (Soback, 2021, pp. 183 – 190)

2.3 Foreperson and change leadership

Change is a process which makes something different than it was before. Change can be small or large, slow, or fast. Often change effects also the work and things that was not intended to be part of change. Some changes might start unnoticed, and people also confront change very differently. (Myllymäki, 2017, pp. 20 – 21)

Organization comes across need of change regularly and change management is one part of every leader's job. Change management is same leadership as every day leading, only more systematic. In changing circumstances is good to get back to basics and evaluate if current strategy also fits organizations new goals. It is also important to observe customer's expectations and best cases observe organizations working methods and modify them to the new situation. People are the key factor, but in change it is also important that things are going smoothly. It is hard to motivate employees if they do not know what to do, processes are stuck or unclear or assignments are not organized. That is why in change first job for a leader is to make sure that things are going fine. After that leader can focus on developing new culture. Traditional way of executing change management is to implement it from top to down, but it is quite slow road, if it is only strategy. Other way is to implement change multiple organization level at the same time (Figure 3). Even fast and well used methods, change is always also relations and cooperation between people not only business. (Kuusela, 2015, Kulttuurin johtaminen – Chapter, Kulttuurin muutoksen johtaminen – paragraph)

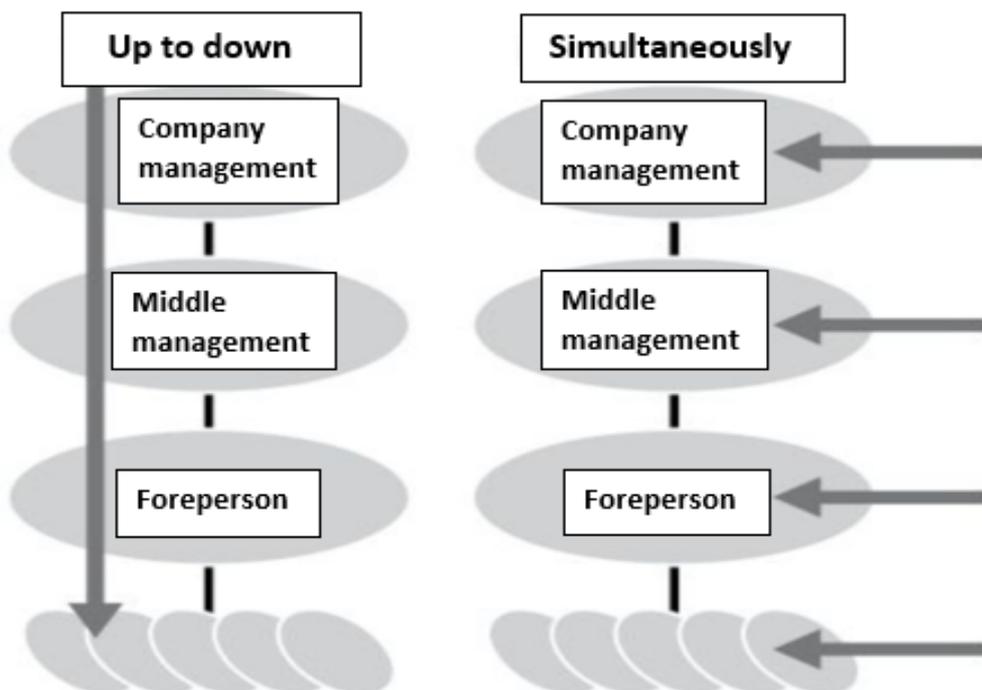


Figure 3. Change management up to down versus all organization levels at the same time (Kuusela, 2015)

Mattila (2007, p.16, pp. 131 – 194) divides change in three different categories. First is gradual change, where change is going systematically forward. Second is radically change where change starts, then happens something suddenly and then keep moving forward systematically. Third is merger, where old organization stops working and keeps going on as one or several new organizations. In this thesis change is focusing to the second change as moving from office to remote work came suddenly and could not properly planned beforehand. Successful management is divided on four stages: creating a base for change, starting action, managed progress, and institutionalization. Creating a base can be slow and long process but the starting actions should be fast and determined. It is common that the task from previous stage follows also to the next stage. Managed process is main task for daily work and properly created base will be seen in this stage. In the last and fourth stage benefits of a change and results can be seen. It is also important to continue institutionalization, so the benefits do not be forgotten. In daily work there might come up some new development needs.

Covid-19- pandemic changed radically working environment in spring 2020. Change was sudden, essential, and recommended from Finnish government. It is important to notice from leaders that although change of working environment is not traditional process of change, this type of radical event needs as much change leadership as planned change process. Sudden change might be even scarier and has more problems than planned one. Change usually means that people must step outside from the comfort zone which means more work and takes more energy. Resistance of change does not often fail the process, but poor or not existing change leadership might do that. (Myllymäki, 2017, pp. 22, 53 – 54)

In this type of change the most important thing for a leader is to give enough information. Information is cornerstone of a controlled change process because it helps people to see reason to the change. Information that is based on facts and is logical might bring up understandable and acceptable development tasks. Leader's job is to provide enough information but also watch what kind of information is. Information should be interesting,

up-to-date and easy to understand or explained by foreperson. (Myllymäki, 2017, pp. 78 – 79)

