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How to Lead a Hybrid Team

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Abstract

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The Objective of this thesis was *to develop recommendations how to lead a hybrid team*, so that the team could be effective and work together to serve customers remotely.

The Applied action research was selected as a research approach of this thesis. The thesis started by setting the thesis objective and then proceeded to analyzing the current state of hybrid team leadership and its ways of working based on interviewing its stakeholders. The outcome of the current state analysis was the identified strengths, weaknesses, and expectations, in the four categories of the Individuals and the team, Team rules and working methods, Leadership & team leader, and Customers.

To address the identified challenges, the study conducted literature and best practice search for available knowledge that resulted in a "meta-construct", the conceptual framework for guiding the proposal building that followed the same four categories. The hybrid team co-created an action plan based on the finding from the current state analysis and the conceptual framework. The action plan for *Individuals and the team* category was to build psychological safety in the hybrid team. The action plan for *Team rules and working methods* category included an action plan that was sub-categorized into Communication, Focus, Helping, Visibility, Communality and Giving feedback. The action plan for *Leadership & Team Leader* element included the best practices how to develop the hybrid skills, how to establish hybrid work policies, how to lead hybrid power dynamics and how to improve psychological safety. Finally, the action plan for the *Customers* category included i.e. establishing best practices on effective video sales call policies. The team tested the action plan, discussed the results, and developed the Implementation plan for actions to be implemented over the next six months.

The outcome of this thesis is a package of actions and best practices *How to lead a hybrid team* to be utilized in the case team and also replicated in other hybrid teams of the case company according to the specific team needs.

Keywords: Hybrid team, Hybrid work, Leadership, Psychological safety, Inclusion, Virtual selling, Video sales call

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1 Introduction

Finland is now undergoing a huge revolution in the world of work. The amount of people working remotely in Finland only is 1 million (Aalto-Setälä, 2022). The situation touches more and more on the working population. Since the pandemic restrictions started to relinquish, the working population started shifting from fully remote to hybrid work. It may be a “3 days at the office and 2 days remotely” as a popular scheme. However, managers have noticed that the change is not about “3+2” or “50% office and 50% remote”; it is also about how to lead these new hybrid teams, how to organize the work of the hybrid teams and how to work in a hybrid team. In short, the change requires more focus on how to organize the processes and people (Bingham 2022) for this new hybrid working world.

Working people value flexibility, but the idea of flexibility can differ significantly. 74% of the working population wanted to work from office before the pandemic. Now, in 2022, 77% does not want to go back to that. People have recognized and started appreciating the value and freedom that the hybrid work created. (Aalto-Setälä, 2022. Gratton, 2022.)

This situation creates some dilemmas to the topic of leading a hybrid team. The hybrid workforce is growing in the number. It is easier to reach talents via hybrid or remote arrangements from wherever, and it is easier to swift jobs to find the perfect fit to a personal situation. In this situation, employers increasingly need to adapt to employees’ needs and preferences. Some want to work from the office, some from home and the most something in between. Flexibility can become the next best benefit for the employees. Therefore, there are voices calling that leaders need to pause and figure out what is working and what is not working for their buisnesses. (Bingham 2022; Katsoudas and Patel 2022.)

Hybrid mode also creates challenges. It creates power differences, can damage relationships, can be defective to collaboration and reduce performance. Scientists concluded that hybrid power dynamics are shaped by hybrid competence and hybrid location; and these power dynamics are especially important to multi located teams. (Haas and Mortensen, 2022.)

Now as the change is ongoing, there are lots of studies and theories in the field of leading a hybrid team. This thesis aims to explore the fresh knowledge for benefiting own team

and developing recommendations how to lead a hybrid team successfully in the context of the case company.

1.1 Business Context

The case company of this thesis is a global company operating in retail industry. It has eight units and the headquarters, with the total of 1700 co-workers in Finland. The case company has established a new hybrid team with the team members from almost every unit in Finland. The team has a team leader and four co-workers in the same location and six co-workers in the other singular locations around Finland. The team's purpose is to serve customers remotely. In this thesis, this team will be referred to as "a Hybrid team" since it operates on-site in the unit where the team leader and four members of the team are operating remotely from other units in Finland. The team has worked together starting from 1.11.2021.

1.2 Business Challenge, Objective and Outcome

The situation to lead a hybrid team is new to this unit where the part of the team and the team leader are located. The unit manager recognized this business challenge and encouraged it to be researched in order to find best practices for this team. It was recognized as important to support the team and the team leader and find best practice to operate so that the team members are highly motivated wherever they are located. Among other challenges, there is a recognized risk to remote co-workers who are not located in same office than their team leader, and thus can feel excluded. Not having a physical work community that they are working for, as they physically are in a different place, is also a risk of feeling excluded.

Accordingly, the Objective to this thesis is *to develop recommendations how to lead a hybrid team*. The Outcome is the recommendations how to lead a hybrid team so that the team is highly motivated and working together to serve customers remotely.

1.3 Thesis Outline

The scope of the thesis is limited to the case company in Finland and one new team that has started to operate in November 2021. The team operates in several locations as a hybrid team. The thesis focuses on identifying and describing recommendations how to lead a hybrid team.

The source of data collection and current state analysis are the interviews with the case company and its customers. With the help of the interviews, the study analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of how the team is led currently, expectations of the different stakeholders and identified development areas. The study uses Applied action research methodology as the goal of this study is to help develop a practical solution to the business challenge at hand.

This thesis is written in seven sections. First section is the introduction to thesis topic, the case company, business context, objective, and outcome of the thesis. Second section is about research method and material. Third section presents the results from the current state analysis as for the current practices of leading the hybrid team and its ways of working. Fourth section is the literature and best practice search that results in the conceptual framework for leading a hybrid team, based on selected knowledge and relevant best practice. Fifth sections is focused on building the proposal to address the research objective. Sixth sections is devoted to validating the proposal by testing the proposal in action. And finally, seventh section contains the conclusions of the research.

2 Method and Material

This section describes the research approach, research design, and data collection and analysis methods used in this Thesis.

2.1 Research Approach

Research, in simple words, can be described as a systematic scientific investigation. Research types include descriptive or analytical, applied or basic, quantitative or qualitative, conceptual or empirical research. *Descriptive* research is concerned with describing the situation as it is existing at present by gathering information mostly through surveys. *Analytical* research uses facts that already exists and analyses those fact critically. *Applied* research aims to find solutions to practical problems. *Basic* research generates new knowledge based on already existing scientific knowledge. *Quantitative* research is used when phenomena can be measured in terms of quantity. *Qualitative* research is used to find out underlying motives, desires, attitudes or opinions of people, human behavior, or describe a phenomenon. *Conceptual* research is focused on theories or abstract ideas. *Empirical* research uses only experiences or observations. (Kothari 2004, 1-4.)

For studies in the field of business, there are several popular types of research approaches. Case studies are focused on researching one or multiple “case”, which can be a company, department, phenomenon, team etc., and they gather information from various sources in order to learn from the case in-depth. Case research does not aim to make change or develop anything, this is the fine line between case research and action or design research. Action research aims for change, and the researcher is involved in the change, testing, implementing, and measuring the change. In Applied action research or Design research, the development is done for the better, it can produce, for example, recommendations and solutions that work in practice, and it uses a shorter cycle (problem identification - investigation - gathering knowledge - development - testing/other evaluation) compared to action research. (Kananen 2013, 37-47.)

In regard to data collection methods, there are typically two types of data recognized, primary and secondary data. *Primary data* is something that is collected for the first time, original data. In the business field and in applied research, there are several methods to

collect primary data, for example; observations, interviews, surveys and questionnaires, audits, focus groups (e.g. consumer panels), workshops, etc. *Interviews* is a method where questions and answers are made verbally; the interview is usually personal face-to-face and structured, where there is set of questions asked structured way and answers are comparable. Also, telephone or, more recently, online interviews can be used, these are more flexible than face-to-face interviews. *Questionnaires* are popular way of collecting data. They include a set of questions sent to respondents with request to answer and return. Textual data gathered from the interviews, questionnaires etc. is typically analyzed using *Content analysis* which “*is mostly qualitative analysis concerning the ... message of the existing documents*”. (Kothari 2004, 95-103; 110.) *Secondary data* is something that already exists as it was gathered by other researchers. Published secondary data is usually publications by local or foreign governments, international organizations, books, newspapers, business and industry, banks, stock exchanges reports, university, economist, etc. (Kothari 2004, 111.)

In this study, qualitative research methods are used based on the analysis of primary data. The thesis researcher collected primary data from such data sources as interviews, workshops, meetings, and a questionnaire used to collect opinions and point of views from different stakeholders. Applied action research was selected as a research approach since the objective is to find a practical solution how to make the change to the better in the case organization.

2.2 Research Design

Figure 1 in the next page shows the research design of this study.

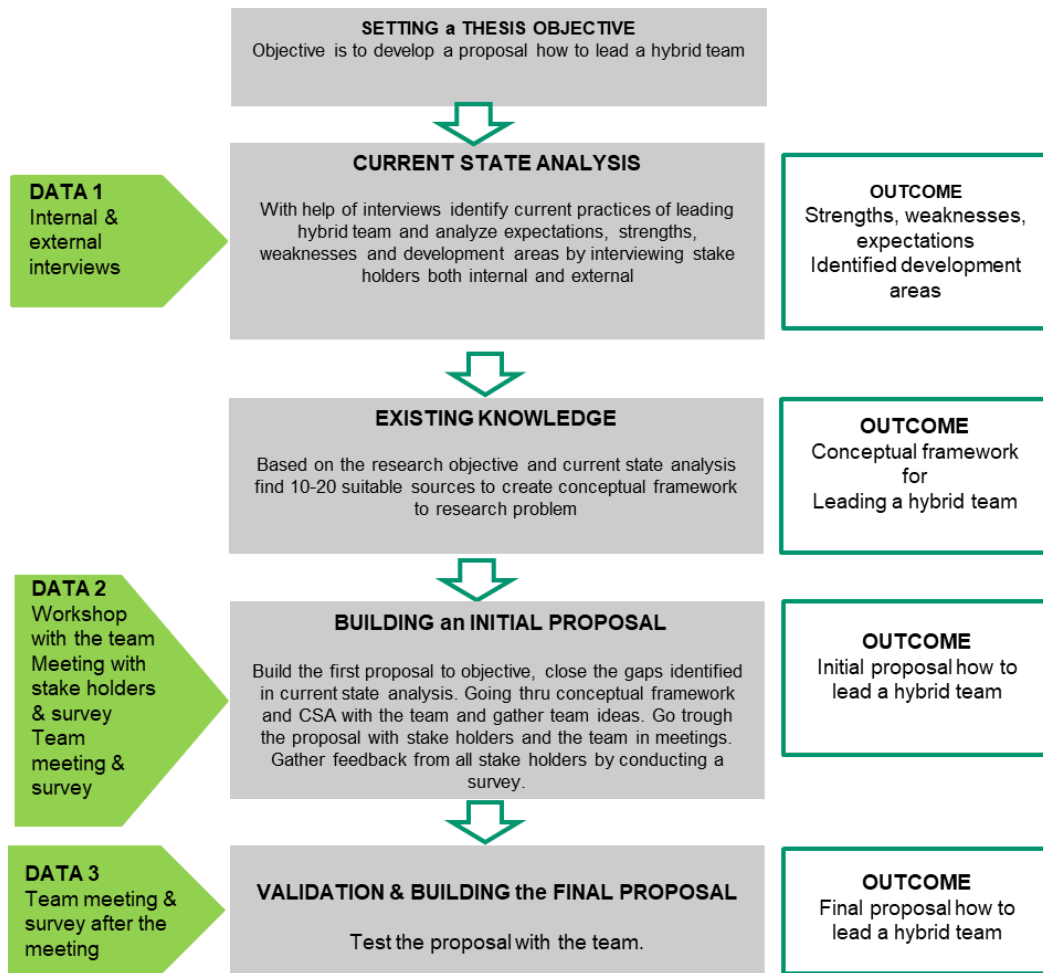


Figure 1. Research design of this study.

As shown in Figure 1, *the first step* in this thesis is to set the thesis objective. *The second step* is to analyze the current state of hybrid team leadership and collaboration based on Data 1 collection by interviewing stakeholders in the team. The outcome of the current state analysis is the list of strengths, weaknesses, expectations, and development areas as for the current practices of leading the hybrid team and its ways of working. *The third step* is the search for existing knowledge and best practice on leading hybrid teams; as an outcome, this step ends in developing a conceptual framework based on selected, relevant elements of existing knowledge and best practice. *The fourth step* is the Proposal building which is done based on the results from the current state analysis, ideas from literature synthesized into the conceptual framework, and the inputs from the new round of data collection, Data collection 2. Data 2 collection includes the workshop with the team discussing all available inputs and results for developing the recommendations for leading a hybrid team. It also includes presenting the recommendations to the unit manager, HR manager, manager for team leader and team

leader, and conducting a survey to gather feedback and improve the proposal. *The fifth step* includes testing and validation of the initial proposal in the form of gathering feedback from the team in a team meeting to improve the proposal into the final proposal.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The data of this study is collected from various sources: interviews, workshop, meetings, surveys. The data was collected in three rounds. Figure 2 shows details of Data collections 1-3 used in this study.

Figure 2. Details of Data collections 1-3 used in this study.

	Participants / role	Data type	Topic, description	Date and duration	Documented as
Data 1, Current state analysis					
1	Unit Manager	Teams Interview	Leading Hybrid Team	November 2021 60 min	Recordings & Field notes
2	Human Resources Manager	Teams Interview	Leading Hybrid Team	November 2021 60 min	Recordings & Field notes
3	Team Leader	Teams Interview	Leading Hybrid Team	November 2021 60 min	Recordings & Field notes
4	Team	Teams Interview	How do you perceive new hybrid team	Nov-Dec 2021	Recordings & Field notes
5	Customer	Phone Interviews	Customer Experience of interaction with the team	December 2021 15-30 min	Recordings & Field notes
6	Team Leader	Teams Interview	Additional interview to update team status	March 2022 60 min	Recordings & Field notes
Data 2, Building initial proposal					
7	Team Leader, Team	Workshop in Teams	Go through the conceptual framework, team ideas for initial proposal	April 2022	Recording & Field notes
Data 3, Validation and final proposal					
8	Unit Manager, HR Manager, Manager for Team Leader, Team Leader	Teams Meeting	Go through initial proposal	May 2022 60 min	Recording & Field notes
9	Unit Manager, HR Manager, Manager for Team Leader, Team Leader	Survey	Initial proposal feedback	May 2022 15-30 min	Written texts
10	Team Leader, Team	Teams Meeting	Go through final proposal	June 2022 60 min	Recording & Field notes
11	Team Leader, Team	Survey	Initial proposal feedback	June 2022 15-30 min	Written texts
12	Team Leader, Team	Teams Meeting	Feedback discussion of testing the proposal	July 2022 60 min	Recording & Field notes

As seen from Figure 2, data for this Thesis was collected in three rounds. The first round, collecting Data 1, was conducted for the current state analysis by interviewing stakeholders. Key stakeholders included the unit manager, unit HR manager, team leader, onsite co-workers, remote co-workers, and finally customers of the team. The unit manager was selected as a key stakeholder since the manager is leading the unit of the target team, the HR manager was selected since the manager is supporting the target team leader and the team members. Finally, the team leader, the onsite co-workers and the remote co-workers are the members of the target team and therefore, are key stakeholders for this research.

Interview questions were developed in advance and sent to each participant via email. With managers and the team members, the planned interview time was one hour and with customers the interviews lasted for 30 minutes. Introduction sessions before the interviews were conducted with different stakeholders. With managers they were done in one-to-one meetings and with the subject team in a team meeting. With customers the first information and willingness to participate was found out by the team members when working with the customer. Then, the thesis researcher called to book interviews and sent the introduction information to these customers via e-mail. The interviews were conducted as semi-structured, Teams meeting interviews, with questions created in advance. Customers were interviewed via a phone call. The interviews were recorded, and the field notes taken. The questions for interviews can be found in Appendix 1.

In the next round, Data 2 was first collected to gather suggestions from the case team for developing the proposal. This data included a workshop with the team gathering their point of views around initial proposal based on the current state analysis and conceptual framework. First, there was a preliminary assignment to get the team thinking process started before the meeting. The preliminary assignment can be found in Appendix 6. The workshop was facilitated by the thesis researcher, who first went through the findings from the current state analysis and the ideas gathered from literature and best practice synthesized into the conceptual framework. Then, the team was divided into groups, each group had questions and the groups wrote down ideas to a digital chart; these ideas were then presented to the team and best ideas gathered to finalize the initial proposal. The workshop was held in Teams. The teams meeting was recorded, and field notes taken. The workshop material can be found in Appendix 7.

In the third round, Data 3 was collected by introducing the initial proposal to the management and the team in separate meetings, and after the introduction their feedback was gathered by conducting a survey. The proposal was developed based on this feedback. The meetings were held via Teams, the meetings were recorded, and the field notes taken. The initial proposal was presented in presentations, participants were asked to give feedback along the presentation or latest after the meeting via the survey. The presentation for meetings can be found in Appendix 10 and the initial action plan in Appendix 8. The survey questions can be found in Appendices 9 and 11. After the testing of proposed actions, feedback was collected in a meeting with the team. In this meeting, the proposed actions were discussed and followed by gathering detailed feedback for each action. Testing of the action plan can be found in Appendix 12. The Final action plan can be found in Appendix 13.

All the textual data gathered in this thesis was analyzed using Thematic/content analysis.

The biggest part of data was analyzed for the current state analysis, to establish the current state of how the hybrid team is led and organized, identify its strengths, weaknesses, development needs and expectations. The findings from the current state analysis are discussed in Section 3.

3 Current State Analysis of How the Hybrid Team is Lead at Present and Its Ways of Working

This section analyzes how the Hybrid team is currently lead and analyzes its current ways of working. The overview explains how the current state analysis was conducted. The description of how hybrid team is lead explains the business challenge. The results from the current state analysis identify the strengths, weaknesses, expectations, and selected focus areas of the current ways of leading this hybrid team and its ways of working.

3.1 Overview of the Current State Analysis

The purpose of the current state analysis was to identify the current state of how the Hybrid team is led and analyze its current ways of working. Data was collected by interviewing all the key stakeholders (i.e. the Hybrid team members, Team Leader, Unit Manager, Human Resources Manager, and selected customers).

First, the current state analysis gives a detailed description of the current management and leadership of the Hybrid team. The current state analysis then proceeds to describing the tools and systems in use, and the ways how the team operates today.