3 Remote work

Remote work means flexible and voluntary based work with agreed rules which can be carried out outside office. Characteristic feature for remote work is that work is independent from time or place. Remote work can be full time or part time and all the working laws apply also for this type of working. Working arrangements are often documented and there is written rules about working time, when and how much is possible to do remote work etc. Employer is responsible to supervise employees working time and load also when people are working outside workplace. (Työsuojeluhallinto, 2020)

Flexible work has lots of benefits especially if organization can utilize all the possibilities that virtuality brings. Employees are attempted remote work since it helps to balance work and free time even better. Possibility to work remote can be significant part when building employer image and might tempt skilled person to work in the organization. Remote work is often efficient, and employees find rewarding that amount of made work is bigger than made at the office. This feeling grows work motivation and increases job satisfaction. Also, the lack of journey to work can lower down employees work stress, especially if way to work is long or need to use public transportation. For the organization benefits are lower absences for example due sickness, also expenses can decrease for example opportunity to change smaller office. (Vilkman, 2016, Etäjohtaminen-Mitä se on? – Chapter, Virtuaalisen työskentelyn etuja – paragraph)

Virtually work has also its challenges and its usually related to communication, team spirit, working methods and trust. It is easier to build team mentality if people are in the same place. Virtual team spirit needs more work from the foreperson, and it needs to be systematic. Central key is interaction between the team members and between the foreperson and employees. (Vilkman, 2016, Etäjohtaminen-Mitä se on? – Chapter, Virtuaalisen työskentelyn haasteita – paragraph)

3.1 Remote leadership

” Think leadership first, location second” (Eikenberry et al. 2018, p. 7)

Traditional leadership changes to remote leadership when employees are working outside office, for example home or work is mobile. Foreperson might see employees face to face rarely and this means that leader needs to have good leadership skills and ability to use information technology versatile. New methods of working are needed as traditional leadership methods might not fit to remote work culture. Functional modes are usually found by discussing and testing which works for organization best. Term remote might sometimes get feeling that it is something not wanted, but thanks to nowadays technologies working from apart is not obstacle to efficient work or cooperation. (Vilkman, 2016, Etäjohtaminen-Mitä se on? – Chapter, Hajautettua, virtuaalista vai etätyötä? – paragraph)

Virtual working methods are demanding foreperson’s ability to challenge old working habits and actions. Methods that are not working in a remote work should be replaced by the new ones which are found together with the team. Sometimes old methods might be years old and are very fitted to organizations vision, so it also needs courage from foreperson to change these methods. There is less communication between team members because all coffee and dinner breaks are missing. These unformal situations are important getting to know each other so in virtual environment it might be wise to leave room unformal discussions for example after formal meetings. (Vilkman, 2016, Työskentelytavat ja johtamiskäytännöt – Chapter)

Virtual work community is said weaken communication between foreperson and employee and that is why foreperson should pay attention to it. Foreperson needs more time on virtual communication, and it should plan and schedule on daily work. Good communication increases commitment and productivity and decreases absences. Team should decide together which kind of communication tools are good for the team and when tools are used. Open communication is key word also because in virtual environment information comes from many directions, not only from foreperson anymore. So, it is important that all employees can understand which information is essential to others too. When

communication is only virtual it is important to notice that chances for misunderstandings are bigger than when communicating face to face. (Vilkman, 2016, Työskentelytavat ja johtamiskäytännöt – Chapter)

Workload and stress level is sometimes hard to evaluate when team members are not in the same place. Work assignments can easily divide uneven between team especially if employees have not ability or courage to draw lines to their workload. People also feel pressure very different, so it is important to have support from foreperson to learn to keep control of work. Foreperson can prevent workload increasing for being available for the team. It is important to get answers considering work problems or the job start to get frustrating in long term. Foreperson's job is to make sure that employees are not always at work. Balancing between office and remote work is often best combine. (Vilkman, 2016, Esimiesten kokemat haasteet – Chapter, Työntekijän stressin määrän seuraaminen, Esimiehen tavoittamisen tärkeys korostuu – paragraphs; see also Rubanovitsch, 2020, p.153)

Motivation at work is studied much in recent years and it is noticed to effective positively on managing work and results of the work. It also benefits on individual level for example as a better quality of life, working ability and mental health. Results shows that good motivation also effect positively on business results and innovation among working community. Usually, people who are enthusiast from their work are also more commitment and more proactive. Biggest factors for maintaining motivation are meaningful working assignments, ability to effect on work, feelings of succeeding and progressing in work. Foreperson's job is to build circumstances on succeeding in work and if the employees are motivated themselves, they do not need extra help. If the foreperson has a role for decreasing motivation, then the role is much bigger. When the team is working remote, foreperson can uplift motivation for example listening team's ideas, giving enough freedom, confront all even-handedly, communicate clearly and in time, help employees to be self-directed in work, having positive attitude and joy for work and ability to feel empathy. It is important that leadership is also shared among team, it means that individual's competence is used for example in decision making and power and responsibility is shared. Foreperson should also notice what motives team members, not all motivates on bigger responsibilities. (Vilkman, 2016, Työskentelytavat ja johtamiskäytäntö – Chapter, Motivaatiotekijät virtuaalisyössä – paragraph)

Remote work has now started to be a routine and its downsides are becoming visible. According Jyväskylä University researcher Soila Lemmetty, now it is possible to evaluate if remote work is the best way to work in long term. She says that amount of research about good remote work practices could be increased recently. Many companies did not have clear models how to react crisis like Covid-19-pandemic. Same thing is regarding remote work leadership. Lemmetty says that at least now it is important to create a model for remote work leadership, because remote work will be here to stay. Model should include at least who are key persons in remote leadership, what are the roles for them and rules that they will follow. Lemmetty also says that one of the key elements of remote leadership is to build good communication between foreperson and employee. Listening has become more important for foreperson's job. Lemmetty suggests foreperson to schedule regular meetings weekly or monthly. It is important to discuss experiences of remote work, so too big workload can be noticed early enough. (Mäentausta, 2021)

Lemmetty also highlights importance of well-being in remote work. Many companies have already search ways of leading that supports employee's well-being. Foreperson's role is to help employee to focus on important tasks and prioritize. According Lemmetty, next challenge is to prevent employee's workload for working alone in protracted situation. Workload can increase also among forepersons and those who cannot work remote. (Mäentausta, 2021)

3.1.1 Cornerstones for the good remote leadership

Cornerstones are important in all types of leadership and without one, it is hard to develop other. These cornerstones are trust, respect, openness, ground rules, continuous interaction, and sense of community. These cornerstones can see in figure 4. (Vilkman, 2016, Hyvän etäjohtamisen kulmakivet – Chapter)

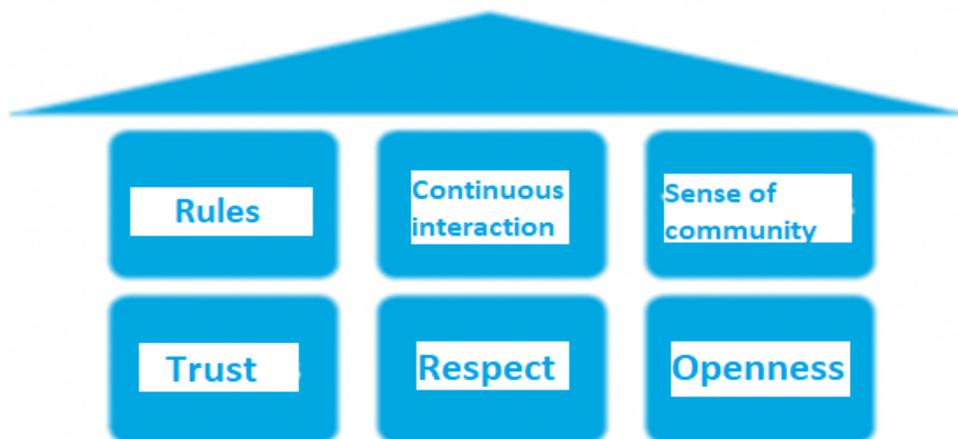


Figure 4. Cornerstones for good remote management (Vilkman, 2016)

Biggest challenge in remote work is trust. Still in some organizations part of foreperson have doubts for virtual and remote work and the biggest fear for those supervisors is that are people going to do their work. Usually, employees want to do their job good and be trustworthy if there is a change. Many experienced leaders says that it is very rare that people misuse their trust. Trust is highlighted when work is remote or virtual and building it means open communication with the employees. It also slower to gain your teams trust when people are not working face to face. Traditionally leaders think that employees must earn their trust for example to get permission for remote working. Maybe the results are better if everyone can do remote work and it is forbidden if the working method is misused. Communication is important for maintaining trust. Trust is first and most important choice in leaders work and it concerns all leadership. (Vilkman, 2016, Hyvän etäjohtamisen kulmakivet – Chapter, Luottamus kasvattaa luottamusta – paragraph)

Next cornerstone is respect and many times it is kept self-evidence. Still, it is important to observe how we react other's opinions, way of working or acting. Judging can be imperceptible or called critical observing of things. Many times, it is easier to think negatively than found the positive sides about things. Respect is important for remote leadership because without it cooperation is not working among team. Social support is one

way to show respect and sometimes employees that are working remote get feeling that they lack social support from their foreperson and colleagues. Respect consists often very small things for example greeting others, asking how they feel, smiling, being kind to others, saying thank you for a good job and being present when talking others. (Vilkman, 2016, Hyvän etäjohtamisen kulmakivet – Chapter, Arvostus mahdollistaa hyvän yhteistyön – paragraph)

Openness in remote management is in key position when observing interaction and its quality. Without openness sense of community effects and commitment for the organization decreases. Openness means that all actions are transparency, good communication and cooperation. Feeling that all information is transferring same through the whole organization. It also means that people get chance to be a part of work planning and making decisions. From the individual perspective openness means that they can talk even hard themes without knocked out or getting ridiculed. When the organization culture is open it increases also trust. (Vilkman, 2016, Hyvän etäjohtamisen kulmakivet – Chapter, Avoimuus lisää työssä viihtymistä – paragraph)

Good cooperation is possible when team has trust, respect and conversation among team is open. Working methods are efficient and work forward going and its based-on interaction. Cornerstone that makes cooperation easier is good ground rules. When rules and methods are clear to whole team, working apart is less stressful. Often rules need to fit to a new way when working remote. Discussions about rules and methods between employees are good base for cooperation if the decisions are made together. Important rules are for example times when foreperson and employees should be accessible, what kinds of working tools are used etc. (Vilkman, 2016, Hyvän etäjohtamisen kulmakivet – chapter, Pelisäännöt raamittavat työn tekemistä yhdessä – paragraph)