Second, the interviews with the stakeholders were conducted. Interviews took place in November and December 2021. Internal interviews took place in video calls via Microsoft Teams application and external, customer interviews via a phone call. After getting the consent to an interview via e-mail or virtually in the booked interview time, the thesis researcher interviewed different stakeholders. With managers the interview took one hour, with team members form 20 minutes to one hour, and with customers 20 minutes to 30 minutes for each interview. Field notes were taken, and interview sessions were recorded. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) information and forms for different stakeholders were developed and sent in advance to get the permissions to take part in the interviews and collect data.

Third, the collected data was analyzed. The field notes were analyzed using Content/thematic analysis. The answers were then categorized into four categories that emerged from the analysis. For each category, the strengths, weaknesses, and expatiations were identified. Based on the results, the strengths and weaknesses of the current ways of leading the hybrid team and its ways of working were identified.

Importantly, since the team is very small, it was almost impossible to separate the topics of *leading the hybrid team* from its *ways of working*. All members, as well as the Team Leader work closely together and thus, the team's ways of working are tightly connected to its leadership. Being so, the teams feels that the ways of working are part of leadership, and often even the tools and other practices (such as HR topics) also belong, or at least touch, to the realm of "team hybrid leadership". Therefore, in all four identified categories, the topics of leading the hybrid team and its ways of working are closely intertwined.

Additionally, the interviews included not only the team members but also the customers (via five customer interviews). Although this was a small number of customers, it was important to the team to include the customers into the analysis in order to have a realistic comparison with how the team and its ways of working are perceived from the outside. Since it was not possible to ask the customers, similar to the team members, about how the team is lead, the customers were asked about their perceptions of the current service provided by the hybrid team. Their responses, although indirectly, shed the light on how the hybrid team's service is led, from the customer perspective. The results from the current state analysis are presented below.

3.2 Description of How the Hybrid Team is Lead at Present

The case company has ambitions to expand remote services to customers. The remote service has been in use for several years already with a smaller remote team and scope. The new ambition is to grow the remote service and therefore, there was a need recognized to grow the Hybrid sales team. The core competence of this team is specialized, wide and complex. To train a new co-worker even inside the company or with similar competence outside the company takes a lot of time. The same work is done in physical locations of the company face-to-face with the customer. In the case company, it was decided to expand the Hybrid sales team nationally and set up a Hybrid team to operate from multiple locations around Finland. The recruitment goal was to gather competent people around Finland to serve customers remotely. The sales goals and expectations to this new Hybrid team serving remote customers was set and perceived as high.

3.2.1 Team structure

The current Hybrid team has a team leader and four members in one location and seven members in other physical locations around Finland. Team Leader is new to the role of leading remote sales team. Team Leader has several years of experience in leading teams but is lacking the multi-located hybrid team specific competence. Leading a multi-located hybrid team is also new to the Unit managers. Team Leader's manager is Unit Sales Manager who reports to Unit Manager.

Every member in the team was recruited internally. Requirement for a team member was competence based in the team's specific competence. Four members are working in the same location as the Team Leader, and these team members worked in the remote sales team already before it was changed to multi-located hybrid. New for these team members was that they could now focus only on planning and selling to remote customers, compared to the earlier times when they had other tasks as well. These other tasks were separated from the remote sales team, and this also meant that their other colleagues were recruited to do these separated tasks to a new team as well. Another new feature for these remote sales team members was that the new colleagues in team are working in different physical locations. As for the seven team members, most of the team is in different locations from their Team Leader. Most of the new members have team's specific competence, but some are new to this area of business. Two members has done remote sales in their current physical unit during COVID19-pandemic time.

3.2.2 Team purpose

The team purpose is to serve remote B2C customers all over Finland, create an inspiring plan according to customer needs, and to sell the plan to customer. The hybrid team has ambitious sales goals. A customer books the planning time from the company webpage and delivers the needed basic data before the meeting. In the meeting, the team member maps the customer needs and expectations. The meeting is held via phone, but some team members use Microsoft Teams and share screen so that customer can see what they are planning. After the meeting with the customer, the team member has 3-4 hours' time to finalize the plan, create sales quotation, create pictures, and send these to customer. If everything is in order, the customer then decides whether to buy the plan or not. Most customers come back, and some want minor changes to the plan.

3.2.3 Tools and physical workspaces

Team members can be located in any physical workspace that the company has in Finland. The team has workspaces in physical locations and the team members can also work remotely from home; the team members can choose where they want to work. Physical tools are provided and ordered locally in physical units, although financed by the home unit where the Team Leader is located. The Hybrid team members use the following tools:

1. a phone or Microsoft Teams app for customer interactions,
2. a booking tool to open timeslots for customers to book the planning time,
3. the sales tracking system to create sales leads and track the customer's buying journey,
4. the planning tool to create plan for customer,
5. the sales order system to create customer quotation and sales order, and
6. e-mail to get basic information from the customer, to send plan and pictures to the customer after the planning time.

3.2.4 Team support network

The Hybrid Team Leader is the manager and leader for each individual team member in every location. In the unit, there are also specialists working to support the whole unit with specific area of knowledge. Two specialists are specialized to support the remote sales' team specific area of knowledge. These specialists train and also support the remote sales team.

The Hybrid team members also have the support of the local physical unit. They take part in local staff parties, local meal benefits, local health care, and get their staff presents locally. The Hybrid team members are also members of the physical work community. It is seen important that this physical connection to the work community is preserved.

The hybrid team has colleagues also in the physical locations of the company, colleagues who are doing the same planning and selling work, but instead of doing it remotely these colleagues are doing this work physically, face to face with the customer. In the physical set-up, there is an advantage of physical products and samples at the physical locations to support the sales.

In the company's county and global organization, there are also support roles to this working area. Sales leader in the country organization, and sales support specialists in the global organization support these teams.

3.2.5 Communication structure

First, the Hybrid team has *coffee breaks* together three times a week, for informal get-together. Once a month the team has a team meeting. The team meeting always starts with everyone sharing how they are, it has created openness to the team.

Second, every Monday Team Leader sends *weekly information via e-mail* consisting of mainly current topics and product information. Otherwise, *e-mail is the information channel* that the unit and Team Leader is consciously *trying to avoid* and use the common knowledge bank instead.

Third, the Unit has a very modern, structured, and easy to use *knowledge bank* for information sharing. There are also structured working methods and roles to produce knowledge for the knowledge bank. Knowledge bank is currently taken into use in every unit nationally in the case company. Despite this wide support, there is felt some lack of knowledge in this specific area of remote selling in the knowledge bank.

Fourth, the Hybrid team has a very active *Microsoft Teams group chat*, where the team members greet each other, ask for help, and inform each other on the current day topics. Team leader does not use this forum for information sharing because information can easily get lost in the active chat. But instead, Team Leader reads the chat and picks acute topics to weekly e-mail or in, urgent situations, sends the e-mail directly. There is also common *One Note in Teams* with e.g. ready-made answers to customers.

Fifth, there are *two other Teams chat groups* where the team members take part, a national group chat and a general unit chat. In the national chat team, the team members

can ask for help or assistance from colleagues in other units and teams. They can also receive information from Country Sales Leader; there are also open system issues and some working routines in *Teams One Note*. In the general unit chat, the team members can ask for help or advice from each other from every team, or the today's unit issues can be reported there. The Hybrid sales team is not very active in these two chats. Most of the team members have muted the national chat and do not even use the unit chat. Some team members and Team Leader, on the other hand, are active and communicate to others from the national or unit chat to the team chat.

Sixth, the Team Leader uses *Teams calls*, *Teams chat* and *e-mails for one-to-one interactions* with the team. Team Leader sends *the monthly personal key performance indicators* to each team member via e-mail. Team Leader uses key performance indicators also in the *monthly performance coaching sessions*. *Customer feedback* is reported on the team level, and best feedbacks are shared in weekly e-mail.

Finally, Team Leader can search manually to identify certain positive or negative customer feedback to go it through personally with the team member. *Personal sales performance and customer feedback surveys* have been in use from January 2022. Customer satisfaction has stayed on the level of 98%-100%.

3.3 Analysis and Key Findings of the Current Practices of Leading the Hybrid Team and Its Ways of Working

The data gathered for the analysis of leading the hybrid team and its ways of working was grouped into four categories. The categories were formulated when cross tabulating the interview answers from the field notes. First, there were questions and issues on the team member expectations for themselves, their colleagues, current state of the team, the strengths and weaknesses that the team has. Answers to these questions were categorized into how individuals see themselves and others as members of this team. These two aspects led to forming the category *Team and individuals*. The second category was identified when asking about the team expectations, current state, satisfaction, or dissatisfaction with the current ways of working or how the team is organized. The second category of questions and issues was identified and separated as *Team rules and ways of working*. Third, there were questions and issues related to leadership. When diving deeper how the team is currently led, the analysis resulted in the third category named *Leadership*. Finally, the team and managers were asked about

the customers and the customer interviews. Their responses led to formulating the customer interview questions. The customers were interviewed using these questions and findings from these interviews were categorized to the last, fourth category *Customer*.

Next, this analysis will focus on the findings from the four categories: *Team and individuals, Team rules and ways of working, Leadership, Customer*.

3.3.1 Category 1: Strengths, weaknesses, and expectations for the Team and Individuals and the related ways of working

The team members and managers were asked about their expectations towards the team, weaknesses and strengths of the current Hybrid team and its individuals. Appendix 2 shows the results from the analysis of *the Team and individual* strengths, weaknesses, and expectations towards one another and each other. These topics are based on the team members' and the managers' responses.

First, in relation to *the Team and individuals'* strengths, the current Hybrid team is seen by its members as very competent, helpful to each other, open, committed, responsible, self-determinate, communicative, a united and tight group with good team spirit. The Hybrid team has nice members from all around Finland. As the team is newly formed, all members are in the same situation.

The hybrid team members have also named these strengths in their individual answers: teamwork, colleagues who are cheering, caring, inclusive, understanding, and warm individuals that have ambitions towards goals. They also feel they are individuals who can be themselves in this team and there is no need for rivalry inside the team. One team member feels as not working alone since someone in their team is always working at the same time, even though not in the same place.

The analysis also revealed strong evidence of cross-team support. Some team members of the hybrid teamwork who are located in the same physical location feel that colleagues in the hybrid team working in same physical location support each other. At the same time, the hybrid team members working in the other physical locations from their team leader, apart from their own physical unit, still feel welcoming, good feelings in the unit they are working in but are not members of. These team members also feel that they can

ask for help and help back to colleagues in the same physical unit, working in the same sales area, but are members of different team. They also feel that help is near i.e. IT although they work for different units but in the same physical location. These team members also feel they can see people during a workday even though they cannot see their own hybrid team colleagues. And they feel that they are still part of the physical work community although they work remotely for another team.

Second, *the Team and individual's* weaknesses related to feeling loneliness when working at home. Some team members lack competence, and some are unapproachable. The team members reported that they sometimes lack togetherness, the team is new and they sometimes feel as separated. Some colleagues are perceived as invisible. These were the most frequent concerns of the team members as *the Team and individuals*. Other weaknesses related to working alone, stress of meeting customers via video connection there was new mandatory video tool to be implemented later, workload that feels overwhelming, and helping colleagues that is time consuming, and colleagues being too busy.

Finally, *the Team and individuals'* expectations revealed the following. Team members expect themselves and others to be fast paced in their work; they want to deepen and widen their knowledge in their specific working area and in other product areas. The team also has very high expectations to meet each other physically; co-operation is expected to be tight within the team. The team members expect each other to share knowledge and inspiration. The team members also expect to talk and listen to one another, to give feedback to each other, and to build and develop the team. These were the most frequent expectations for *the Team and its individuals*. Other expectations included sharing opinions, ensuring knowledge, time management, excellent work quality, helping each other, taking care of one's own wellbeing. Expectations also included showing good behavior to one another, permission to ask for help, keeping up the good and welcoming atmosphere. As shown from these responses the Team is expected to be a group of seasoned professionals. There is also an expectation to have some resistance in the team as the team is new.

Summing up, key strengths of *the Team and individuals* on the topic of leading a hybrid team are competence, self-determination, and since the team is newly formed, some team members feel that all team members are in the same new situation. Key weaknesses of *the Team and individuals* in the topic of leading a hybrid team relate to

loneliness when working at home, unapproachability when asking for help, lack of togetherness, the team being new, some colleagues being invisible, and the team being separated. Key expectations of *the Team and individuals* in the topic of leading a hybrid team include reaching and exceeding the set sales goals, tight co-operation in the team, willingness to get to know one another, giving feedback to one another, feeling the sense of belonging, as well as team building and team development.

3.3.2 Category 2: Strengths, weaknesses, and expectations for the Team rules and working methods and the related ways of working

Some of the responses of the team members and management about the current Hybrid team clearly pointed to a new category. This category was separated as the team members' expectations towards *the Team rules and working methods*. Appendix 3 shows the strengths, weaknesses, and expectations related to the Team rules and working methods.

First, *the Team rules and working methods'* strengths in the current working methods include a flexible schedule in both the working shifts and customer planning times. The flexible place to work is also seen as a strength, as currently the team member can quite flexibly choose whether to work at home or at the office. The Hybrid team has a very active Microsoft Teams-group where the team greets, share where everyone is, discusses, keeps in touch, helps, and supports its members. As one interviewee responded:

“With the help of this Teams-chat team, a member feels like they are in the same physical location”. (Interviewee 13)

At the same time, this interviewee also noted that

“As customers book all the times that has been opened, there is a high demand for this service”. (Interviewee 13)

The Hybrid team members mentioned that the Team has clear and high sales goals and it serves customers with high quality. They also noted that the team has virtual coffee breaks to get together, as well as individual Teams-discussions. They agreed that new systems and documents make it easier to document what was agreed with the customer

and what is done. Yet, they felt that it is still easier to get to know new products when working in physical locations.

Other mentioned strengths were the feeling that remote work is meaningful, colleagues help with the customers when one is absent, the team has good remote meeting practices. There are good tools for communicating with the team, the team has an improvement-oriented mindset, all the team members do the same tasks and are focused on the same tasks. The team uses video connection with customers by their choice (no official video tool at this point), the booked planning timeslots are tracked well, and they get support from specialists when needed. Working conditions are perceived as peaceful. As for the physical locations, separate working space at physical location is perceived as a strength, everyone in the team can always find a computer to work, no matter where they are. Personal follow-ups and tracking personal customer satisfaction are perceived as a strength since, in the physical locations, the customer satisfaction is only tracked on the unit or department level. And finally, it is refreshing to work in a physical location.

Second, *the Team rules and working methods'* weaknesses related to the information overflow, lack of the common ways of working, and the team has never yet meting alive. In the beginning, there was a remote introduction that many felt very difficult and they would rather have the introduction live. For many team members, remote work is new and it is difficult to communicate remotely. Teams Microsoft Teams-group is too active, many interviewees say that one cannot follow-up the discussion in Teams-group if they had days off, were absent or working in other roles. The team also lacks the rules how to take care of customers when someone is absent or working in other roles. Another concern is that the team members can't sell as much as they want to, and they are not aware how much sales they have made. Many team members felt inequality due to differences with working on physical premises and tools, and there was some unclarity with physical HR matters e.g. parking slots and Christmas Party. Some weaknesses that affected their teamwork are not within their power to change, such as availability issues of pe due to covid pandemic or insufficiency in manufacturing capacities. Also, the company's new global systems that are taken into use with agile development are sometimes seen as unfinished systems by the end users, since the end users need to report lots of deficiencies that they found in these systems.

Other, individually mentioned weaknesses included the following points: one team member doesn't know where the colleagues are, one feels it difficult that everyone is spread around Finland. In the beginning, there were too many customers and confusion with work shifts. There is lack of common place to save documents, lack of communication between the team members and lack of the Swedish language skill. Tacit knowledge is missing from the knowledge bank. Colleagues do not want to interrupt one another when they need help. Weaknesses also included the lack of written communication skills towards customers, slowness in responses when the customer can't wait any longer and goes to a competitor or to the company's physical location. There were also difficulties reported in recruiting from other units, since they do not want to let their talents go away.

Finally, expectations about *the Team rules and working methods* revealed the following. The team is expected to reach and exceed the set sales goals and serve customers with excellent customer satisfaction. They expect to have a physical meeting, have common ways of working and routines in place, and that their work becomes routine. They want to decide whether they want to work at home or at the office and start using the new video tool for customer interactions. The team members also expect to have physical HR-matters, working spaces and tools in order.

Other, individually mentioned expectations included efficiency, consistent service, focus on selling and planning, variations to working days, and sharing inspiration. The team members are also willing to see what happens after the selling process. The team supports the company strategy, and they have an opportunity to create value for the company and customers. Team internal communication is on a good level, and the team wants to make sure what are the preferred channels for communication. It is especially felt after a long pause in teamwork, for example, when there a need to catch-up important information. The management wants to get every worrying or deferred issue fixed. The team is expected to have peer coaching, specialists support available, and that the unit HR is available for everyone. The team expects to have fresh trainings and information on new products. The team feels that remote work increases wellbeing. The team also wants to develop own operations, take care of customer when someone is on other tasks, help and being available in Teams. On the practical level, the team wants a better camera for video meetings and better headphones. The team members feel that giving a positive image of team work should be attractive when recruiting new team members,

and finally that the start of a new member's work should be easier to new colleague's (as for the workspaces, tools, remote work).

In the future, the team expects to have fantastic, peaceful working spaces, grow in headcount and sales, to have lots of customers. In the future, the team also expects to be able to work from anywhere, do comprehensive planning with all customer needs planned from one point of contact, and to have a virtual store – with inspiration, touch and feel like in physical locations. The team also expects to have better visibility of their service to those areas in Finland that do not have physical locations of the company's stores, advanced digital tools, automatized follow-ups with no manual work needed, and also global co-operation and work cycle.

Summing up, key strengths of *the Team rules and working methods* related to the topic of leading a hybrid include: a flexible schedule & place to work, an active Teams-group, team coffee breaks to get together, excellent customer service, and the advantage of getting to know new products when working in the physical locations. Key weaknesses of *the Team rules and working methods* include the information overflow, the team having too active Teams group disturbing their customer work, the introduction arranged remotely, and the lack of rules how to take care of customers when someone is absent or working in other roles. Other key weaknesses relate to the team members not being able to sell that much as they wanted due to the working schedules, as well as some unclear physical HR matters e.g., parking slots, Christmas party, differences with physical working premises and tools, and finally not knowing what one has sold. Key expectations of team rules and working methods on the topic of leading a hybrid include excellent customer satisfaction, an opportunity for everyone to decide whether they work at home or at the office, and taking a video tool into use to optimize planning and physical HR-matters, as working spaces and tools are in order.