Continuous interaction is the cornerstone which ties all the other cornerstone together because interaction is needed if wanted to succeed formerly mentioned stones. Interaction is not only informing and communication, but also actions and relations between people where they are sharing thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and experiences. (Vilkman, 2016,

Hyvän etäjohtamisen kulmakivet – Chapter, Jatkuva vuorovaikutus on tärkeä osa työn tekemistä ja kehittämistä – paragraph)

Working environment and "We"-spirit are important to feel comfortable in work and being efficient. Sense of community is the base of building team spirit even people are not at the same place. People has natural need to feel being one in the group and cooperation is more effective when people are getting along inside the team. Sense of community creates real and productive cooperation. When working remote sense of community needs special attention because people are not face- to - face. Feeling of community comes when people know each other and learn each other's reactions, working styles, strengths, and weaknesses. Foreperson's role is to evaluate the amount of meetings and other connections between the team members are needed so the sense of community can be born. (Vilkman, 2016, Hyvän etäjohtamisen kulmakivet – Chapter, Yhteisöllisyyden kokemukset lisäävät vuorovaikutusta – paragraph)

3.1.2 Profile of a good remote foreperson

It is a bit different to lead remote team than a traditional team at the office. Best foreperson might not be anymore the expert on the team. When leading remote team in the center is leading people. Managing things is not enough anymore and traditional ways of leading might not work virtually. Many forepersons find remote leading more difficult than traditional leading. Usually, remote leading just needs more time on focusing leadership assignments than before and demands self-direction skills also from the foreperson itself. (Vilkman, 2016, Etäjohtajan osaamisprofiili, Henkilöstöhallinnon näkökulma – Chapters, Esimiehen valitseminen virtuaalitiimille – paragraph)

Lots of organizations have not defined what is expected from a virtual leader. Good questions on defining elements of a good leader are for example what the key assignments on foreperson's job are, what kind of competence is needed for foreperson, what foreperson needs to know and what kind of action and attitude is important on succeeding in the job. It is hard to choose right person for the job if these points are not defined in the organization. Good leader is also socially competent, good to delegate, able to enthusiast

and motivate others, proactive and goal oriented. Good remote leading skills are also competitive advantage since best specialists can be hired even, they do not live near organization. (Vilkman, 2016, Etäjohtajan osaamisprofiili, Henkilöstöhallinnon näkökulma – Chapters, Esimiehen valitseminen virtuaalitiimille – paragraph)

Remote leader should also keep up with the technology that makes communication and work more efficient. If leader does not use available technic tools, usually team will not use them either. All effort that leader uses on studying on new technology, will pay of when team also starts to use new tools with courage and usually without resistance. Picture from The Long-Distance Leader is describing importance of technology when leading remotely (Figure 5). (Eikenberry & Turmel, 2018, p.29, 38)

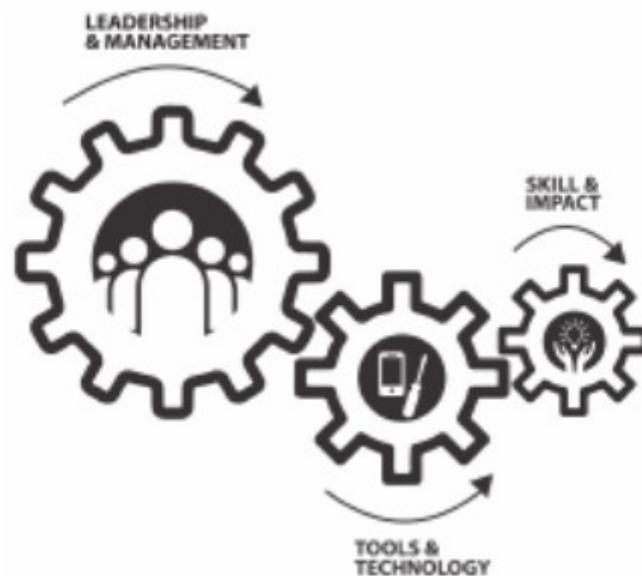


Figure 5. Model of the remote leadership (Eikenberry & Turmel, 2018)

Last but not least, lead as the person you are. Successful leadership can perform with different styles and foreperson can continuously be better and more competent version but still keep up own personality and beliefs. When leading remotely personal style might be less transparent but highlights your beliefs and suppositions. Foreperson's assumptions for example towards remote work and people in the team always affects leading. Foreperson also needs to remember that team might not see good intentions same if communication is poor. (Eikenberry & Turmel, 2018, pp. 52 – 53)

3.2 Self-direction in remote work

In remote work ability to control own work emphasizes but with the freedom also come the responsibility. Self-direction skills are become more essential past few years and especially if employee works remote. Part of traditional leading tasks transfer to employees themselves. Employee's need to make decisions for example working methods and how to follow progress of a work. That makes team more independent, and employees get chance to take more responsibility. Independency usually increases motivation. People are different, so foreperson's job is to notice how much responsibility employees are willing to take. Others want and need more guidance than others. (Vilkman, 2016, Etäjohtaminen-Mitä se on? / Esimiesten kokemat haasteet etäjohtamisessa – Chapters, Virtuaalisen työskentelyn etuja/ Työntekijän itsen johtamisen taidot – paragraphs)

To able foreperson to support self-direction of an employee all the tasks inside the team should be clear and everyone is aware of the tasks that are their responsibility. Meaning of a vision should be highlighted, since it is guiding to right direction also when foreperson is not guiding work at the same place. Sometimes organization's vision is too wide and does not work guideline as itself so foreperson alongside with the team can revise own vision from the original one. Good methods of self-direction are good to discuss with the team and talk openly all the good and bad sides of remote work and the things that employees need more support from foreperson. Usually at first employees need more support to take responsibility and make decisions on their own. Coaching as a leading method is a good way to increase self-direction, because foreperson does not give right answer direct. (Vilkman, 2016, Etäjohtaminen-Mitä se on? / Konkreettisia keinoja – Chapters, Tue työntekijää itsensä johtamisessa – paragraphs)

4 Empirical part

Research of this thesis is based on remote work and remote leadership in office environment. Goal is to find out how target group experiences change in working environment and leadership and what are the benefits and challenges of remote work.

Research gives tools for the author and other forepersons to work in new working environment which is here to stay.

Case company of this thesis works in a retail business and has thousands of employees in Finland. Office workers are working in four different locations in South- and Central Finland. Target group teams are working in one of them in South Finland and are auxiliary activity of a logistic warehouse.

4.1 Research methodology

Methodology for this thesis is based on qualitative case study. Case study means empirical research which observes specific event or person in known environment with the various source collected information. Aim is to understand event or phenomenon more deep way. Case study allows generalization, and it is natural base for it since study is based on subject's own feelings. Case study can find how complex and inside each other social truths can be. In best cases study can give support for alternative solutions. Case study can also give chance to make different solutions with the data, it is also functional research and results are meant to use in action. Reporting is made easy to understand and that is the reason why case study can be useful for many readers. (Metsämuuronen, 2008, pp. 16 – 17)

Data for thesis is collected by interviews. Interview can be structured, half-structured or open and it can last for minutes to days. Structured interview is usually form interview and it is good when target group is united and large. It is also effective way to collect information since it has only few previous phases. If target group consists of group with various background, better choice for interview is half-structured interview. This is often called theme interview since themes are chosen beforehand, but questions are open. Typical theme interview finds answers for example tender or poorly known subjects. Third alternative is open interview, and it is conversation like. Interviewer might not even control the discussion and this type of method is good when target group is small and they have very different experience about the research questions. (Metsämuuronen, 2008, pp. 37 – 41)

Typical for interview is that it is planned beforehand, and interviewer is acquainting oneself to the theme and target. Interviewer knows its role and is prepared to motivate target. It is important to create a feeling that all the information is handled confidentially. Interview is good way to collect data for example when target group has low motivation on answering, interviewer wants to interpret or clarify the answers or validity of the study can confirm other ways. Interview is, like observing, one of the basic methods since it fits many different situations. (Metsämuuronen, 2008, pp. 37 – 41)

Based on this theory, author chose half-structured interview as a model. Target group is ca. 10 person, so interviews are implemented in two group interviews. One group consists of forepersons and the other assistants. Group interviews are usually 5-10 person groups where interviewer is guiding the discussion but gives room also to the group to interact with each other. This type of interview gives interviewer chance to see what kind of thoughts individuals have and how they perform it and what kind of unite thoughts group gathers. (Hyvärinen et. al., 2017, pp. 112 – 117)

Group interviews are fit to research where are interested people's different interpretations, meanings and how these things are argued in group. Versatile discussion is not always easy to reach, especially if there is lot of strong opinions or feelings about the theme of the interview. If individual has not a strong opinion for example by its job or political position, even opinions that differs from the other, comes usually indirect or a bit hide. Most of the interviews, group tries to find mutual understanding about the theme. For the interviewer these are the reasons why it is important also to observe also non-verbal language and read between the sentences. Interviewer's job is also to supervise the discussion so also the quiet ones get to say their opinion. Important is also how the group is collected. Group interview can be recorded with video or audio, but it is useful to write down memo about the non-verbal actions if recorded only with audio. (Hyvärinen et. al., 2017, pp. 112 – 117)

4.2 Implementing the interviews

Teams can be different types and Eikenberry and Turmel (2018, p.25) are divided teams in three categories. First team type is co-located teams where team members are working in

the same place most of the time. This is the traditional way of working. Second type is completely remote teams, and it means that people are working towards same goals but from the different places. Third type is hybrid teams, and it means that part of the team is sharing for example office, but others might be somewhere else. Typical example of hybrid team is that they have office, but one or two people work from home few days a week.

Teams in this research are all working part of the time at the office and part of the time at home, so teams are example of the third type, so called hybrid team.

When choosing the target group, hybrid team model was key factor. It was important to interview individuals who have same kind of working arrangements to find out differences. Discussion is also more productive when interviewees know in practice discussed theme.

Interviewing data was collected in Spring 2021. Interviews were divided in two parts. First interview was for assistants. Interview invitations were sent by email (appendix 1) week before interview and all interviewees had a chance to participate also via Teams. In the invitation was explained the theme and goal for this interview. All participants also knew that interview was recorded for the analysis, but everyone's anonymity is remained. Time for this interview was reserved 45 minutes.