3.3.3 Category 3: Strengths, weaknesses, and expectations for Leadership and Team Leader and the related ways of working

The team and other managers were asked about their expectations for the current Team Leader. Team Leader was asked about the challenges of leading a hybrid team. Appendix 4 shows the summary of the Team Leader's strengths, weaknesses, and expectations towards the Team Leader and the related ways of working.

First, in relation to *the Team Leader's* strengths, the hybrid team sees the strengths of a Team Leader in showing supportiveness, speed, presence, reactivity, approachability, activity, warmth, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring and unbiased attitude, and authority when needed. The Hybrid team has stated that the Team Leader has wide IT knowledge which supports team members with challenges with new system deficiencies. Team Leader comes back to the agreed matters, has good feedback skills, knows where the team is, is easy to come along with, does not depreciate, and takes concerns seriously.

Second, as for the weaknesses of *the Team Leader*, they relate to the lack of team specific competence, which was a finding from both the team and the Team Leader. It was seen as worrying that Team Leader is always available, as Team Leader needs to learn how to detach from work. One team member felt that the Team Leader does not keep in touch enough and one team member felt that Team Leader listens to the system issues but does not act on the issues enough. Team Leader felt the need to share more information to the team.

Finally, Team Leader is expected to share and support where the team is and with what is happening. Connected to this, the most frequent answer was that the Team members felt that they need support when there is a lot of workload. One team member expected the Team Leader to learn the team specific work skills so that Team Leader can substitute any team members if needed. This expectation is linked to the most frequent weakness which the team members and Team Leader has stated. One team member felt that Team Leader is exceeding expectations as a leader. One team member expects the Team Leader to give feedback about the team members' work. As yet another team members said, the Team Leader is also expected to

“Find balance how to make sure support is available for all team members and how to unify the ways of working” (Interviewee 1).

Based on the responses, the Team Leader feels the need to set own boundaries when it comes to working hours. This is also noticed from the team members as a weakness since it is seen that the Team Leader works too much and is therefore always available and team members are worried that the team leader won't burn out. Team Leader also feels the need to spar more with own direct manager and intensify co-operation with the colleagues in other units.

Summing up, key strengths of the current *Team Leader* on the topic of leading a hybrid team and the related ways of working include the Team Leader's IT knowledge, presence, and approachability. Key weaknesses of the current Team Leader on the topic of leading a hybrid team and the related ways of working is the lack of team specific competence. Key expectations include sharing and supporting the team with the relevant information.

3.3.1 Category 4: Strengths, weaknesses, and expectations from the Customers for the current service by the hybrid team and its ways of working

Five customers were interviewed about the strengths and weaknesses of the current service provided by the hybrid team and its ways of working. Customers were also asked about their expectations before, during and after the interaction with the team member. Three customers were from capital area of Finland, other two from areas with no physical company location available. Three customers were served via phone, two via Microsoft Teams video connection (not an official tool to use). Three customers were planning to buy, and two had already purchased. Three customers tendered out their offers, two did not. Four customers received their plan with link and PDF-files, and one received only a PDF-file.

Importantly, the team members and managers were asked in advance for their own questions what they would want to ask when interviewing customers, and their wishes were taken into account when asking questions from the customers. Appendix 5 shows the strengths, weaknesses, and expectations discovered based on the interviews with the *Customers*.

First, *Customers* recognized several strengths in the current service provided by the hybrid team and its ways of working. As for the key strengths, the customers perceived that the service is professional and customer service is excellent. The customers also felt well informed how to get in touch after planning, and the customers strongly preferred a video connection for meeting with a team member.

Other strengths, less frequently mentioned, included, first, that the company's remote planning service was brand image, and the fact that the remote planning service had good availability. The customer felt easiness, smoothness of the current service; and the service was perceived as logical. Customer felt that the products had good quality per

ratio. The customers felt that the company has short delivery times and that the plan responded well to the customer needs. The customer plan was perceived as a good virtual visualization of the planned space. Customers also felt that the pre-information that they were asked was exact and relevant, they received lots of informative pictures, and they also appreciated that the link to the plan can be shared. The team member who interacted with them was precise, thorough, clear, and available; the order was proceeding clearly and successfully, and it had a wide variety of different options and solutions. Price, concept, and pictures were better than competitors'.

Second, *Customers* found the following weaknesses in the current service provided by the hybrid team and its ways of working. First of all, the customers pointed to the lack of video connection when meeting the team member via phone, and the need for some more planning time with the customer since the planning time ran out fast. Second, the customers pointed out that some products were missing from the company's product range, and there were availability issues. Finally, even though the service is remote, the customers felt the needed to go to the company's physical location to see the materials used in products, as customers could not make their buying decision without seeing physical products.

Other weaknesses, less frequently mentioned, included, first of all, no availability of physical service. Also, when booking the planning time, the customers felt there were irrelevant questions asked that cannot be passed. Additionally, customers could not attach the plans when booking the planning time, and there were some problems in the beginning with no access to checking the measurements. When having the meeting with the team member, some customer felt that the team member had to rush, or the team member was cautious to offer solutions. Some customers also mentioned that the team member used product names when speaking to the customer, or the team member spoke about the product order in the plan over the phone and it was very difficult for the customer to follow. Sometimes, the customers also mentioned that the original plan was in the old planning system, and it took lots of time to check it up. After the meeting, some customers received multiple versions of the plan. There were also responses that the customers felt unhappy that the link outdates in 7 days, so a separate pdf-file was needed to be made; or that the pictures are rough and more photographic pictures would be better to have. There was also unhappiness about e-mails coming to two separate customer e-mail address, and that the contact person changed, and lastly due to availability issues, the customer order was split into many separate orders with separate

payments and separate deliveries. Also, when tendering out the offer, the competitor had a lower or the same price as the case company.

Finally, *Customers* expected to have a checklist to prepare for the meeting with the team member. Customers asked that this checklist would include the decisions that the customer needs to make in the planning phase. Other expectations, less frequently mentioned, were that the service and the planning time should be available according to the customer needs, video connection is needed as a tool for meeting the customer, and the team member should map the customer's budget. The customers would also appreciate professional help to make a decision, they would appreciate to have one contact person from the company, affordable price, and a ready-made plan.

Summing up, key strengths from *the Customers' perspective* in the current service provided by the hybrid team and its ways of working are excellent customer service and video connection in the planning meeting was available when team member chose to use it. Key weaknesses from *the Customers' perspective* are the lack of video connection in the planning meeting (the meeting was held via phone), not knowing the physical products for decision making, and the planning time running up too quickly during the meeting. Key expectations from *the Customers* are the decision checklist opening up in advance what the customer needs to decide in the planning phase and mapping the customer budget in the planning phase of the sales process.

3.4 Summary of the Key Results and Selecting the Focus Areas

The results identified from the current state analysis are summarized below. The results point to the identified strengths, weaknesses and expectations from the team members on the topics of leading the hybrid team and its current ways of working. Importantly, since the team is very small, it turned out impossible to separate the topics of *leading the hybrid team* from its *ways of working*. All members, as well as the Team Leader work closely together and thus, the team's ways of working are tightly connected to its leadership. Therefore, in all four identified categories, the topics of leading the hybrid team and its ways of working are closely intertwined.

Additionally, the interviews included five customer interviews. Although this was a small number of customers, it was important to the team to include the customers into the

analysis in order to have a realistic comparison with how the team and its ways of working are perceived from the outside. Since it was not possible to ask the customers, similar to the team members, about how the team is lead, the customers were asked about their perceptions of the current service provided by the hybrid team. Their responses, although indirectly, shed the light on how the hybrid team's service is led, from the customer perspective. The results from the current state analysis are summarized below.

3.4.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of Leading the Hybrid Team and Its Ways of Working at Present

Figure 3. shows details of the all the strengths, weaknesses, and expectations in each category studied above on the topics of leading the hybrid team and its ways of working. The most frequently three mentioned responses in each group are marked in *italics*. Some findings appear in several categories (even in the opposite categories, for example, in strengths and weaknesses simultaneously) due to different perceptions by different stakeholders. For the reliability of the analysis, it was important to list all more or less frequently mentioned points, as they were collected from various stakeholders.

Figure 3. The key strengths, weaknesses, and expectations in each category (Team and individuals; Team rules and working methods; Leadership & Team leader; and responses from Customers).

1. Team and individuals	
<i>Strength</i>	<i>Competence</i>
<i>Strength</i>	<i>Self-determination</i>
<i>Strength</i>	<i>All members being in the same new situation since the team is new</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Loneliness when working at home</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Unapproachability when asking for help</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Lack of togetherness</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Being new to the team</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Some colleagues are invisible</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Team is separated</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Reach and exceed set sales goals</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Tight co-operation</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Get to know one another</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Give feedback to one another</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Have a sense of belonging, team building</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Team development</i>
2. Team rules & working methods	
<i>Strength</i>	<i>Flexible schedule & place to work</i>
<i>Strength</i>	<i>Active Teams-group</i>
<i>Strength</i>	<i>Team coffee breaks</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Information overflow</i>

<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Teams group is too active</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Remote introduction</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Lack of rules how to take care of customers when someone is absent or working in other roles</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Not being able to sell that much as wanted, working schedules</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Not knowing what one has sold</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Lack of common ways of working</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Having the new video tool in use with customers</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Excellent customer satisfaction</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Making own decision where to work, at home or at the office</i>
3. Leaderships & Team Leader	
<i>Strength</i>	<i>The Team Leader having IT knowledge and skills</i>
<i>Strength</i>	<i>The Team Leader being present</i>
<i>Strength</i>	<i>The Team Leader being approachable</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Lack of team specific competence in the team</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Inequality/differences with physical working premises and tools</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Unclear physical HR matters i.e., parking slots, Christmas party</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Information sharing (“Share and support where are we and what is happening”)</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Physical HR-matters, working spaces and tools to be in order</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Learn team specific work</i>
4. Customers	
<i>Strength</i>	<i>Professional service</i>
<i>Strength</i>	<i>Excellent customer service</i>
<i>Strength</i>	<i>Video connection available (when team member chose to use)</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Lack of video connection (team member chose to use a phone call)</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Planning time runs up too quickly</i>
<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Not knowing physical products for making decisions in the call</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Having the new video tool in use with the customers</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Decision checklist: what customer needs to decide in the planning phase</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Mapping the customer budget</i>

3.4.2 Selected Focus Areas

The areas for improvement were selected based on the identified weaknesses.

First, taking into consideration the team being new (in *the Team and Individual* category), lacking togetherness and looking for strengthening internal ties, the first area for development was selected as follows: identifying the team building stages and strengthening the team togetherness. The team consists of many individuals, every individual is important to the team and every team member should feel included. To help the team with team building, it is necessary to find and establish the team building

principles in hybrid team environment and find best practices how to make a hybrid team productive and to tackle the feelings of loneliness in remote work.

Second, taking into consideration that the team suffers from the information overflow and communication disturbance from some channels (in *the Team rules and working methods* category), as well as lack of common rules and shared ways of working, the second area for development was selected as follows: it is necessary to learn how to organize the work of a hybrid team. This improvement area should include: structuring information in a way that team does not need to spend extra time going through their most active channel; finding solutions how information is prepared and where is the best place to store the information; establishing the rules for giving and getting help. If someone is always busy providing help to others, then it is impossible for him/her to perform other tasks. Therefore, the team needs to develop the rules and agree on how to take care of customers when someone is absent, on holidays, working elsewhere. It should help to make everyone a visible member of the hybrid team and agree the rules on taking part into common discussions.

Third, considering the fact that leading a hybrid team is a new situation to the current Team Leader (in *the Leadership and Team Leader* category), the third area for development was selected as follows: to find best practice to lead a hybrid team and familiarize with the team leader's specific work. This improvement area should include: finding ways how to secure everyone the same tools and similar working environment, and focusing on how to take care of visibility and sharing it with the team.

Finally, based on the expectations of the Customers (in *the Customer* category), the improvement to the current ways of working strongly relates to introducing a video connection to address the need to serve customers remotely via video. This points to the final improvement area, namely searching for the best practices how to sell via a video connection.

Accordingly, this thesis selects these four focus areas for search for literature and best practice in the next step: 1) *team building* and 2) *common ways of working in hybrid working environment*, 3) *leadership in hybrid working environment* and 4) *servicing customers remotely via a video connection*. These topics are discussed in Section 4 and later utilized in Section 5 for building the proposal how to lead a hybrid team.

4 Existing Knowledge and Best Practice on How to Lead a Hybrid Team

This section discusses the best practices how to lead a hybrid team. The literature is chosen to inform the selected development areas identified in the current state analysis. First, the selected literature focuses on the definition of a hybrid team and the psychological needs that should be taken into consideration when designing hybrid work, as well as the topics of how teams are developed, and how psychological safety is linked to hybrid work. Second, the selected literature focuses on the characteristics of hybrid work, how to design hybrid work, and how to strengthen togetherness in hybrid work. Third, the selected literature focuses on leading the hybrid team, the hybrid skills, the best practices of leading hybrid power dynamics and psychological safety. Fourth, this section discusses best practices of virtual selling via a video connection. Based on the relevant elements identified from literature and best practice, the conceptual framework is built at the end of this section to address the selected development areas in the next steps of the thesis.

4.1 Element 1 of the Conceptual Framework – Individuals and Team

Starting with the first element of the conceptual framework, i.e. the individual needs and team development in a hybrid team, it was needed to start with describing the concept of what a hybrid team is.

4.1.1 Concept of a hybrid team

Traditional team typically consist of group of individuals, team members are interdependent working with same task and common purpose, team members share same goals and are responsible of these goals together and are embedded in organizational context meaning working in same organization and managing relations between organizational boundaries. In contrast, a *virtual team* is geographically dispersed and dependent of communication technology. It can be stated that a virtual team is a traditional team with two additional attribute geographical dispersion and reliance on communication technology. (Afflerbach, 2020 12-13.)

A *hybrid team* is located somewhere between a traditional team and a virtual team. According to Afflerbach (2020), traditional team is a collocated, face-to-face team, while

a pure virtual team is reliant on communication technology and does not meet face-to-face. *Hybrid team* is relying on communication technology, with some team members having a physical location in local subgroups and some team members being remote. In a hybrid team, there are collocated groups that can decide to communicate face-to-face and there might also be individuals who are fully dispersed without any collocated colleagues. (Afflerbach, 2020 14-16.)

A *hybrid team* is a team where some team members are co-located in an office and others are working remotely. These hybrid teams can face same challenges than a team that is located both in the head office and in satellite offices for example us versus them confrontation among colleagues. And same challenges that a team that is geographically distributed for example communication, team engagement and coordination. (Knight, 2020.)

Hill and Hill describe a *hybrid team* as a team where some team members may be co-located and others working from different locations. And this is not static, it can change depending on the load and on demand. In the future more and more teams will be hybrid teams. *Distributed team* differs from hybrid team, the team is fully distributed. Team works independently of each other, and all the work is done in different locations, no headquarters or central offices exist. (Hill, Hill, 2021.)

All definitions have similarities. There is an office or offices where part of the team works, and other part can also work remotely from home or anywhere. There is also acknowledge challenges for hybrid teams. For this reason, it is also important to look into what team development stage the team is to best support with the team challenges.

4.1.2 Team development

One of the most famous approaches to team building sages belong to Tuckman (first discussed in 1965 and later further developed by the author). His approach suggests splitting the team development into five stages: forming, storming, norming, performing, and later Tuckman also suggest adding the fifth stage, adjourning, for the team to seize its existence. (Tuckman 2001.) Figure 4 below shows the categorization of Tuckman's theory in Time and Performance axes.

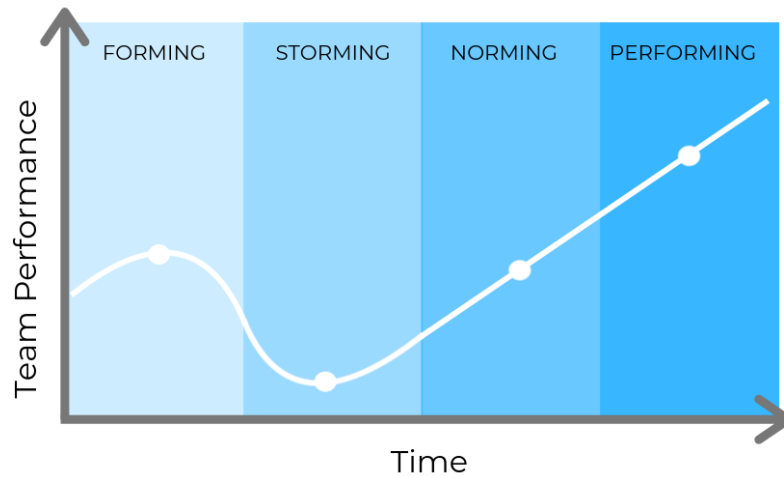


Figure 4. Shows the stages of team development, forming, storming, norming, and performing in the axes of Time and Team Performance (Hyman 2019).

Forming can be described as searching for own place in the group, creating ways of working, group acts formally, and leadership is needed, there are no conflicts in the group. *Storming* is the stage for establishing clear common expectations, when there are disagreement and conflicts in the group, own needs are above the group needs, and the team members are busy finding inner hierarchy, and even rebelling against the leader. *Norming* is described as the stage with the established ways of working, better co-operation, willingness to settle and avoiding conflicts; at this stage, different opinions become valued. *Performing* can be described as the stage where the team has reached as relaxed working atmosphere, it enjoys functioning interaction, every team member has own place in the team, the group is efficient since the conflicts are clarified, team members are flexible with their individual needs and seek for consensus in solutions. The final stage, *Adjourning*, can be described as the stage when the performing team splits up, it can be sad, hard, and distressing experience, and it can happen if the team gets a new team member or co-operation is coming to an end. (Paloposki 2014.)

The approach by Tuckman (2001) was embraced by researchers and business practitioners which deal with teamwork in real life. There also multiple practical tools appeared that help to apply it in practice. For example, Abrams et al. (2011) suggest assignments to assess the teams' stage of development. The tools were developed in a form of a survey that offers a quick way to assess team most likely stage of development, as shown in Figure 5. below.

"For each of the following statements, rate your level of agreement or disagreement

(1 = disagree, 2 = undecided, 3 = agree):
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I clearly understand the goals and purpose of my team. 2. I understand my role on this team and the role of my fellow team members. 3. I am able to openly disagree with another team member's ideas in order to find a better solution. 4. I am able to openly debate with another team member about an idea I have submitted. 5. I clearly understand the meeting rules and guidelines our team has developed to govern how we work together. 6. Our team members regularly follow the meeting rules and guidelines we have set forth. 7. Our team is able to successfully complete tasks we have been assigned. 8. I am able to ask for help when I am in danger of failing on an assignment. 9. Our team takes time to celebrate successes and recognize the contribution of members at the completion of a project. 10. Our team is able to successfully orient new team members and continue performing at a high level with little interruption." (Abrams et al. 2011.)