To the interview participated seven people out of nine invited people. Three interviewees were via Teams and four was present in the conference room. Before interview participants had a bit time to catch up news and that created relaxed atmosphere for the interview. Participants are working in three different team and interviewer is a foreperson for three interviewees. Employees or interviewer did not find it obstacle for the interview, so they participated same interview with the other teams.

Teams are all working in the auxiliary activity for the logistics, but their assignments are different. All teams had working mainly at the office before Covid 19-pandemic. In all teams at least one person needs to be at the workplace. Six out of seven employees had been working in the case company over two years, so the processes and practices of the organization are very familiar to everyone.

Interviewer informed when recording of the interview started and when it ended and took care that also the participants via Teams had chance to take part to the conversation. Interviewer presented the theme and topics of the interview. Email invitation was lacking the information that one topic for interview is also remote leadership and what are the elements of the good remote leadership from the employee point of view. At the beginning interviewer had to lead conversation a little bit, but after a while all interviewees discussed wanted theme widely without bigger involving by interviewer.

Second interview was kept for the two forepersons in the case company. Interviewer is a colleague for the interviewees and invitation for this interview was oral. Date for the interview was fitted to their schedule. Time for the interview was scheduled half an hour. Theme and goal for this research was told before. In this interview theme was same as the assistants, but remote leadership was examined more foreperson's point of view.

Interviewees had very different background as being a leader. Other interviewee has wide experience of leadership and the other is fairly new leader. Both interviewees had been working in the case company over two years.

One of the interviewees were in the same conference room as the interviewer and the other participated via Teams. Interviewer kept camera on, so interviewees and interviewer saw each other's. Interviewer informed in the beginning when recording started and when it ended. Participants were told before that the interview is being recorded, but anonymity is going to remain. Interview was solid and theme aroused lot of discussion. Interviewees got lot of good advice from each other and felt just the discussion very useful.

After the interviews, recordings were partly transcribed, and exact notes were written the rest of the data. Transcribing is common action in qualitative research, and it means that recorded data is written up word to word. Transcribing can be done to the whole collected data or pick part of the data for example by theme. Before data is transcribed researcher should decide which kind of analysis is attended to use. (Hirsjärvi et al., 2016, p. 222)

5 Research results

Results of this research are divided on three main themes based on the interviews. Interviewees were quite unanimous about benefits and challenges of remote work. Differences was found for example how much they were willing to do remote work and how good the circumstances are for remote work. Third chapter covers results concerning remote leadership and elements of a good remote leadership. Remote leading worried more the forepersons than the employees.

5.1 Benefits of a remote work

All interviewees said that biggest benefit in remote work is calm surroundings. It is easier to work with something what needs concentration when there are not disruptions like in the office. Most of the interviewees said that they try to plan their week so that the most demanding jobs are in remote workdays. Part of the interviewees told that assignments are planned together with the team. They also felt that more job gets done when they are at home. Assistants did not find hybrid model stressful, and they said that office days are not fuller of duties than remote workdays. Interviewees who worked as a foreperson said that office days are so full of social events between own team and colleagues that they do not even try to schedule other assignment for those days.

Second big benefit was the lack of journey to and from work. This aspect aroused especially for those interviewees who lived further away but also the rest of the interviewees felt that there is more free time even the workplace is near. They think that it is very good that some mornings can sleep a bit longer when the work journey is missing. Also, some hobbies can start earlier because free time starts immediately when work time ends. Few interviewees although enjoyed their journey to work. That fifteen-minute work journey helps to get oneself to ready for work and the other way around.

Interviewees had good tips for a good remote workday. One for example said that it is good to build morning routine also for the remote workdays for example walking around the block before starting a day. One team had tried virtual coffee breaks and they felt that it was great

way to get together for a casual chat. That way the breaks become kept also in the home office. About half of the interviewees had built good office circumstances at home. They had invested on bigger screens and even lifted worktables. Screen is also possible to take home for a loan also from the workplace, but that information had not reached all interviewees.

5.2 Challenges of a remote work

Interviewees missed most social contacts when working remote. One interviewee said that now in the exceptional time it is become visible how important is to see other people. Even the interviewees who kept themselves as an introvert felt that it would be nice to see people more often. Especially people who lived alone, remote working days felt long and sometimes workday stretched because there was nothing necessary to do after work. Only one interviewee told that work is full of virtual meetings and other virtual events that going remote did not effect so much on social contacts. Based on this point, interviewees made conclusion that feeling of loneliness is depending on nature of work. They also said that it is not the place that they miss, it is the people. If they would work office, but there is no one else, the feeling would be the same.

Flow of information seems to be other challenge when working remote. Topic has been continuous theme in personnel surveys also before Covid 19-pandemic and interviewees thought that in remote it is not easier. Interviewees uses OneNote and Teams chatrooms in their teams to help information flowing. Still, they think that information flood is sometimes hard to handle. Many small things that in the office can just say on the fly, needs in remote work extra time and effort to inform others. Technology takes a bigger place in the work because it is only way to reach others. It has also other side, people assume that all needs to be reached all times.

Interviewees kept that orientation of new employees is easier if colleagues are sitting in the same place. Interviewees kept orientation time faster if it is made in the office. New employee integrates into the team and learn how to act in the workplace if it can be copied by others. In one team orientation is done partly in the office and partly in home office. Then

it is important to use available technologies and for example stream screens or call via Teams.

5.3 Remote leadership

Interviewed forepersons experienced that time for supervisory duties need to be more scheduled and it takes more time. They said that when working remote foreperson needs to have even more sensitive ear for the employees. Interviewees had weekly meetings with the team but arranges also one on one- meetings with all employees. They said that virtual meetings are not the same as live encounters in the office. Weekly meetings rouse up also interviews with the assistants. They felt that the shared moments with foreperson are more important now than earlier when they do not see every day. Weekly meetings with the whole team experienced also important so that everyone knows others weekly plan. It is also the time when team can catch up others news and talk not so work-related things. These moments are important when coffee and dinner breaks are missing, and foreperson needs to give some time for these discussions too.

All interviews said that the office days were the days of social encounter and forepersons said that they plan their week so that they have enough time in the office days for the team. Both employees and forepersons said that it is easier to go through not so acute tasks in the office when can see other face to face. Employees felt sometimes hard to contact their foreperson because they did not want to disturb but felt weekly meetings helpful, because there they also heard the forepersons weekly plans. Interviewees were pleased to their forepersons work and felt that foreperson is taking care of their well-being also remote conditions.

Communication and communication tools rouse up in both interviews. Both employees and forepersons said that it is more complicated to communicate when working remote. Possibilities of misunderstandings are more common than working in the office, where can see the person talking with and reflect expressions. Oksaharju (2021, p.53) had in his Pro Gradu-research same kind of results. His research was examining remote and immediate leadership challenges in building trust. In his research all interviewed forepersons said that

written and oral communication needs to be more exact when working remote. They also found hard to recognizing the misunderstandings. Also in this research interviewees, especially forepersons experienced regularly that they need to think motives behind the written text.

Recommendation to start working remote came sudden and many parts unprepared and it was very new situation for the leaders. In the interviews came up that forepersons would like to have more training and introduction how to lead distance. Especially for new leaders, it is needed. Employees also said that common instruction would have been useful in the beginning. Now it was up to foreperson how it was organized. Forepersons felt hard to define which where the tasks that requires presence at the office. Forepersons worried also what happens when someone is appointed to office and gets sick. Based on the interviews, forepersons had more worries considering the remote leadership than the employees. Employees felt that their immediate forepersons are doing good job in the hard circumstances.

Based on interviews all interviewees felt unpleasant when all social contacts are missing. Well-being at home office is important to foreperson to observe but as important is to take care forepersons own well-being. Katja Atsar from Ilmarinen ensure company writes in her blog -post that uncertainty and worry about the future has increased forepersons leading stress to a whole new level. And if the motivation and community spirit is decreasing among the team, the more forepersons job are increasing. (Atsar, 2021)

5.3.1 Elements of a good remote leadership

Vilkman (2016, p.nd.) pictures elements of the good remote leadership as a house where first floor is made of trust, respect, and openness. Second floor is based on rules, continuous interaction, and the sense of community. Without these stones the roof of the house would not be it its place.

All these same elements were found in this thesis's research. Based on the interviews trust and respect is walking hand-in hand and in the case company it was in the good place.

Employees need to know that they have support from their foreperson also when working remote and a feeling that they are not forgotten at home. It is a wavering line between self-direction and abandonment, and this is the most important thing for foreperson to remember. In this research this was not a problem but can easily happen in remote conditions and if a team is very independent. Even independent employees need support.

Openness is important especially when working in exceptional circumstances. Foreperson's job is to keep up an open atmosphere also in remote work for example one-one meetings. In the case company these types of meetings were used in part of the teams and based on the feedbacks from the employees' author would recommend it to all teams.

Setting up rules for the work is a hard but important part for avoiding misunderstandings and other conflicts when working remote. Continuous interaction is part of this, but it is also important to set up the rules for communication. In the case company the biggest challenge based on the interviews is flow of information and information overload. Teams should set up the rules how to contact and which kind of situation. Harvard Business Review had an article about the theme and the table that was presented in the article (figure 6.) might be useful for the interviewed teams. Problems in communication might cause other problems and decrease well-being in work.

Tool	When to use	Response time	Norms
Instant messenger (IM)	Time-sensitive, urgent messages Short and simple conversations	ASAP	Use with fewer than 6 people (otherwise call) Set your availability Avoid complicated questions or conversations that require visuals

<p>Email</p>	<p>Provide directional, important, and timely information</p> <p>Ensure there's a record of your communication</p> <p>Direct the receiver to an online source for more information</p>	<p>< 24 hrs; priority dependent</p>	<p>Use identifiers in the subject line for urgency and response expectation</p> <p>Use to share attachments</p> <p>Avoid when immediate response is required</p> <p>Not for random chit-chat</p>
<p>Video call</p>	<p>Use for meetings, including external ones that could benefit from visual interaction (e.g., project check-ins, introductions, deck sharing)</p>	<p>Schedule in advance; priority dependent</p>	<p>Use mute if you're not talking</p> <p>Meeting host clarifies if video functionality is required for participation</p> <p>Record calls for those who miss them</p>
<p>Text</p>	<p>Time-sensitive, urgent messages</p> <p>Only use if you were unable to reach the person via other channels</p>	<p>Within 30 minutes if between 7AM and 7PM; priority dependent</p>	<p>Use can be adjusted if it is the preferred communication for your manager</p> <p>Avoid texting during meetings/working sessions</p>

Figure 6. Table of contact options (Dhawan, 2021)

Sense of community was strong in the interviewed teams and forepersons job is to maintain it. Especially if team joins new employees. Based on the interview many things can be teach

in remote conditions, but the silent information does not spread to new ones so easily. In hybrid teams like case company's interviewed teams are, it might be useful to try arranging office days for the new employees and their mentors. Familiarizing is more effective and the new employee integrates to the team better.