Figure 5. Survey questions to assess the teams' stage of development (Abrams et al. 2011).

Once the responses have been collected, the quiz is scored. First, Abrams et al. (2011) suggest ensuring that all questions were answered. Second, they suggest adding up all the scores and divide by the total number of people who completed the survey. Third, they recommend using the following scoring chart as a guide to indicate which stage the team may be in. (Abrams et al. 2011.)

Score	Scoring Chart for Development Stage of Team Assessment
10–14	Forming
15–18	Storming
19–22	Norming
23–26	Performing
27–30	Transforming

Figure 6. Scoring chart for development stage of team assessment (Abrams et al. 2011).

As seen from Figure 6., the scoring by Abrams et al. (2021) will help to identify the stage of the team development.

It is important to know in what team development stage the team is and find ways to move the team to the next stage. The goal is to have a highly performing team and also a performing team has the needs for team building. Abrams et al has a suggested list of

team activities for virtual teams to facilitate the team to moving to next phase of team development. It is important to know the correct stage to not to push too hard to work on matters. If the team is not yet able to for example forming team is not able to debate openly on a set of potential solutions. Likewise, the high-performing team might get frustrated or bored if the team activities are too easy and they would need more complex challenges. (Abrams et al. 2011.)

“The forming stage. This is the polite, get acquainted, and “get to know each other” stage. This is where team members begin to figure out who’s who, and where everyone fits into the picture. Typically, this takes place at the opening meeting or even an orientation session. For a virtual team, team leader can get a head start on this stage by providing the team with each team member’s qualifications and background information, so everyone has an understanding of why the individuals were chosen for the team. For traditional teams, the forming stage includes both the actual time spent in meetings and the informal gatherings and discussions in and around the initial meetings. For virtual teams, these informal connections have to be planned for and strategically incorporated early on into team conference calls. The goal is to create an environment that is safe and secure. Because the team also looks for guidance and direction in this stage, the leader must ensure that the team’s purpose is clearly communicated and understood by all team members. At this beginning stage, it’s essential to get buy-in from all the team members and candidly and honestly identify the pros and cons of teamwork and team building. This stage is where the team builds their foundation, so time well spent in this stage will pay off later.” The objectives for this stage are to build strong sense of team identity and to gain better understanding of the members of the team. (Abrams et al. 2011.)

“The storming stage. In this stage, interpersonal issues may arise. This stage is typically where conflict gets introduced into a previously safe and comfortable environment. These conflicts provide team members with opportunities to learn how to interact effectively with one another. For a traditional team, this stage takes place around week two, when things that may not have mattered in the beginning suddenly seem important; therefore, conflict ensues. A virtual team may experience this stage closer to week three or four, or even later, in a virtual team. This will depend on the frequency of communication on the team, and how much trust and camaraderie were developed in the forming stage. This stage can be extremely frustrating when working virtually. Or it can be ignored completely. Out of sight, out of mind, so to speak. Some virtual teams never make it out of this challenging stage. While face-to-face communication allows for

immediate feedback and provides nonverbal clues for better understanding, a virtual team may struggle with this stage, and become frustrated with the time it takes to resolve conflict and learn the best ways to communicate with other team members. The team will look to the leader to support them as they navigate through this stormy stage. Many issues can cause separation on a team. Virtual teams are teams that are already separated—by distance, time, or both. To ensure that other issues don't arise to fracture the team, team leader needs to develop protocols for using various types of technology, along with training to ensure that all team members are comfortable and willing to use the best technology for the situation. The one-way nature of email, which is one of the main communication methods teams use, hinders a team's ability to navigate through conflict. It is critical that these concerns be dealt with honestly. When interpersonal conflicts and dissonance are handled at this early stage, the team has a better chance of success. Once again, leadership will be necessary to navigate through this stage. The leader should lead discussions to ensure the team can use these tools when interacting with each other day to day.” The objectives for this stage are to understand the limitations of one-way communication and to improve verbal communication skills. (Abrams et al. 2011.)

“The norming stage. Cooperation and trust are now becoming the “norm” for the team. The team begins to better understand the respective personalities of other team members so the diverse perspectives can come together to work more effectively. Team members should also have a good understanding of which technology is preferred and most efficient to interact with other team members. Good things are starting to happen, and as a result, the team feels more confident, connected, and creative. The team looks to the leader for support during this stage. Team members can take leadership roles by facilitating games from this chapter.” The objectives for this stage are to develop a sense of team spirit and to understand each team member's responsibility for team success (Abrams et al. 2011.)

“The Performing Stage. The team has momentum, energy, and, ideally, all team members are willing to contribute equally. This is the most productive of all the stages. Tasks are identified and handled efficiently by the members of the team. Individuals respect the contributions of others, and the team is well on its way to meeting and even surpassing its goals and objectives—all the while creating a sense of unity and cohesion. Allow team members to take the lead and facilitate the games in this section. As team leader, be ready to step in if the team experiences storming during this stage. “On a roll”

sometimes creates complacency, which can lead to conflict. In addition, the stress involved with deadlines, transitions, and changes can influence the way team members communicate. With their eyes on the goal, they may be more focused on attaining the goal than on interacting with the team. Conflict on a team is normal, and by now the team should have some experience and confidence handling conflict. The leader can help to mitigate and direct that conflict in a positive and constructive manner. If everyone always agrees, you may not be hearing from everyone.” The objectives for this stage are to discover new ways of thinking about team’s project and to break out of limiting thoughts and think outside the box. (Abrams et al. 2011.)

“The Transforming Stage This final stage brings closure. The team you have in this stage is a far different team than the one you started with. Developing a successful virtual team takes time, patience, and a willingness to rewrite the rule book. The relationships established on a virtual team are hard-earned and may continue long after the team disbands. The team leader should allow time for closure and reflection. And as a leader to be ready with plenty of recognition and appreciation. Give team members ample time to recognize and appreciate each other, as well as their success.” The objectives for this stage are to provide recognition to the team members, to celebrate the success of the team and to foster a sense of accomplishment. (Abrams et al. 2011.)

The goal for every team that aims at high performance should be to develop the leading features that affect performance, namely, self-determination and psychological safety, which are discussed next.

4.1.3 Self-determination theory

According to Hinkkanen (2021), the new ways of working in hybrid environment and designing hybrid work require intrinsic motivation and drive to make things happen. People are motivated to do their work better, see their doing extensively, work relentlessly and are more creative, by three empirically confirmed psychological needs, autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This theory is called a self-determination theory. (Hinkkanen, 2021.)

The self-determination theory (Hinkkanen, 2021) relies on several basic needs of people. First of all, *autonomy* is the need to feel one’s own volition, ability to effect on one’s own work and its content. *Competence* is the need to grow and develop, to have a feeling of

control, ability to respond to the obstacles that come one's way and learn from these obstacles. *Relatedness*, which means the basic need of connectedness to other people, includes the abilities to give back, do good to others, make the work meaningful. When these three needs are fulfilled, people become self-determined, they are intrinsically motivated, and this will raise their performance and overall well-being. (Hinkkanen, 2021.)

Specially, *autonomy* and *relatedness* are important to pay attention to when designing hybrid work, starting with individual experiences and finishing with collective discussion. Everyone has their own experience and by relating to these experiences everyone can feel heard and make a difference. This method implies that everyone's opinion and experience matters. If individuals are not heard and discussion starts or moves straight to collective discussion, people can feel disregarded. (Hinkkanen, 2021.) At the same time, for facilitating collective discussion, the team needs to be transparent, telling openly what possibilities exist to influence and make decisions, if there are any preconditions or existing policies. The goal is to be tangible, clear and have justifiable ways of working that are linked to everyday work life. (Hinkkanen, 2021.)

For example, solutions to these questions can be searched when designing hybrid work: What ways of working should we agree so that independent, focus based work and being available are in balance? Calendar and communication rules, so that people do not have to be on Microsoft Teams chat all the time watching if a colleague is messaging. People feel free to limit work time and take time to focus based tasks. Do people let know where and when they are working and how? How to take care of sense of community remotely and in hybrid appointments, so that culture does not form based on face-to-face encounters? What places and rituals to create in the everyday work life, that builds communality? (Hinkkanen, 2021.)

The team leader should acknowledge these two factors autonomy to understand individual situations and preferences and relatedness to facilitate discussion around the questions Hinkkanen has gathered. Psychological safety is one important factor when working in a hybrid team. The next section focuses on describing what psychological safety is and why it is important in hybrid teams.

4.1.4 Psychological safety

According to Yli-Kaitala (2021), *psychological safety* is a shared belief that people can be themselves and can take risks in a group. In a psychologically safe working environment, everyone can bring up ideas and thoughts that relate to work, ask for help, asks questions, bring up concerns, admit mistakes, without a fear of being embarrassed, punished, or depreciated. (Toivanen, Yli-Kaitala 2021.) This theory has existed since 1960's but became more widely known after Google Aristoteles-project acknowledged that psychological safety is a common factor for successful, high performing teams. (Yli-Kaitala 2021.)

Psychological safety has become important because organizations and the world around us has become more complex. The importance of psychological safety to performance, especially in specialist work, has increased significantly. The reason for this phenomenon comes from the changing ways to organize work and changes in the ways and rules of working. Remote work and interaction over the Internet challenges psychological safety, but there are ways to overcome that also in remote work. There is a lot of non-verbal communication and emotional communication lost over the Internet communication compared to face-to-face interaction. *Familiarity*, one cornerstone of psychological safety, is threatened when face-to-face interaction is missing. Other threats are the feelings of *loneliness* and getting *bored*, as well as *the remote work apathy*. Therefore, it is important to pay special attention to psychological safety and strengthening being *present*. (Toivanen, Yli-Kaitala 2021.)

“Working with me” is the exercise designed to help individuals share their personality and style to work with their team to *build trust, understanding, and a safe team* (Congelosi 2020). Figure 7 shows a list of questions for Working with me exercise.

<p>“Working with me” Questions for building psychological safety</p>
<p>“What’s Important: What are you most excited about in this role? When do you feel most happy at work? In or outside of work, what are 1-2 things that you haven’t made enough time for that you wish you did more of? Include 1-2 pictures of yourself or pictures that you have taken that capture who you are and explain why. Have you taken any personality assessments in the past? Which ones? What were your results and why do you think it was accurate/inaccurate?”</p>

<p><i>Quirks: What are your pet peeves? What are your scheduling quirks or scheduling preferences (any recurring events or times that your schedule might adjust? Or favorite times to conduct meetings, etc?) What is something about yourself that people might not know in their first time meeting you? What is something you're actively working to improve?</i></p>
<p><i>Stressors: How do we know when you're stressed? Is there anything in a work setting that makes you uncomfortable? When you're upset, do you like space? Distractions? To talk it through with the team?</i></p>
<p><i>Expectations: How do you like to receive feedback? How do you like to receive praise?</i></p>
<p><i>Learning Styles: What is your favorite way to learn a new tool/skill? When are you most productive or most energized? Is there a certain time of day that you feel most productive? How do you measure your success?"</i></p>

Figure 7 Questions for building psychological safety (Congelosi 2020).

As seen from Figure 7, the list of questions includes the building of psychological safety on a team level with individual approach. To get the team members know each other in a deeper, personal way.

Taking care of psychological safety is responsibility of everyone and it can be improved by *being present* and addressing interest to *other people's thoughts* in virtual meetings, *contacting colleagues* with low threshold, it is also important to catch up, *asking for feedback* on own work and *encouraging* others. As one approach in improving the psychological safety, a "Rose, bud, thorn" method can be used that aims to add interaction, improves familiarity and learning from mistakes. It could be made into a routine in weekly meetings, for example. Everyone tells three things from a work week in turn: "rose" is something that went well, "bud" is something that brings hope or inspires, and "thorn" is something that did not go well or was a mistake. (Toivanen and Yli-Kaitala 2021.)

When there is knowledge established of individuals in the team and their needs, what a hybrid team is and the team development stages, it is natural to move to investigating how the hybrid team should be organized. Next, this thesis investigates the best practices of how to organize a hybrid team.

4.2 Element 2 of the Conceptual Framework – Team Rules and Working Methods

When defining the common ways of working in a hybrid team, it is necessary to describe the characteristics of hybrid work, then describe the practices how to design hybrid work, and to discuss how to make hybrid work inclusive to ensure that hybrid work does not create inequity in the team.

4.2.1 Characteristics of hybrid work

Hybrid work is work done in the physical office or remotely for example from home. Hybrid work is the new form of organizing knowledge work globally. Some companies have very limited work-from-home plans, other companies have greater flexibility. (Choudhury et al. 2022)

According to Katsoudas and Patel (2022), embracing people with their entirety is the way to get the hybrid work right. Organizations should find out who their co-workers are and what works best for them the unique preferences of everyone. One form does not fit all and that is what a traditional organization structures does not recognize. Some people want to work at the office, some at home and the most something in between. Flexibility of work is the greatest benefit for business because it attracts the best talents. (Katsoudas and Patel, 2022.)

Based on Katsoudas and Patel (2022), organizations should put people first when offering flexibility. In response, hybrid gives the opportunity to reach talent wherever they may be to democratize the opportunity. One of most exciting prospects of transformation of work for coming years is that no matter where people are located, they have global opportunities to work. People can search for opportunities anywhere and organizations talent from anywhere. (Katsoudas and Patel, 2022.)

Also, scientists stress that hybrid is different from remote. Remote is where people are working from distance, apart from others. Hybrid takes remote further by creating inclusion for every individual, to connect with people no matter where they work. (Katsoudas and Patel, 2022.)

Being so, technology will be critical in hybrid work to make co-worker experience seamless between virtual and physical. Virtual communication technology is already

existing, but virtual collaboration technology is still new. The game-changer here will be collaboration technology that enables serendipity in the virtual experience. The result of this technology transformation and new hybrid ways of working will be the new era of work. (Katsoudas and Patel, 2022.)

In hybrid work it is important to find flexible solutions to fit individual needs, to find talent wherever they are, and the people can also search opportunities wherever. Hybrid work creates inclusion, and the technology plays an important role in hybrid work arrangements. Next this thesis will discuss the practices how to design hybrid work.

4.2.2 Practices how to design hybrid work

Organizations around the world have embraced designing a hybrid model for work. According to Gratton (2022), successful designing of hybrid work arrangement takes individual human needs in mind, not just institutional needs. Elements of hybrid work include *place* and *time*, *jobs* and *tasks*, *employee preferences*, *projects* and *workflows* and *inclusion* and *fairness*. (Gratton, 2022.)

The first element, *place* and *time*, conceptualizes the new work arrangements along axes of place and time. In a hybrid workplace, the work usually gets the most attention. Work can be done from workplace or remotely. *Time*, when people work, is another element. Time is constrained when working synchronically at the same time and unconstrained when working asynchronously, whenever people choose. Figure 6 below illustrates how the flexible place and time are defined in different situations.

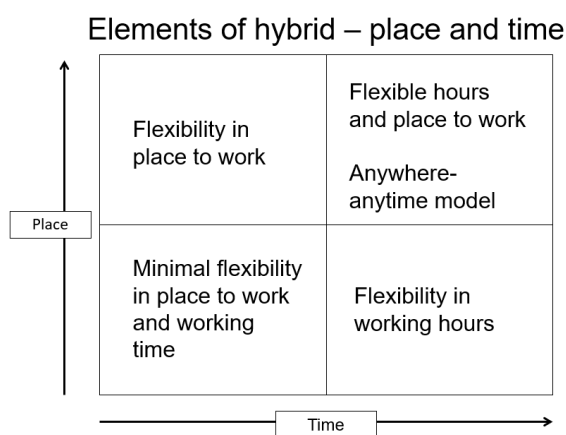


Figure 8. Elements of hybrid work – place and time (Gratton, 2022).

As seen from Figure 8, at least three quadrants allow flexibility for the workforce: to choose the place, to choose the time, or even to choose both. The figure itself does not seem to communicate much new information. Yet, what is changing is how the flexible working conditions create more satisfied and productive workforce. (Gratton, 2022.)

The second element, *jobs and tasks*, include energy, focus, coordination, and cooperation that are the critical drivers of productivity and how these changes along with axes of time and space. For a planner, the critical driver is *focus*, a need to work without interruption, while *the time* can be asynchronous and *the place* is less critical. For a team leader, the critical driver is *coordination* since the leader needs to communicate and engage with the team, give feedback, share best practices, mentor and coach team members which means *the time* must be synchronized, while *the place* is again less critical. (Gratton, 2022.)

The third element, *employee preferences*, aims to accommodate the preferences when designing hybrid work. Managers need some survey tools to find out and understand individual preferences and key tasks of all the workforce. (Gratton, 2022.)

The fourth element, *projects and workflows*, describes how the work gets done, and how to organize the work. Management can visualize and categorize what tasks different teams are doing, individual and team tasks can be placed in the axis of place and time. Managers can investigate movement and visualize the data about their team, and find working patterns of everyone. Companies designing hybrid work can get the workflows right the first time by finding out if any team tasks are redundant, can some tasks be automated or re-assigned and can workplace have new purposes. (Gratton, 2022.)

The fifth element, *inclusion and fairness*, refers to the basic conditions for successfully doing the work. Good examples show that when designing hybrid work companies which involves as many people as possible have less feelings of unfairness. People need to have their voices heard. "*Feelings of unfairness can hurt productivity, increase burnouts, reduce collaboration and decrease retention.*" (Gratton, 2022.)

As Gratton (2022) believes, to have an anywhere anytime working model, organizations first need to identify the key *jobs and tasks* and determine *the drivers* of productivity and performance for the identified jobs. After that, consider *the arrangements* that would serve these jobs best. Second, organizations also need to understand what individuals

really want and how they can include employees to the process of designing new work, for example, by using surveys and interviews. Third, organizations need to delaminate duplication and unproductive elements of the current work arrangements, and think expansively and creatively. By communicating broadly in every stage of the journey, everyone can understand that the new hybrid work arrangements enhance productivity rather than drain people. Also, organizations should train their hybrid team leaders and invest in co-ordination tools that helps to align team schedules. Most importantly, organizations should check that hybrid arrangements reflect values and support culture and check if the arrangements create a foundation of engaging, fair, inspiring, and meaningful future. (Gratton, 2022.)

In addition, Aalto-Setälä (2022) suggests that, when designing new hybrid work, first organizations should stay calm and start where they can start. They need to figure out what is meaningful, why they are doing this work and how this work can be done from anywhere in the future. If there is no need to be physically present, organizations should consider what tasks can be done individually and what should be done digitally together. Employers cannot dictate people to be in a certain work mode in certain days, rather some try to avoid and not react on what their people are doing and don't listen to their people, which makes an inefficient, short-sighted practice. It is destructive if the employer does not settle such situations. (Aalto-Setälä, 2022.)