5.4 Foreperson's check list

Based on the interviews of employees and forepersons and the result analysis, author created foreperson's check list for remote leading. Check list is destined to forepersons and its meaning is to help foreperson to lead remote work. List helps foreperson to arrange and plan own work and focus on important things.

Foreperson's check list for remote leading

- Schedule time for your employees individually and as a team
 - Remote leading takes more time and scheduled meetings helps to manage foreperson's own work
- Be available
 - It is important that team can reach you. Set up rules how and when you can be contacted
- Set up ground rules together with the team
 - Work flows smooth if everyone knows what to do. This highlights especially hybrid model work.
- Create time also for casual discussion
 - Virtual coffee breaks or short meeting just to catch up others news are important to keep up good well-being at remote work.
- Take care also own well-being at work
 - Many foreperson is stressed under new working environment so it important to arrange own work carefully

5.5 Reliability and validity of the research

Reliability means research's ability to give non-accidental results. Reliability of the research can be stated many ways. For example, if two different researchers come up with the same results or if same target group is studied multiple times and results will stay same can research results state as reliable. (Hirsjärvi et al., 2016, p. 231)

Validity means research's ability to measure right things. For example, questionnaires should make so simple that answerers cannot understand questions on different ways. In the qualitative research it means how well description and explanations fit together (Hirsjärvi et al., 2016, pp. 231 – 232)

Reliability and validity in qualitative case study is not so easy to measure than in quantitative research. Still, it is important to estimate somehow also qualitative research too. The core of the research are descriptions of people, places, and events. Researcher can increase reliability with the exact representation of all stages of the research. For example, circumstances and place of the interviews are important to tell truthful. Also used time, distractions, misunderstandings, and researchers own interpretation of the interview should inform in the results. (Hirsjärvi et al., 2016, p. 232)

In this thesis reliability and validity was taken care of by informing interviewees before, having enough time for the interview, and offering safe and silent space for the interview. Interviews were recorded, treated, and transcribed properly and with time. Author believes that with the same themes and same target group different researcher would have the same results. In interviews researcher aimed to stay in the background and mainly involved by giving opportunity to speak also to the interviewees who were participating via Teams.

6 Conclusions

Topic of this thesis is quite current due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Leadership and remote work are daily life in all organizations. Leading people in remote conditions follows the same ground rules as leading people in the office, but it needs more planning and organizing by

forepersons. Leading duties takes more time from the forepersons, but elsewhere drives their work towards real coaching leadership methods. Specialist duties can delegate to the team and focus on leading people. Employees want the feeling that they are still part of the team and not left alone. Being available and taking contact are the most important duties of a remote leader. Open and caring atmosphere helps people to survive in this exceptional time.

Working environment is changing for good and future's work is more or less hybrid model. Leaders of today needs more tools on working in changing environment where part of the team is working remote, some are working in the office building and some of the work might be even delegated to the robot.

Theoretical framework was chosen by the author's interest before the theme interviews and the interviews were planned based on notices that came up from the theoretical framework. Author finds that the chosen theories are very suitable for the research.

Research was limited in very narrowed part of the case company's departments. Target group was selected to serve author's interest to find out how to lead remote office and specialist teams. Choosing theme interviews as a method of collecting data was natural due to the amount of people and theme of the research. Author feels that target group could have been even a bit bigger and still research would be able to perform with the interviews.

Thesis process was long, and topic searched its frames but when Covid-19- pandemic started in Spring 2020 and author confronted whole new situation as a team leader, found topic its final form. When process started with current topic, it went quite smoothly, and author received many valuable information for working as a remote leader. Remote work and remote leadership as a topic are interesting and very today's subject.

Author and foreperson colleagues are daily working with the themes of this thesis and solving problems when something comes up. Thesis helps to cover the big picture of coaching, remote work, and remote leadership. Biggest challenge for author was to choose target group, not too big and not too small group of office workers.

Research is a good base for the case company about remote work and remote leadership for creating own remote leadership model. Forepersons hoped more training for remote leadership skills so some kind of course or training is recommend for the company. Interviews in the thesis are reproducible and case company could execute them again later and examine what kind of results come later when remote work is permanent way of working.

In the case company works also people who can't work remote so this thesis could be base if company would like to research how those employees are experiencing their work during Covid-19-pandemic.

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Appendix 1: Invitation E-mail for interviews

Hey,

I am writing my master's thesis for HAMK university for applied sciences and like to interview you about remote work. Topic for my thesis is remote work and elements of a good immediate leadership.

Interview is theme interview and below you can see the themes;

- Remote work's benefits and challenges
- Tools for working remote
- Well being in remote work

Interview is recorded but answerer will stay anonymous. Record will be destroyed when research is ready. Interview is voluntary, I would appreciate if you can join in.

Best regards

Laura Pellikka