Aalto-Setälä (2022), also believes that, second, organizations should act, find, create, and solve problems. People should be included to innovate and to create new and find out better ways of doing. It could be a great opportunity to create new and find a better way to preserve energy in the organization, to grow the energy and do new things together, so that everyone can keep up also the individuals who do not wish to come back to office. Aalto-Setälä (2022) concludes that modern leadership should be more flexible and personalized. "It is best to avoid the old ways of doing, because we are now living a new, better time in working life". (Aalto-Setälä, 2022.)

When designing hybrid work it is important to take the place and time, jobs and tasks, employee preferences, projects and workflows, inclusion and fairness clear the purpose and involve people to find the better ways of doing. As inclusion is one important factor to both these references next, this discussion will focus on how to make hybrid work more inclusive.

4.2.3 Practices how to make hybrid work inclusive

Inclusion is described as the working environment and atmosphere where people feel they are valued member of the group and encouraged to participate in the organization. (Davis and Shirlley, 2022.)

The conceptualization of inclusion has evolved during time where in 1998 inclusion was described as “*existed on a continuum based on the degree to which individuals feel involved in critical organizational processes*”. In 2000 inclusion was refined “*as the interchange between an individual’s personal characteristics and the workplace*”. And in 2011 inclusion was described “*to be the degree to which employees are treated as insiders with unique characteristics and value to the group or organization*”. The conceptualization is relatively coherent, but the identification of practices to facilitate inclusion in organizations, is more indistinct. (Roberson 2019.)

According to Almeida et al. (2021), hybrid work can create inequity and to ensure fairness, high performance, and cultural cohesion, it is suggested to follow these five practical points of inclusion when designing new ways of working in hybrid environment: *recruitment and onboarding, working together, resolving conflicts, improving team cohesion and promotions*. (Almeida et al. 2021.)

Virtual *recruitment* is suggested to reduce costs, to review current onboarding processes and to consider people from different experiences and backgrounds. Quite often, it is also followed by a virtual onboarding. While virtual recruitment is welcomed, virtual onboarding often gain quite a lot of criticism, so organizations need to prepare to change this stage in order to better meet the needs of the newly recruited employees. According to Almeida et al. (2021), consistent onboarding experience can be created, and individual needs met by having video catalog of short maximum 15 minutes videos in onboarding process and then to have common sessions to new beginners to ask questions about the videos. Right setup of technical tools is also important in remote environment and new employees can be supported to have technical assistance in the beginning if they need it. To avoid remote workers’ learning curve to be steeper, and then label remote workers less competent or productive, a company can implement, for example, a buddy-system, where old and new colleague are paired and the new remote colleague can ask day-to-day questions, to ensure informal learning compared to those who work in the office. (Almeida et al. 2021.)

Working together in hybrid environment puts informal communication to a new perspective. Where live interaction can have positive impact on the organizational culture and performance, the ways to make informal communication must be created in remote environment. Almeida et al. (2021) suggest two solutions. One can use status bar to “Open for chats”-status, where one can have the digital office door open to colleagues. Virtual meeting rooms can create sense of belonging and sharing. (Almeida et al. 2021.)

Resolving conflicts can be done by increasing psychological safety, where all voices are heard, and people can speak up when there is interpersonal conflict. It can be done by showing what healthy conflict looks like, that people can hold conflicting viewpoints, and have these conversations in judgement-free zones. (Almeida et al. 2021.)

Team cohesion can be damaged in hybrid way of working when people form in-groups, a group within a group, to feel sense of belonging. These groups can exclude others from conversations, be reluctant to share information, dictate task assignments, be less involved to resolve team issues and sharing knowledge. An effective way to break these in-groups is to ensure information flows smoothly. (Almeida et al. 2021.)

Finally, it is believed that productivity and performance determine the pay, promotion and opportunities. Productivity and performance vary in remote work. Depending on home or office environment, internet connection and children at home, many factors can affect productivity. Hybridity can also impact the rewarding mechanism, who gets and why and some are left out. The same traits do not apply to remote environment than in an in-person office. One can keep an eye on this shift in rewarding, by keeping careful auditing who gets what and why, to start to see patterns and monitoring encourages managers to pay attention to their allocations. (Almeida et al. 2021.)

When designing new hybrid ways of working it is important to take the practical suggestion in to use to create inclusion in the recruitment and onboarding, to create the ways for informal communication. Increase psychological safety when resolving conflicts, ensure smooth information flow and the leaders to recognize their patterns of rewarding in connection to hybridity arrangements. After the discussion on how to organize work in hybrid work environment, it is logical to move to how the hybrid team should be lead. Next, this discussion focuses on the best practices of how to lead a hybrid team.

4.3 Element 3 of the Conceptual Framework – Leadership

When defining how to lead a hybrid team, it is necessary to describe the concept of hybrid work skills, and then investigate leading a hybrid team. Hybridity creates power dynamics in the hybrid team and these power dynamics should be recognized and led. Finally, this study will look how to lead psychological safety.

4.3.1 Hybrid work skills

There are identified set of hybrid skills to manage the hybrid work. These skills are presented in the Figure 9. below.

<i>Hybrid work skills</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Systematic innovation. How can this trend be useful? 2. Networking without boundaries. Who's help is needed, can be also someone outside the organization. 3. Digital skills. Success factors in disruption was better management with strong leadership training program and the ones utilizing technologies as forerunners. 4. Doing one thing at a time. What is relevant. Lean has an idea. What is relevant, do it and one thing at a time. 5. Process management. How this is going to be ready. Leading is managing processes and people. It is recommended to rethink processes after the transformation. 6. Leading with empathy. How to make caring visible in the hybrid environment.

Figure 9. Hybrid working skills (Aalto-Setälä, 2022).

Three categories of foundational skills can help employees thrive in hybrid working models.

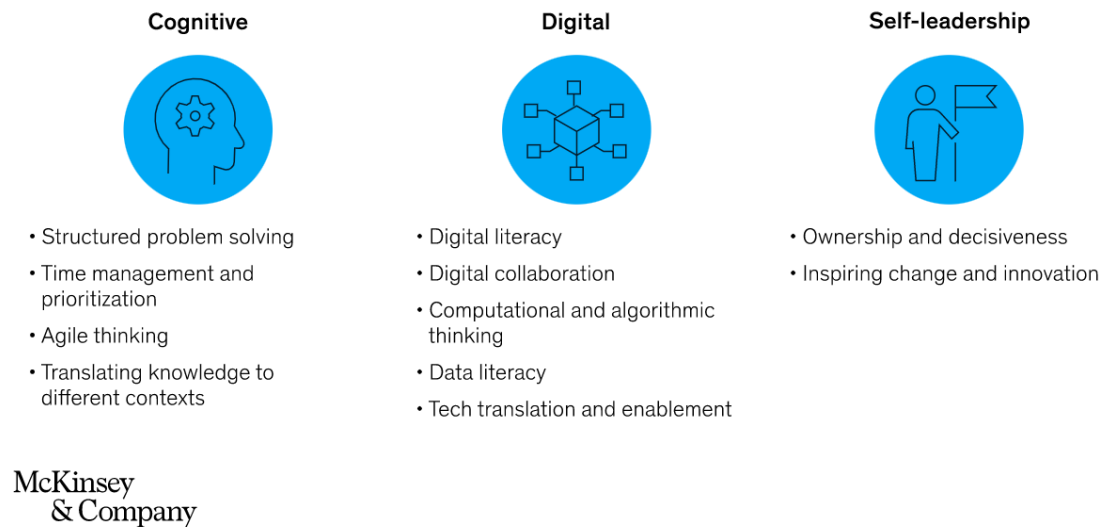


Figure 10. Hybrid work skills (Elizondo et al. 2022.).

As Figure 10 shows there are three categories for hybrid work skills: Cognitive, Digital and Self-Leadership. *“Cognitive ability. Having a high level of cognitive ability means adding value beyond what can be done by automated systems and intelligent machines. Being able to think critically, structure thoughts, and communicate efficiently while adapting to developing circumstances are key to achieving cognitive excellence. Digital skills. Having digital skills means being able to identify, evaluate, and communicate concepts through the means of digital platforms. Self-leadership. This is the practice of understanding the role, identifying aspirations, and purposefully guiding oneself toward achieving one’s goals. In other words, it’s understanding what we do, why we do it, and how we do it”.* (Elizondo et al. 2022.).

There are similarities to hybrid skills expected from leaders and team members such as digital skills, prioritization, agile thinking, and innovation. In addition to the skills for doing hybrid work, there are also some leadership specific hybrid skills that the team leader could act on and also to teach these skills to the hybrid team members. Next, the discussion moves to identifying the hybrid work skills that should be taken care of it for leading the hybrid work.

4.3.2 Leading hybrid work

According to Aalto-Setälä (2022), work is not a place, time, or device, and it never was, and especially now we certainly know it. Key elements of successfully leading hybrid work are to listen, settle and follow-up. To follow-up also means to use different technologies (such as surveys, for example) and to make caring visible. Otherwise, it is difficult to see if anyone is present, and if anyone cares in the hybrid world. (Aalto-Setälä, 2022.)

Bingham (2022) believes that hybrid work configuration needs to give more attention to processes and people, and by adapting to employees' needs by asking their input along the way. There is a competition for talents and not listening to employee preferences can lead to turnover. Both scientists and business practitioners know that people are attracted and engaged to employers who are more flexible. Flexibility builds deep employee connection and creates a shared purpose, produces better wellbeing for employees and, according to Bingham (2022), produces 21% more high performers. In this environment, leaders are expected to know their team and the work that this team is doing, understanding the team impact on the organization, and act as entrepreneurs in their part of the organization, flexing according to customers' needs, and involving the workforce into all major decisions, which means that people's feedback and input is heard, and it creates value for the employees to stay in this organization. (Bingham, 2022.)

Here are listed three steps to establish hybrid work policies, according to Bingham (2022).

STEP 1: *“Learn your team members’ circumstances for flourishing. A connected manager knows team members on personal basis and understands individual circumstances under which they work best and thrives as a person and a worker.”*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What are your goals for the near term and long term of your career?” • “What could stand in your way?” • “What makes you feel valued at work?” • “What do you wish you could spend less time doing?” • “What businesses processes could we update to create efficiency?” • “What tools or processes help you feel included or engaged?” • “Where do you feel you are the most productive at the office headquarters, a third place in a coffee shop, with your co-workers, working from home or working across a combination?” • “What schedules best support your personal wellbeing?” • “What tools do you need to perform your job well?” (Bingham, 2022.)
<p>STEP 2: “Ensure clarity on business needs, then schedule accordingly.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Are the team’s benchmarks, goals and deadlines clear?” • “Do you understand what is expected of you and what constitutes success performance?” • “How often do you communicate with team or customers?” • “What hours do you most often overlap?” • “Do you have any questions on your role in realizing the company’s vision?” • “What helps you focus? What distracts you?” • “What methods of communication works best for you when working within a team, across teams, with customers or external stakeholders?” (Bingham, 2022.)
<p>STEP 3: “Seek insights of how well the schedule is working.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What benefits have you seen with the hybrid policy?” • “What difficulties have you encountered?” • “Should we make any adjustments over the next quarter and how we collaborate?” (Bingham, 2022.)

Figure 11. Three steps to establish hybrid work policies (Bingham 2022).

As seen from Figure 11, the first step is to “Learn your team members’ circumstances for flourishing. A connected manager knows team members on personal basis and understands individual circumstances under which they work best and thrives as a person and a worker.” Managers can find hints of the current level of engagement by asking and listening carefully, and can support employees accordingly. To learn these

circumstances and individual needs managers should ask such questions as “*What are your goals?*”, “*What could stand in your way?*”, “*What makes you feel valued at work?*” (Bingham, 2022) and similar questions listed in Figure 11.

Second, for establishing policies for hybrid work the next step would be to “*Ensure clarity on business needs, then schedule accordingly.*” First, Bingham (2022) believes that it is important to make sure the team is aware of the business needs for meeting customer expectations. Second, decide the flexibility of the team inside these business needs and make sure to have all discussions with the eye of building a climate of success. Third, managers should be able to engage the team and find a workable schedule that supports goals, collaboration, productivity and individual need with a board understanding of the team’s purpose and how it is linked to the organizations purpose. To ensure clarity on the business needs, managers might ask these questions related to productivity, collaboration and individual preferences: “*Do you understand what is expected of you and what constitutes success performance?*”, “*What helps you focus? What distracts you?*”, “*What methods of communication works best for you when working within a team?*” (Bingham, 2022) and similar questions listed in Figure 11.

Third, the next step would focus on “*Seeking insights of how well the schedule is working.*” According to Bingham (2022), managers should facilitate team discussions what is working and what is not when having the hybrid policy and schedule in place, since the current state is an experiment that changes over time and feedback. Therefore, managers need aligning the places, people and policies with business goals and individual needs as much as possible. For this end, managers should start conversations and nurture those by employee engagement through business changes to ensure the flexibility in the future. Recurring feedback and policies that meet the organizational need are important; they may ask such questions as: “*What benefits have you seen with the hybrid policy?*”, “*What difficulties have you encountered?*”, “*Should we make any adjustments over the next quarter and how we collaborate?*” (Bingham, 2022) and similar questions listed in Figure 11.

Summing up, this sub-section discussed the important factors how to succeed in the hybrid work. It is also important to find out how the hybrid arrangements are working and ask for feedback from the team. To succeed in leading hybrid work, the team leader should also be aware and lead the hybrid power dynamics. Next this thesis will look how to lead hybrid power dynamics.

4.3.3 Leading hybrid power dynamics

Social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven defined five sources of power in 1959 that people use when they want to drive a decided change: force, reward, legitimate, affiliation and knowledge authority. Sixth source of power informational such as access to data was added later. There might be even more sources of power depending on the workplace for example the reputation of the leader. (Chhaya, 2022.) These power types help to build understanding on what kind of power there is in the hybrid teams and hybrid work environment.

Hybridity creates power differentials that can be damaging to relationships, defective to collaboration and reduce performance. Power dynamics must recognize and actively lead two sources of power: *hybrid positioning* and *hybrid competence*. (Haas and Mortensen, 2022.)

Hybrid positioning means that people have different *access to resources* and different *level of visibility* in the office and remotely. These are the key sources of power and influence. In the office, co-workers have easier access to technology and infrastructure, easier and faster access to information. In the office, it is possible to have informal conversations in the hallways that provides emotional support by colleagues. When working remotely, the technical setup is typically weaker and so is the internet access, and this makes it more difficult to demonstrate competence. Lack of informal conversations makes the feeling of last to know and out of the loop. As a result, remote work causes the feeling of being isolated, lacking relationships, connection, and social support. Additionally, the location and being seen by those in power causes different *visibility* and *power levels*. Working in the same office with management increases likelihood of being recognized. No one sees the late nights and early mornings, and hard work when working remotely. There are two angles of *hybrid positioning*, where the manager and employee are situated. (Haas and Mortensen, 2022.)

Hybrid competence creates the skill differences that not everyone has the same skills to operate in hybrid environment. Navigating effectively in hybrid environment is a skill and, thus, a source of power. Hybridity requires balancing between and navigating across colocation and remote. Moreover, people who are willing to ask, find and demand the resources that they do not have easy access to, also have an advantage to those colleagues who are not. Other advantageous hybridity competence skill is a skill to create

relationships face-to-face and virtually, and use informal connections to replace missing information. People with good networks and political awareness can recognize advantageous situations and positions. Employees who can work adaptively, organize and coordinate across dynamic, complex environment and are able to establish and provide evidence of their trustworthiness when working with low visibility are also highly skilled in hybrid environment. People with less skilled in this complex system may find themselves un-synced with colleagues and their manager. People lacking these skills may find it hard to work with the people who have these skills. (Haas, Mortensen, 2022.)

To address these challenges, managers need to stay informed what their team members are doing and facilitate their *access to the needed resources*. Naturally, managers knows better the situation of those co-workers who they are colocated with. On the contrary, remotely operating managers might feel they are operating from the dark. Thus, hybridity threats fairness. To address this problem, Haas and Mortensen (2022) came up with the following four ways that managers can use to more actively manage hybrid power dynamics and their effects. (Haas and Mortensen, 2022.)

First, it is necessary to make a special effort to *Track and communicate* in order to map the team's hybridity configuration, who is working where and when, and to have conversations with the team members about what challenges team members and the manager have phased, and what can be done to overcome them. Managers must remember that *access to resources* depends on the team members' location, and *visibility* depends on the location relative to the manager. It is also important to add to this that hybridity is complex and dynamic, with variations of locations to work and the time to work also vary. By tracking and visualizing systematically, it will help the team and the manager to stay aware of hybridity configuration in their team. (Haas and Mortensen, 2022.)

Second, it is essential to *Design the hybrid work*. Managers needs to re-distribute power trough the access to resources or visibility levels, and re-visit regularly the policies and procedures so that those are not unfair based on hybridity. Examples of unfair advantages are the KPI's that rely on the resource accessibility or evaluations that take a visibility level into account. (Haas and Mortensen, 2022.)

Third, manager need to pay special attention to *Educating the team* to avoid bias because many issues raise due to the lack of awareness of imbalance that these powers

create. It requires establishing the culture of psychological safety that increases likelihood of speaking up, individual and collective trust, as well as confidence that their concerns are recognized. (Haas and Mortensen, 2022.)

Finally, *Monitoring* should be focused on the key intervention moments, and the key opportunities to address potential challenges that hybrid power dynamics create in the team. For example, there are opportunities for both team members and the manager to examine and discuss the imbalance and how to overcome those factors in performance reviews and evaluations. Managers need to be aware that hybridity creates imbalance in their team's access to resources, visibility levels and information they hold about their team members. (Haas, Mortensen, 2022.)

Summing up, for successful performance in hybrid teamwork, managers need the knowledge on the importance of locations where the co-workers are, as well as having good understanding of the positioning power due to the access to resources or visibility. These factors can put the co-workers of the team into different positions due to access to information and resources, as well as how well their work is managed. This understating come from the knowledge of differences in hybrid power dynamics. Therefore, a team would expect the team leader to share and support the team via sharing information and resources equally. By tracing and communicating, the team leader can remove some of these challenges; as well as by designing the hybrid work the team leader can equalize the differences in power dynamics. Also, educating the team is critical for establishing the culture of psychological safety. Next, this discussion will need to look more depth into how to lead psychological safety.

4.3.4 Psychological safety

Leader can support psychological safety in remote work by revising expectations, to talk permissively about failure, invite everyone to take part, answer constructively by recognizing, thanking, offering help, and giving feedback. Taking care that everyone knows their goals, this is significantly highlighted in remote work. Creating routines to encounters and feedback. Focusing on results, not to how work is done, or time spent. Making sure that everyone's voice is heard. Guiding to set boundaries to time spent to work. Team dynamics and individual needs and preferences can vary between remote work and face-to-face work, which can reflect to nature of co-operation. In managerial work being busy cannot decrease ability to notice team member's needs. Manager

should be open about their own challenges in leading co-operation. Managers should ask what team members need to support smoother co-operation. Managers need to remember one-to-one meetings and that genuine interaction requires listening – also in remote work. (Toivanen and Yli-Kaitala 2021.)

Psychological safety is a key driver for team effectiveness. It is a belief that that one can speak up without the risk of punishment or humiliation. In hybrid workplace managers need to engender trust beyond the work context and with the aspects of personal circumstances to create a culture of psychological safety. Managers must lead the way by showing their own vulnerability and sharing their own challenges in hybrid context and not to expect that people tell their most personal challenges right away. Transparency is helping the team to design new arrangements that supports both organizational and individual goals. Managers must push back when noticing comments that turn down psychological safety. (Edmondson, Mortensen, 2022.)

How to make sure everyone is participating in virtual meetings? Making clear everyone knows the goal and meaning of the meeting. Agreeing on common meeting rules. Round the table. Raising hand when wanting to speech. Using quires to address opinions anonymously. Encouraging using comment field. Smaller virtual break-out rooms. Camera on but avoid virtual stimulation. (Toivanen, Yli-Kaitala 2021.)

Psychological safety is acknowledged to be an important part of working in and leading a hybrid team, since 80% of communication is nonverbal and there is a need to close this gap in a team working partly virtually. When there is knowledge on how hybrid team is lead and organized, it is time to take a look to the customer perspective of the hybrid team. In this study the customers section will focus on highly effective video sales calls and what kind of practices the video sales call needs to take into use to be inclusive for the customer.

4.4 Element 4 of the Conceptual Framework - Customers

Video sales calls was a new way to work to most co-workers in the hybrid team when the team started to operate. Some had doubts and insecurity in the interviews and customers had expectations to have video sales call instead of just phone sales call. That is why this study will next investigate the best practices to effective video sales calls.

4.4.1 Highly effective video sales call

“Video sales calls are easy, convenient, and cost-effective. It is the closest facsimile to in-person interaction. At least half of people’s brain capacity is dedicated to our eyes. The primary way we interpret the world around us is through visual stimulus. This is exactly why video calls are a powerful and effective virtual sales communication channel when human to human connection matters most. Video is more personal than any other form of virtual communication.” (Blount, 2020.) 62 percent said that video improved communication versus the phone. Emotional connections, relationships, and trust are established faster because of the visibility in the video call. Appearing in video makes sales professionals nervous and anxious, but people can learn to master it. (Blount, 2020.) According to Blount (2020), *“The best way to visualize proper framing for a video sales call is to think about how a newscaster is positioned on screen.”* (Blount, 2020.)

Figure 12 shows how to properly set the video framing for customer meetings.

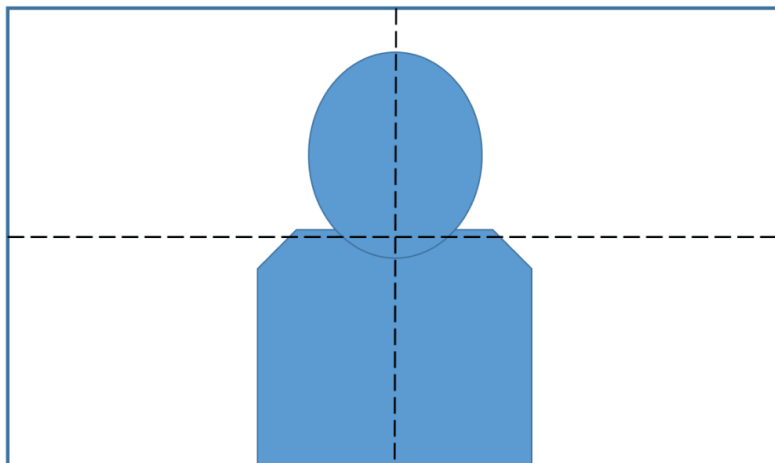


Figure 12. Proper video framing.

Next in the Figure 13, are listed the five human elements of effective video sales calls that makes salespersons accessible, warm, credible, human, and memorable on camera. (Blount, 2020.)

To be an effective, approachable, trustworthy communicator, one must manage five elements of body language:

1. Facial expressions specially relaxed smile. Smile is the most powerful and effective facial expression on video sales calls.
2. Body movement and posture: straight posture, chin up, shoulders back, stand still in a relaxed posture.
3. Gestures, keep hand gestures natural and relaxed. A wave accompanied with a smile is a virtual handshake.
4. Voice tone and inflection. People will be confident, sound professional and believable when voice inflection and pace are relaxed, assertive, and confident. When smiling and leading with a pleasant tone, people reduce the chance of misinterpretation and pull others towards oneself. Eye contact connects at an emotional level.

(Blount, 2020.)

Figure 13. manage five elements of body language

Attention Control. It is easy to become distracted in today's work environment, we are constantly on our devices. To keep control salesperson must turn everything else off, remain completely focused, turn off the sounds of devices and controlling eyes to be there. As the eyes goes so does the attention. (Blount, 2020.)

Listening. Listening is the most important for excellence in virtual selling. It's a key to developing deep emotional connections with customers. The person asking the questions is in control and that is a basic rule for human communication. Listening requires more focus and patience in virtual communication channels because of its natural limitation. By listening one can make people feel important, valued, and appreciated. (Blount, 2020.)

Active Listening. Salesperson can acknowledge that they are listening by looking directly at the camera and making eye contact. Affirmative body language and facial expressions demonstrate that people are listening smiling, leaning forward toward the camera, and nodding head. People must make sure that their hands are idle and by their side; otherwise, it will appear to be distracted. Summarizing and restating what customer have said will tell that salesperson was not only listening but aids understanding. Asking relevant follow-up questions that build on the conversation to validate that attention is paid. Supporting phrases like "Yes, I see," "That makes sense," and "That's exciting" encourage customers to open and reveal more. However, because of the intrinsic issues with virtual communication, salespersons need to be careful that their verbal acknowledgment is not misconstrued as talking over customer. (Blount, 2020.)

Deep Listening. To truly hear another person, one must listen with all senses—eyes, ears, and intuition. As people listen, they should observe their stakeholder's body language and facial expressions. To be observant and tune in to the emotional nuances. Paying attention to the tone, timbre, and pace of the customer's voice. Focusing on the meaning behind the words they are using. Since people tend to communicate in stories, listening deeply to pick up unsaid feelings and emotions. As a salesperson perceive emotional importance, it is important to ask follow-up questions to test their hunch. For example: "That sounds pretty important. How are you dealing with it?" This opens the door for other relevant follow-up questions that encourage customers to share the issues that are most important to them. (Blount, 2020.)

Pausing to Avoid Video Awkwardness. Nothing makes customers feel like salespersons aren't listening more than when they talk over them. Paying attention to that the other person has finished speaking, pausing, and counting to three. This affords time to fully digest what one has heard, before responding. Pausing leaves room for others to finish speaking and prevents people from cutting them off if they have not. When people are unclear about what customer is saying, or don't understand something they are trying to express, people want to clarify. In this moment, it is easy to make the mistake of interrupting them mid-sentence. Instead, just making a note, waiting until they pause, and then asking clarifying question. Well-timed clarifying questions demonstrate to the other person that people are listening and are interested in understanding them. (Blount, 2020.)

Preparing to Listen. By being empathetic, considering other people's feelings when they aren't listened and stepping into customer's shoes and considering their feelings if they are not heard. By focusing on the wants as motivation to regulate one's disruptive emotions of boredom, attention control, and the need for significance. By practicing intentional attention control. Making a deliberate choice to remove all other distractions, including own self-centered thoughts and impulse to interrupt, and give complete attention to customers. To shut up and listen—making it a conscious, intentional choice. Before each virtual sales call, preparing mentally to listen. Being aware of the urge to blurt out own idea when feeling the impulse to making a point and stop oneself. The more salesperson listens, the more emotionally connected customer feels to them. (Blount, 2020.)

Being Video Ready. People judge others competence based on what they wear and how they look. *“These judgments are made in a matter of milliseconds and are very hard to avoid.”* The way people look—the physical appearance—is a key element in making a great impression and projecting credibility and competence. Both of which lead to trust. Therefore, salespersons need to dress and groom like their job is to close deals. (Blount, 2020.)

Video Sales Call Calendar Invitation. There is always someone who does not show their face in video calls. In this situation it is preferable to act as if they have their camera on and always making eye contact. The best way to avoid this situation, is to send a proper meeting invite that clearly indicates the intend it to be a video call. Customizing the invitation. If the meeting is intended to be a phone call only, it is not preferred to include the link to the online meeting. If the intention is to the call to be a video call, the online meeting link should only be included. It is suggester to set profile on the videoconferencing platform and to use a professional headshot. This way, people see a face in the frame prior to salesperson joining the call on video and if the video feed goes down. (Blount, 2020.)

The more conscious the salesperson is in the video sales call the more emotionally connected the customer is. (Blount, 2020.) When there is an emotional connection, the customer is more likely to buy. This theory gives a good overview how a co-worker from the hybrid team can by own behavior effect on the sales results of the team and supports the team with the new sales method the team is taking over.

Next section will summarize the findings from literature review in the categories of individuals and the team, the team rules and ways of working, the leadership and customers

4.5 Conceptual Framework of the Thesis

The section above discussed available knp3ldge and best practice to address these four categories and sub-themes that were earlier identified as development areas for the current state analysis (Section 3). The relevant ideas from literature and best practice on these topics and sub-topics were collected and visualized into a meta-construct (i.e. the

conceptual framework) that should guide the development of the proposal in the next stage. Figure 14 shows the conceptual framework of this thesis.

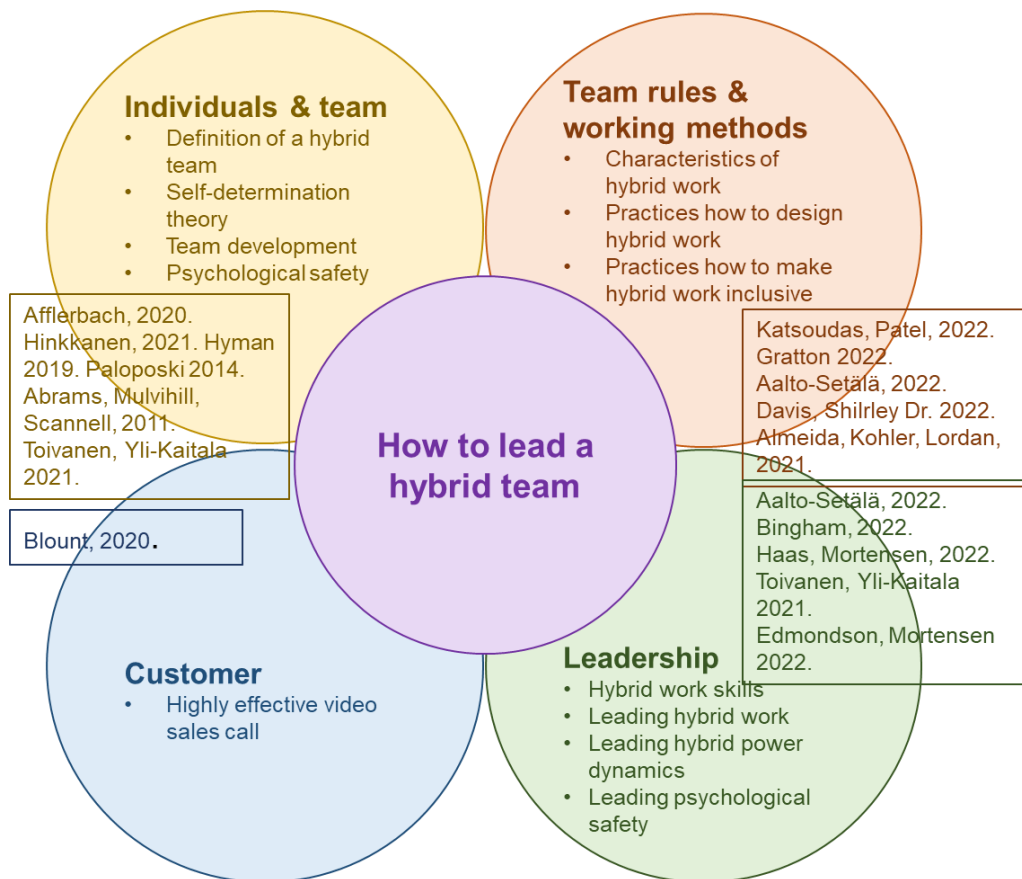


Figure 14. Conceptual Framework of this thesis.

The conceptual framework contains four basic elements that support the core theme of the thesis, How to lead a hybrid team.

The first element relates to Individuals and Team and describes the definition of a hybrid team to get the understanding what a hybrid team is (Afflerbach, 2020). Then, it moves to the stages in the team development to better understand the situations and emotions each individual is going through when forming a new team and in what stages the hybrid team members are and where they should be heading to perform highly (Tuckman 2001, Hyman 2019, Paloposki 2014, Abrams et al. 2011). The last sub-themes relate to the self-determination theory explaining the psychological needs of an individual in a working environment and how to take these needs into account when designing new hybrid work arrangements (Hinkkanen, 2021), continuing to psychological safety describing how important it is in this new complex working environment of a hybrid team and how to

strengthen psychological safety in the hybrid team (Toivanen 2021, Toivanen and Yli-Kaitala 2021.).

The second element of the conceptual framework relates to the Team rules and working methods. This element focuses on how to organize the hybrid teamwork taking into consideration the characteristics of hybrid work (Katsoudas and Patel, 2022), how to design hybrid work (Gratton, 2022. Aalto-Setälä, 2022) and how to make hybrid work inclusive (Davis and Shirlley 2022, Almeida et al. 2021).

The third element of the conceptual framework is the Leadership in the hybrid team environment. This element focuses on describing hybrid work skills (Aalto-Setälä, 2022), how to lead hybrid work (Aalto-Setälä, 2022, Bingham, 2022) and introducing hybrid power dynamics and how to best lead these power dynamics (Haas and Mortensen 2022), and finally how to lead psychological safety in a hybrid team (Toivanen and Yli-Kaitala 2021, Edmondson and Mortensen 2022).

The fourth element of the conceptual framework is the Customers. The hybrid team in this study needs to take a new video tool into use with its customers and the customers expect to have a video sales call nowadays. For this reason, the Customer element focused on how to make video sales call effective and discuss the best practices on managing video sales calls (Blount, 2020).

In the next section, the conceptual framework is utilized for guiding the proposal building for the case company based on the ideas from best practices and existing knowledge discussed above in Section 4.

5 Building Proposal of How to Lead a Hybrid Team for the Case Company

This section focuses on building the initial proposal from the findings of current state analysis based on Data 1, the conceptual framework suggestions gathered from existing knowledge and best practices and finally from Data 2-3 collection in form of team workshop, stake holder meeting and team meeting companied by survey to give input on suggested actions. The outcome is the proposal, an action plan that is attached in this thesis as Appendix 8.

5.1 Overview of the Proposal Building Stage

In the current state analysis, the findings were categorized into four groups, namely: Individuals and team, Team rules and working methods, Leadership & Team Leader, and Customers. The current state analysis described the strengths, weaknesses, and expectations in each category. After that, to address the selected development areas, the thesis focused on the search for relevant knowledge elements from literature and best practice. The aim for conceptual framework was to identify and select the relevant elements to guide the proposal building in the next stage. Therefore, the same logic and categories were used for selecting the elements for the conceptual framework and the findings from the current state analysis were used as sub-themes.

This section presents the steps in the Proposal building for this study.

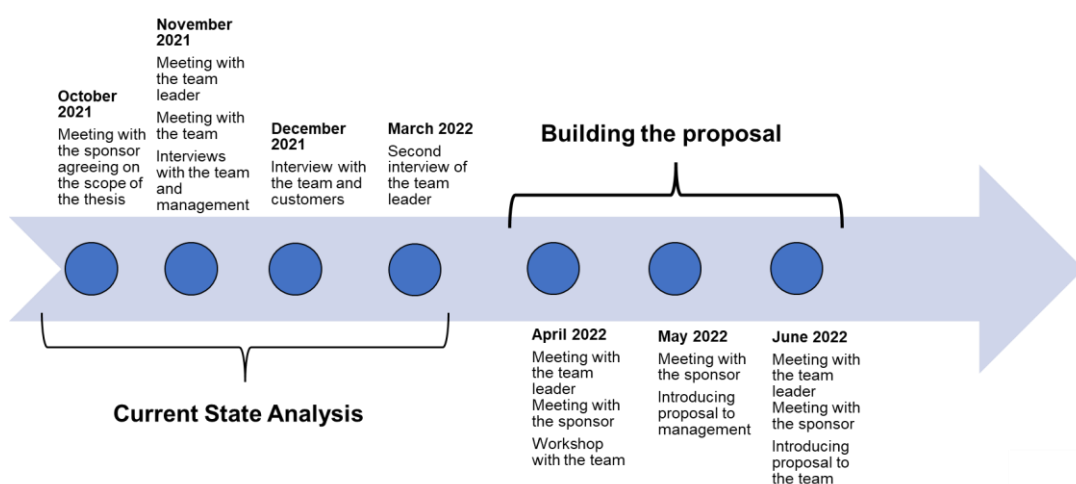


Figure 15. Data collections 1-3 (gathered from meetings with the team and the stakeholders) in a timeline.

First, the proposal building included a workshop with the team that introduced the key findings from the current state analysis and the conceptual framework and then arranged discussion on these topics to get the input for the initial proposal (Appendix 8). The workshop themes, preliminary assignments, exercises, and presentation were reviewed by the thesis sponsor, the unit manager, and the team leader of the hybrid team before the workshop. The materials from them are available in Appendix 6 and 7.

Second, the proposal building continued into a meeting with the management to introduce the key findings from the current state analysis and the conceptual framework and the initial proposal, i.e. the action plan, co-created together with the team in the previous step. The meeting materials were reviewed by the thesis sponsor, the unit manager, and the team leader of the hybrid team before the workshop. Management consists of the unit manager, the human resources manager, the sales manager and the team leader of the hybrid team. After the meeting, feedback was collected from the management to improve the initial proposal by using a survey (Appendix 9).

Third, the proposal building ended with a meeting with the team to introduce the initial proposal, the action plan, to familiarize the team with expected actions co-created with the team and management in the previous steps. The meeting materials were reviewed by the thesis sponsor, the unit manager, and the team leader of the hybrid team before the workshop. After the meeting, feedback was collected from the team to build the final proposal by using a survey (Appendix 11). Thus, the feedback from the management and the team formed the initial proposal for this study, i.e. the action plan which was later tested in Validation (Section 6, Appendix 12) and after the testing round and the validation sessions, the Final proposal was formed (Section 6, Appendix 13).

Next, the thesis summarized the three main inputs for the proposal building (the CSA results, the conceptual framework, and the co-development and suggestions from the stakeholder before reporting on the Initial proposal itself).

5.2 Findings from Data 2 (pulling together CSA, CF and Data 2 for the Proposal)

This thesis has four selected focus areas categorized based on the results from the current state analysis and then explored in the conceptual framework: 1) Team and individuals, 2) Team rules and working methods, 3) Leadership & Team leader, and 4)

Customers. These four topics were selected to address the objective of this thesis *to develop recommendations how to lead a hybrid team*.

First, in relation to *the Team and individuals*, the current state analysis, first, pointed to the need to identify the team building stages, and the conceptual framework introduced the theory of team development forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning (Tuckman 2001, Paloposki 2014 etc.) and identified a tool (survey) to analyze the stage of team development (Abrams et al. 2011). The survey by Abrams et al. (2011) was selected to be used in the team workshop to assess what stage the team is currently in. Thus, the Proposal building started by conducting this survey which indicated that some team members were in the stage of norming and some in the stage of storming.

Continuing with *the Team and individuals*, in the current state analysis one finding was to strengthen the team togetherness, since the team consists of many individuals and every individual is important to the team and every team member should feel included. To help the team with team building, it was necessary to find and establish the team building principles in the hybrid team environment. For this end, the literature search identified best practices how to make a hybrid team productive and to tackle the feelings of loneliness in remote work. In the conceptual framework, the theory of psychological safety (Toivanen and Yli-Kaitala 2021) was introduced to address these challenges and two exercises were found for strengthening the psychological safety: the “rose-bud-thorn” method (Toivanen and Yli-Kaitala 2021) and “working with me” exercise (Congelosi 2020). The working with me-exercise was selected to be implemented at team workshop in order to get the team members to know each other better.

Second, in relation to the Team rules and working methods, the key findings in the current state analysis pointed to the need to find best practices how to lead and work in a hybrid team. These needs included to structure information in a way that the team does not need to spend extra time going through their most active channel. Also, the literature search focused on how to give and get help in a structured way and making everyone a visible member of the hybrid team. For this end, it was necessary to agree the rules how everyone should take part into common discussions. Based on the current state analysis findings and conceptual framework, there were five focus areas selected for the workshop with the team: communication, focus, helping others, visibility, and communality. From the communications perspective, the ways to make informal communication must be created in remote environment (Almeida et al. 2021). The team has excellent example

of virtual meeting room in their Microsoft Teams Group chat where the team members meet and greet daily, but the chat is sometimes too busy. The team should find ways to reach the information from the busy group chat to everyone. To address these needs, the literature search brought up the idea of using the asynchronous time to tasks that need more focus, and the synchronous working time to give and get help (Gratton, 2022, Hinkanen 2021) in order to balance the independent tasks that need focus and being available. The literature search also suggested ideas how to make sure that people can ask for and get help as psychological safety has set as an expectation (Toivanen and Yli-Kaitala 2021), how these requests are noticed during a workday, and what response time should be agreed. Another important idea was to ask the team members to inform where they are and how, meaning to make oneself visible, and how to take care of and strengthen communality (Hinkanen 2021). These focus areas were selected to use in the workshop for co-developing the proposal around these topics with the team.

Third, leading a hybrid team is a new situation to the current *Team Leader* who is eager to find best practice to lead a hybrid team and to familiarize the team leading specific work. The development areas from the current state analysis pointed to the need to access to the tools and ensuring similar working environment, including the needs for taking care of visibility and sharing information with the team, as the team expects to have common ways of working. Best practices on how to lead a hybrid team relied especially on the publications by Aalto-Setälä (2022) that recommends hybrid team managers to use listening, settling, following-up and caring more visible. Bingham (2022) urges to learn the success factors for each team member, ensuring the needs are met when designing new working methods, and seeking insights how well the schedule is working in the hybrid team. Aalto-Setälä (2022) advises the leaders of hybrid teams to develop own and team members' hybrid skills. The important learning was that hybridity creates power dynamics such as inequality in working environment, tools, benefits, and the leaders of hybrid teams should lead hybrid power dynamics by tracking and communicating, designing, educating and following up (Haas and Mortensen, 2022). Also improving psychological safety and making virtual meetings participatory is also needed (Toivanen and Yli-Kaitala 2021). At the same time, it turned out that, for the hybrid environment, common ways of working are less important, since the results are more important than the ways of working, and the team members in the hybrid work can have different ways of working. These best practices were collected and discussed in the workshop for developing the initial proposal. These topics were then trained to the

management, including the team leader of the hybrid team, when presenting the initial proposal in the management meeting.

Finally, the key expectations from *the Customer* perspective included: a decision checklist of what customer needs to decide before or during the meeting, and mapping customer budget in the planning phase of the sales process. These two expectations were added to the initial proposal. The team needs to know how to serve customers remotely via a video connection. The search for best practice helped to outline how to sell via a video connection (Blount, 2020): by video framing, body language, attention control, active listening, deep listening, a pause of 3 seconds after the customer speaking, prepare to listen, be video ready, including physical appearance and professional etiquette. These best practices were collected and discussed when building the initial proposal. These topics were then trained to the team when presenting the initial proposal at the hybrid team meeting.

The steps formed the Proposal building, and served for involving the stakeholders into co-development (Data 3 collection).

In summary, after the literature review and careful selection of topics, *a workshop* was held with the team. The idea of the workshop was to discuss how the chosen theories fit the team needs, and create an action plan in co-creation with the team to overcome the key challenges from current state analysis. The action plan became part of the initial proposal. Other actions were suggested in conception to the current state challenges, as well as a few customer actions without a link to literature. Thus, the team workshop was Data 2 collection. The workshop with the team was the first input to building the proposal resulting to first draft of team action plan.

The first event for Data 3 collection was a meeting with the management to present the initial proposal and gather feedback using a survey. The second event for Data 3 collection was the meeting with the team, introducing the initial proposal to the team and gathering feedback using a survey.

The team and management came up with suggestions for the Initial proposal listed below in Figure 16.

Figure 16. Key stakeholder suggestions (findings of Data 3) for Proposal building in relation to findings from the CSA (Data 1) and the Conceptual framework.

	<i>Key focus area from CSA (from Data 1)</i>	<i>Input from literature (CF)</i>	<i>Suggestions from stakeholders for the Proposal, summary (from Data 3)</i>	<i>Description of their suggestion (in detail)</i>
	Key findings	-	There are some duplications in strengths and development areas	Fix duplications and decide the key findings, revise CSA findings
	Key findings	Conceptual Framework of the Thesis	Do we have enough time to the action list so that we can have the full benefit of it and take it into action.	No suggestion. Researchers note: No need for everyone to test all actions in the action list. Another test round will be taken if needed. Actions will stay to the team to be utilized in the future as well.
1	Loneliness, unapproachability, the team is new, lack of togetherness, willingness to get to know each other	Psychological safety & practices how to make hybrid work inclusive	To take notice of different types of individuals in the team	No suggestion. Researchers note: This was one literature review topic but had to limit the subjects to keep the study in reasonable frames.
	Team development and common ways of working	Team development & practices how to design hybrid work	What is the best way to develop the team and the working methods	Meeting with the team, training, action plan implementation
2	Team development, ways of working when someone is absent, visibility, improve follow-ups, excellent customer experience, working from anywhere model, video connection with the customer, improve selling process	Team development, characteristics of hybrid work, practices how to design hybrid work & highly efficient video sales calls	Comparison what current state analysis findings has already been developed during the process and time	Add what has been done already to the team presentation
	Competence to reach and exceed sales goals & excellent customer experience	Practices how to design hybrid work	Share customer cases and plans in the team	Added to the initial proposal
	Loneliness, the team is new, lack of togetherness, willingness to get to know each other, sense of belonging	Self-determination theory, team development, psychological safety, practices how to design hybrid work &	Regular live meetings with team members	Added to the initial proposal

		how to make hybrid work inclusive		
	Lack of common ways of working	Practices how to design hybrid	Team rules, to get the team work together even better	Added to the initial proposal
	Flexible schedule and place to work, inequality in working premises and tools	Self-determination theory, practices how to design hybrid work	<i>"I am still confused are we a remote team or do we work at the office, because you are alone in both, no office time together with the other team members."</i>	Added to the initial proposal
3	Leadership & Team Leader		<i>There were no suggestions to leadership part from key stake holders. The proposal was perceived good as it was.</i>	
4	Customer feedback on the need to have a decision list in advance to make decision before or during the meeting	-	There is limited time with the customer, so the decision list and others should be integrated smoothly into action.	Proceed with action taking customer decision list in to selling process before meeting the team member
	Customer feedback on the need to discuss the budget	-	Asking customer budget has been in use before. I should maybe take it back into use. <i>"Customers seemed to be embarrassed or did not inform the budget. Now days I intuit the atmosphere and ask if I feel appropriate"</i>	Proceed with action asking customer budget in the selling process when meeting the customer
	Customer expectation of video connection, team members expected video tool to optimize ways of working	Highly efficient video sales calls	One team member found the best practices of highly efficient video sales calls not useful	No suggestion. Researchers note: Several team members found the shared best practices useful

The key topics discussed when collecting Data 3 are summarized in Figure 16. After the management meeting, a survey was conducted and suggestions collected to improve the initial proposal before introducing the Initial proposal to the team. The suggestions were to fix the duplications in the current state analysis, to find the best ways to develop the team and their working methods and to state the development that has already been done along the way as the process has moved on. These corrections were then made to the initial proposal and the presentation to the team.

After the introduction of the initial proposal and the meeting with the team, a survey was conducted to collect the improvement suggestions to the initial proposal from the team. The team suggested that do the team have enough time to test all these actions and take those into use, to take notice of different individuals in the team, to share customer cases and plans in the team, to meet regularly live with the team, to define team rules to get the team working even better together, to add common office days to meet the team members live, to integrate the customer decision list smoothly into action, to ask customer budget actively from the customer and finally some team member felt that the best practices of highly efficient video sales2 calls were not useful. These suggestions were then added to the proposal or commented to the team if not added to the proposal.

As seen from Figure 16, the stakeholders suggested 12 improvements to the initial proposal. 8 of these suggestions were added or modified to the Initial proposal. 4 suggestions were not taken into use since two were already in the Initial proposal, one feedback did not remove the suggested actions from the final proposal since most team members felt these actions useful and one suggestion was not taken into use since the topic was already considered in the literature review and discarded to limit the subjects of the conceptual framework.

Next, Section 5.3 summarizes the initial proposal, which was built based on the current state analysis, conceptual framework, and Data collection 2-3, as reported in this and previous sections.

5.3 Initial Proposal

This is the initial proposal for leading the hybrid team, an action plan how to improve the four elements of the hybrid team: individuals and team, team rules and working methods,

leading the hybrid team, and improving customer experience. These improvements and suggested actions are based on the findings from the current state analysis, conceptual framework, and inputs to the action plan from the stakeholder in Data collection 2-3.

5.3.1 Element 1 of the Initial Proposal: Individuals and Team

The initial proposal for individuals and team focuses on building psychological safety to the team, as other parts of selected focus areas in current state analysis have been covered in the thesis workshop or later in other elements. In the team workshop, it was stated that the team was already in the *performing* state of team development. If the team still had been in the earlier stages, there would have also been actions to proceed the performing stage of team development. Self-determination theory is covered in the next section in the team rules and working methods element.

The literature review found two assignments to build psychological safety in a hybrid team. The team already tested the first assignment in the thesis workshop and found it very well fitted to the team needs and that the team will continue to use this question list in their weekly coffee breaks and other occasions to get to know each other more. The other assignment was the rose-bud-thorn method, and it was decided and included into the team's action plan to test the method further.

5.3.2 Element 2 of the Initial Proposal: Team Rules and Working Methods

The initial proposal for the action plan in regard to the Team rules and working methods was categorized into *communication, focus, helping, visibility, communality* and *giving feedback*. The team had a workshop around these topics with questions guiding the discussions (Appendix 6), the proposed actions were then gathered into the action plan. The proposed actions focused on how to make sure the information flows smoothly, as in the inclusive hybrid team it should to make the team coherent.

Another focus areas for gathering suggestions related to: (a) how to make sure there is enough focus time in the working day, to make sure the team core work for customers gets done as described in characteristics of hybrid work jobs and tasks, (b) how to make sure that help is available, and the team members dare to ask for help, since this is part of inclusion and psychological safety in the hybrid team; (c) how to make sure the team knows where other team members are located and what they are doing, and that

everyone takes part to the team discussions as everyone is part of the team, since visibility and common discussion are part of working together in a hybrid team and both creates inclusion in hybrid environment; (d) how to take care of communality digitally when the team is scattered to different locations, since this part comes from self-determination theory and psychological safety which takes care of sense of belonging and communality in the hybrid working environment. Finally, it was agreed in the team workshop when the team went through the question list of psychological safety (the “Working together” assignment) how the team wants to give and receive feedback from each other. These elements of team rules and working methods of the initial proposal was co-created together with the hybrid team.

5.3.3 Element 3 of the Initial Proposal: Leadership & Team Leader

The initial proposal for the Leadership & Team Leader element was gathered from the co-workers, team leader and management expectations of leadership in the hybrid team, as well as the key findings from the current state analysis, and fresh ideas from literature review and best practices of how to lead a hybrid team. It was done so that to address the topics and challenges as for hybrid work skills, leading hybrid work, leading hybrid power dynamics and leading psychological safety (identified as themes in the literature and best practice section). The proposed actions were gathered from the workshop after discussing best practice from the literature review and CSA results.

5.3.4 Element 4 of the Initial Proposal Customers

The initial proposal for the actions in relation to the Customer element was compiled from the customer expectations expressed in the customer interviews and the co-worker expectations in the team member interviews. The literature review was also used as input as it discussed the topics of virtual selling and specially using a video connection with the customer since it was a new selling method for most of the team and customers expected the video call instead of a phone call. The topics were also discussed in the team workshop and feedback gathered for initial proposal. The proposed actions for the Customer element were collected from these key inputs.

5.4 Summary of the Initial Proposal

The initial proposal was build based on the results from the current state analysis, ideas from literature and best practice, and stakeholder inputs in Data collection 2. The initial proposal, the action plan how to lead the hybrid team, was built in co-creation with the hybrid team and the hybrid team leader in the team workshop and discussions with the team leader. The initial proposal was then introduced to the management and the team. Feedback on the proposed actions was collected using a survey, and the initial proposal was then further refined and ready to be tested with the team.

The summary of the Initial proposal, the action plan how to lead the hybrid team, is shown in Figure 17. below. (The action plan with a full range of detail and all the proposed actions can be found in Appendix 8).

Actions in "Individuals and Team"
Work With Me - questions
Rose, bud, thorn - method
Actions in "Team rules and working methods"
Weekly newsletter from the team leader
Pinning conversations in the team Microsoft Teams group chat
Separate list to collect product information
Using Microsoft Teams statuses
Do not disturb status on when having a meeting with a customer
Do not disturb status or muting conversations
Always have courage to ask for help
Take a Microsoft Teams call with a colleague
Recap how to make a call to a specialist
Answer the same day, if issue is urgent tell it or ask from other channels
Everyone writes hellos and goodbyes to the team group chat
Taking part on conversations in the team group chat
The new application informs where everyone is remote, office, in other tasks
Everyone writes something to the team group chat in a workday
When working in other tasks inform it in Teams status
Common office days
Face-to-face team meetings
Everyone helps and answers the questions from other colleagues
Everyone takes part to team virtual coffee break at least once a week
Customer meetings and customer plans reviewed in team meetings regularly

Common rules - a questionnaire what is needed, workshop in a team meeting
Positive feedback can be given anywhere however
Constructive feedback is given one-to-one via Teams call, avoid e-mail
Think first and form the constructive feedback before giving it to a colleague
Tell the constructive feedback and guide how to do it differently
Actions in "Leadership & Team Leader"
Listen, settle, follow-up
Make caring visible
Polish own and team hybrid skills
Learn the work the team is doing
Learn the success factors of each team member
Ensure business needs when designing new working methods
Seek insights of how well the schedule is working
Lead hybrid power dynamics: Track and communicate, design, educate, follow-up
Improve psychological safety
Make virtual meetings participatory
Actions in "Customers"
Decision list to customer
Mapping customer budget to sales process
Video framing
Body language
Attention control
Active listening
Deep listening
Pause 3 seconds after the customer stops speaking
Prepare to listen
Be video ready - physical appearance
Professional etiquette

Figure 17. Summary of the Initial proposal (action plan how to lead the hybrid team).

The next section of this thesis focuses on testing the action plan in the hybrid team and validating the proposal with the team.

6 Validation of the Proposal How to Lead a Hybrid Team

This section includes the overview of the validation stage, the results of the validation and developments to the Initial proposal. First, this section describes the validation steps of the initial proposal to reach the Thesis outcome. Second, it reports on the feedback of testing the initial proposal based on Data collection round 3. Third, the Final proposal is presented in the form of the recommended action plan.

6.1 Overview of the Validation Stage

This section reports on the validation results of the initial proposal developed in Section 5. The goal of this step was to validate the initial proposal how to lead the hybrid team so that to improve the weaknesses and fulfill the expectations identified from the current stage analysis. Validation was done by testing and evaluating the actions proposed in the initial action plan. The testing and the evaluation were done by the hybrid team. These actions and evaluations make Data collection 3 of this thesis.

This section presents the steps and timeline in the validation stage.

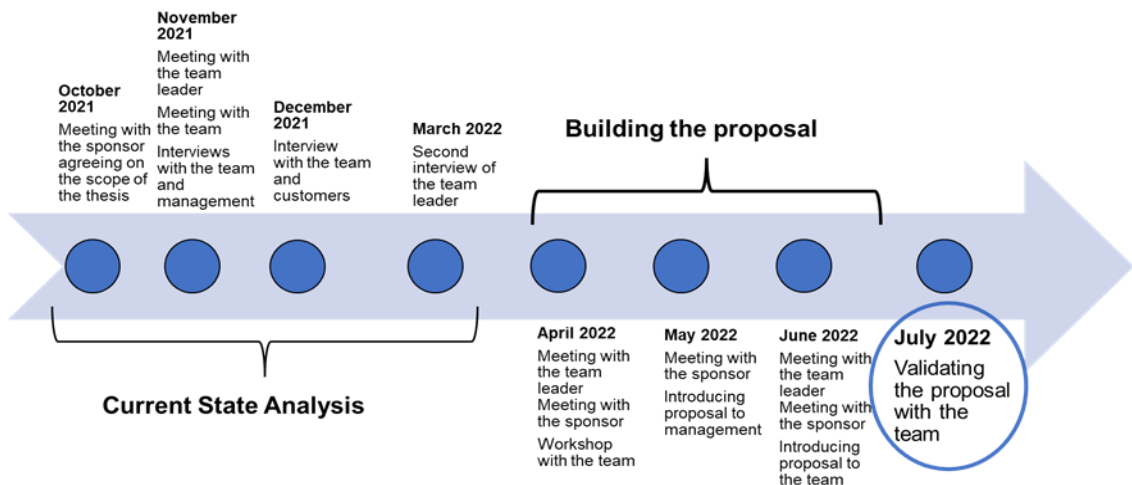


Figure 18. Data collection (gathered from meetings with the team and the stakeholders) in a timeline.

The weaknesses and the expectations identified from the current state analysis required to find solutions and propose actions how to lead a hybrid team. The initial proposal building included Data collections 1 and 2, which informed the topics for search for

existing knowledge and best practices. The identified ideas were then combined into these four elements of the Initial proposal: 1. Individuals and team 2. Team rules and working methods 3. Leadership and 4. Customer.

The goal of this section is to validate the proposed action plan. The validation of the proposal was done in one testing round, followed by the validation discussion. The hybrid team tested each action in the initial proposal. Feedback and validation discussion was held to check the action by action if the tested actions were found useful for the team. Based on Data collection 3 gathered from the validation stage, the initial proposal was then updated into the final proposal.

6.2 Testing and Developments to the Initial Proposal

Data Collection 3 concentrated on identifying improvements to the Initial proposal in Section 5 that resulted from testing the proposed actions by the hybrid team members. Appendix 12 shows the results from testing the actions in the initial proposal.

As seen from “Testing the proposal” (Appendix 12), most actions were tested, and the team agreed to continue with these actions. Some actions were not tested or were partially tested, and the team agreed to implement these actions also into use. Two actions were agreed to remove and one to be changed. Otherwise, the action plan was tested and, in essence, stayed as it was. Next, this section will report on the testing of each element.

First, in *the Individuals and team* element, the team found the selected exercises to build psychological safety in the team useful, and agreed to continue using those in team meetings. There was no need to change these actions.

Second, *the Team rules and working methods* element had 25 actions of which the team tested 16. The team agreed that two of these tested actions should be removed since the technical aspects does not function as it was expected and one action needed to change, namely: “*when working in the other tasks, inform it in Teams status*” was changed to “*when working in the other tasks, inform it in the Team group chat*”. The team and the team leader agreed that all other actions, tested and not tested, can be as it is and the team will use these as part of their routines and ways of working.

Third, in *the Leadership & Team Leader* element, these actions were introduced to management in Data collection 2 and tested by the team leader in Data collection 3. The relevance and validation of these actions were discussed with the team leader after testing. These actions were agreed to be used continuously or start their implementation. The team leader informed that *“Make caring visible”* action was partially tested, and that the team leader should add communication in the Team chat group and also to have routine in place to catch-up with all the team members individually and regularly. Next, *“Learn the work the team is doing”* action was also partially tested, the training is ongoing, and the team leader has done some of the team tasks, but not all. *“Lead hybrid power dynamics”* action was partially tested, but there is still inequality with the working permits; therefore, the team leader will continue to work on equal working conditions. Also, Microsoft Forms is used in the team both with anonymous and signed queries, to collect feedback on how well the new ways of working are functioning and what should be changed.

Finally, in *the Customer* element, there were discussions around the customer decision list. It was found useful, but the reality is that it is the customer’s decision how much they spend time preparing for the meeting. The initial decision list is published in the company’s web site. There was also a discussion that the customer decision list should be included to the booking confirmation. Next, mapping the customer budget-actions was also discussed, as some of the customers were surprised of the price of basic product bundle. However, most customers know the price level and most of the customers also do not consider the budget at this point of the buying journey. Also, the team members did not want to guide the plan to different direction with the budget, and they stressed that the customers typically ask for the budget after the plan was made. In the relation to the video call, the camera positioning and pausing after customer speaks actions were also tested. For the rest of the actions, seven of them, the team did not test. There was some resistance to the topic of how the team members should behave in the selling situation; this is why the team did not test all the customer actions. After the feedback discussion, the team leader agreed that the team continues with these actions and if needed the team leader adds these points to team coaching framework. Also, *the Customer* actions were discussed with the case company’s global matrix partner, and they found it usable to other similar teams around the globe, since the case company did not have a framework on the remote video sales calls with the customers.

In summary, the Action plan was approved and accepted (i.e. validated) by all stakeholders involved. Based on the results, the Implementation plan was created to support getting the partially or not tested actions into use. After discussing the developments to the Initial proposal, this section ends with the Final proposal and the Implementation plan.

6.3 Final Proposal

This section summarizes the Final proposal, based on the results of testing and validation discussions about the suggested actions. As seen from Figure 19 below, the Final proposal “How to lead a hybrid team” is linked to the key findings from the current state analysis (weaknesses and expectations) described in Section 3. This action plan is also linked to earlier discussions in Sections 4 and 5 to find best practices how to lead a hybrid team, and then it is also tested in the previous step, Section 6.

<p>Actions in “Individuals and Team”</p> <p>Work With Me – questions</p> <p>When do you feel most happy at work?</p> <p>In or outside of work, what are the things that you haven’t made enough time for that you wish you did more of?</p> <p>Include 1-2 pictures of yourself or pictures that you have taken that capture who you are and explain why.</p> <p>What are your pet peeves?</p> <p>What are your scheduling quirks or scheduling preferences (favorite times to conduct meetings, etc.?)</p> <p>What is something about yourself that people might not know in their first time meeting you?</p> <p>What is something you’re actively working to improve?</p> <p>How do we know when you’re stressed?</p> <p>Is there anything in a work setting that makes you uncomfortable?</p> <p>When you’re upset, do you like space? Distractions? To talk it through with the team.</p> <p>What is your favorite way to learn a new tool/skill?</p> <p>When are you most productive or most energized?</p> <p>Is there a certain time of day that you feel most productive?</p> <p>How do you measure your success?”</p> <p>Rose, bud, thorn – method</p> <p>Everyone tells three things from a work week in turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rose something that went well 2. Bud something that brings hope or inspires 3. Thorn something that did not go well or was a mistake 	<p>Actions in “Team rules and working methods”</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>Weekly newsletter from the team leader</p> <p>Separate list to collect product information</p> <p>Focus</p> <p>Using Microsoft Teams statuses</p> <p>Do not disturb status on when having a meeting with a customer</p> <p>Do not disturb status or muting conversations</p> <p>Helping</p> <p>Always have courage to ask for help</p> <p>Take a Microsoft Teams call with a colleague</p> <p>Recap how to make a call to a specialist</p> <p>Answer the same day, if issue is urgent tell it or ask from other channels</p> <p>Visibility</p> <p>Everyone writes hellos and goodbyes to the team group chat</p> <p>Taking part on conversations in the team group chat</p> <p>Everyone writes something to the team group chat in a workday</p> <p>When working in other tasks inform it in the team chat</p> <p>Common office days</p> <p>Face-to-face team meetings</p> <p>Community</p> <p>Everyone helps and answers the questions from other colleagues</p> <p>Everyone takes part to team virtual coffee break at least once a week</p> <p>Customer meetings and customer plans reviewed in team meetings regularly</p> <p>Common rules - a questionnaire what is needed, workshop in a team meeting</p> <p>Giving feedback</p> <p>Positive feedback can be given anywhere however</p> <p>Constructive feedback is given one-to-one via Teams call, avoid e-mail</p> <p>Think first and form the constructive feedback before giving it to a colleague</p> <p>Tell the constructive feedback and guide how to do it differently</p>
<p>Actions in “Leadership & Team Leader”</p> <p>Listen, settle, follow-up</p> <p>Make caring visible</p> <p>Polish own and team hybrid skills</p> <p>Learn the work the team is doing</p> <p>Learn the success factors of each team member</p> <p>Ensure business needs when designing new working methods</p> <p>Seek insights of how well the schedule is working</p> <p>Lead hybrid power dynamics: Track and communicate, design, educate, follow-up</p> <p>Improve psychological safety</p> <p>Make virtual meetings participatory</p>	<p>Actions in “Customers”</p> <p>Decision list to customer</p> <p>Mapping customer budget to sales process</p> <p>Video framing</p> <p>Body language</p> <p>Attention control</p> <p>Active listening</p> <p>Deep listening</p> <p>Pause 3 seconds after customer speaking</p> <p>Prepare to listen</p> <p>Be video ready - physical appearance</p> <p>Professional etiquette</p>

Figure 19. Final proposal (the full view can be found in Appendix 13).

After the validating of the actions in the Final proposal, the hybrid team got the Final proposal and the Implementation plan to take every agreed action into use in the hybrid

team. The next subsection describes the Implementation plan which was approved by the hybrid team for taking actions.

6.4 Implementation plan

The Implementation plan takes the Final proposal onto a practical level. The plan includes the steps to take the proposed actions into use and includes the roles and responsibilities, as well as the timing. The plan is presented in Figure 20 below.

Figure 20. Implementation plan for the Final proposal.

What	When	Who	Why	Where	What
1. Actions in "Team and individual" category	In each team meeting and in some of team coffee breaks	Team Leader	To increase psychological safety and inclusion in the team; to get to know each other better	Shared Team files	Update the Excel tool with the actions plan
2. Actions in "Team rules and working methods" category	In one month: customer cases and common rules in monthly team meeting, everyone takes part in weekly coffee breaks, first live team meeting coming, informing where everyone is in the team group chat and using feedback framework when needed	Team & Team Leader	To get the team working together, informed and organized in a hybrid working environment	Shared Team files	Update the Excel tool with the actions plan
4. Actions in "Leadership & Team Leader" category	Full plan 6 months; Monthly check-ups what is the team working conditions in each unit, learning the team tasks step by step, make caring visible in the team chat group and regular catchups.	Team Leader	For excellent co-worker experience in a hybrid team	Team leader's own files	Update the Excel tool with the actions plan
3. Actions in "Customer" category	Full plan 6 months; Monthly check-ups with each team member during the coaching session	Team & Team Leader	For professional virtual selling experience and selling more	Shared team files	Update Excel tool with the actions plan

The approved Implementation plan how to lead a hybrid team is shown in Figure 20. The plan consists of the purpose – what and why, timing – when, responsibilities – who, methods – where, and execution – what. These concrete details are important since the plan ensures tangible steps for improving the existing ways of working and leading the hybrid team. The steps were also agreed with the team and the team leader.

The first element of the Implementation plan relates to *the Individuals and Team* category. The very first step in the final proposal how to lead a hybrid team is to integrate the *psychological safety exercises* into team meetings in order to build up psychological safety and inclusion in the hybrid work environment and thus improve team cohesion, togetherness, also via sharing failures in work and avoiding loneliness of remote work, i.e. the feeling that the team members wanted to improve. The team leader has a task to take care that these exercises are integrated into team meetings, also for the team members to get to know each other more. These assignments are saved in the team's SharePoint files and make part of the action list of the Final Proposal of this thesis

Second, the actions in *the Team rules and working methods* were agreed upon with the hybrid team to get the team working together. These actions were partially tested, not tested, or changed during the validation process from the Initial Proposal. The Implementation plan in this part includes the following actions. First, sharing customer cases and agreeing on the common team rules were put on the agenda of a monthly team meeting the same week as the validation meeting of this thesis. Second, the first live, face-to-face team meeting of the team took place a month after the validation meeting. This meeting was expected by each team member, as they expressed in the interviews, but was postponed due to covid-19 pandemic restrictions. Third, everyone takes part in weekly team coffee breaks. This action was discussed and noted that it was easy to forget the meeting and that everyone should put a calendar reminder not to forget the team coffee breaks. The team members support this action as everyone understands the need for it and why it is important to get together weekly with the team, with an informal agenda. Fourth, the team agreed in the thesis workshop on two actions to take care that everyone knows where everyone is, i.e. ensuring visibility in the hybrid environment, but in the validation meeting it was noticed that these two actions were difficult to follow either technically or to remember, and the team found it best to inform where everyone is in the Team group chat. Fifth, in the proposal building workshop earlier, the team also agreed on the framework for giving positive and constructive feedback. It was noticed in the validation meeting that positive feedback was given as

agreed but the team did not have a chance to test giving constructive feedback with the framework. Therefore, it was agreed that, when there is a need to give constructive feedback, it would be given as agreed by first thinking the best way to articulate the feedback, calling a Microsoft Teams call to each other, telling the feedback, and if possible considering how to give an alternative solution to the topic. (Other actions in relation to “Team rules and working methods” were tested and taken into use in the team already earlier, so there was no need to follow-up on those).

The team and the team leader decided to have a task to take care that these actions included in the Implementation plan are taken into use in one month after the validation meeting (i.e. finalizing the Final proposal). These actions are saved in the team’s SharePoint files in the action list of Final Proposal of this thesis.

Third, the actions in the *Leadership & Team Leader* category are aimed at leading a hybrid team for excellent co-worker experience in a hybrid team. The full plan is scheduled for 6 months, but it includes monthly check-ups for checking the team working conditions in each unit; other points include: learning the team tasks step by step, making caring visible in the Team chat group, and organizing regular catchups. The other actions not indicated in the Implementation plan were already tested and taken into use by the team leader, so there was no need to include them and follow-up on those. The team leader has a task to take care of these actions are taken into use in six months after the validation meeting. These actions are saved in the team leader’s own OneDrive files in the action list of the Final Proposal.

Finally, *the Customer* actions of the hybrid team in the Implementation plan are targeted at developing the professional virtual selling experience and selling more to the customer of the hybrid team. At the proposal stage, most of the actions in *the Customer* element in relation to highly effective video sales call were not received very well by the team members. There was some change resistance with these actions, so it was agreed with the team leader that these *Customer* actions needed change management and more time for the team to familiarize with the actions. It was agreed that the team leader would take of these actions as part of each team member’s monthly coaching session to implement and follow-up these best practices. At the same time, these best practices of highly effective video sales call were very well received by the case company’s global matrix leader to take into use to other similar teams around the globe, since there was no specific a framework for the video sales call meetings with the customers at the point

of writing this thesis. Other actions were already earlier tested and taken into use in the team, so there was no need to include them in the Implementation plan and follow-up on those. The team and the team leader have a task to take care these actions and take them into use within six months after the validation discussions. These actions are saved in the team's SharePoint files in the action list of the Final Proposal.

Next, Section 7 proceeds to conclusions.

7 Conclusion

This section includes the executive summary and summarizing the key findings, the Thesis evaluation from the objective to the outcome, and ends with the closing words.

7.1 Executive Summary

The Objective of this thesis was *to develop recommendations how to lead a hybrid team*, so that the team could be highly motivated and work together to serve customers remotely. The need for this study arose since the case company of this thesis has a relatively new, geographically dispersed team. The team leader and one half of the team are working in the same location and the other half working from other singular locations around Finland, but both groups have the same purpose to serve customers remotely. This study aimed to create recommendations that will support the team and its team leader and find best practices how to operate so that the team members could be highly motivated wherever they are located.

The Applied action research was selected as a research approach of this thesis since the objective was to find a practical solution how to make the change to the better. The thesis started by setting thesis objective and then proceeded to analyzing the current state of hybrid team leadership and collaboration based on interviewing its stakeholders. The outcome of the current state analysis was the identified strengths, weaknesses, expectations, and development areas in relation to hybrid working practices used currently.

In the current state analysis, the findings pointed to four groups of issues related to: the Individuals and team, the Team rules and working methods, the Leadership, and the Customer. Each group of findings had a number of strengths, weaknesses, and expectations identified in each category. In the first category, the Individuals and team, the identified *strengths* related to self-determination of the individuals, and all members being in the same position, i.e. new to the team. The current *weaknesses* of hybrid work related to feeling lonely and separated, invisibility of some colleagues and not getting help when needed; while *the identified expectations* pointed to reaching the sales goals, tighter cooperation and team development, wiliness to get to know each other and developing the sense of belongingness. In the second category, the Team rules and

working methods, the identified *strengths* are flexible schedule and place to work, the team provides excellent customer service, the Teams group chat of the team is very active, and the team has common digital coffee breaks three times a week. The current *weaknesses* of the Team rules and working methods related to the information overflow in the team, the introduction was remote, lack of common ways of working, inequality in working premises and tools. The identified *expectations* included excellent customer satisfaction, video tool to optimize planning, the ability to choose from where to work, and that physical HR-matters, working spaces and tools are in order. In the third category, the Leadership & Team Leader, the identified team leader's *strengths* include their IT-knowledge, approachability, and the ability of being present in the moment. The current *weakness* relates to the lack of team specific competence. The identified *expectation* from *the Leadership & Team Leader* is to share the information where the team is and headed to, and to support the team by telling what is happening. In the last category, *the Customers*, the identified *strengths* include professional and excellent customer service and meeting the customer via a video connection when team member chose to use video connection. The current *weaknesses* that the customers identified relate to the lack of video connection when team member chose to use a phone call, no access to physical products when conducting a remote meeting, and the planning time running up too quickly. The identified *expectations* that the customers identified are the decision list of what a customer needs to decide on in the planning phase and mapping the customer budget in the sales process.

Next, search for existing knowledge and best practice identified relevant information about leading hybrid teams, and the study built a conceptual framework based on selected, relevant elements of existing knowledge and best practice. The aim was to find existing solutions and learn from best practice how to address the key challenges and expectations identified in the current state analysis. Therefore, the same logic of four categories was used for the literature search as sub-themes and focus areas. This logic followed also to the initial proposal, final proposal, and the implementation plan. First, best practice for the Individuals and team element focused on comparing the traditional team to a hybrid team (Afflerbach, 2020); it continued to team development when forming a new hybrid team and heading it to perform highly (Hyman 2019; Paloposki 2014; Abrams et al., 2011); and it ended with self-determination and psychological needs of an individual in working environment, and how to take these needs into account when designing new hybrid work arrangements (Hinkkanen, 2021). The last sub-theme of this element focused on creating psychological safety in the hybrid team (Toivanen and Yli-

Kaitala 2021). Second, the Team rules and working methods element of the conceptual framework focused on best practice how to organize the hybrid teamwork (Katsoudas, Patel, 2022), how to design hybrid work (Gratton, 2022; Aalto-Setälä, 2022) and how to make hybrid work inclusive (Davis, 2022; Almeida et al. 2021.). Third, the Leadership element discussed best practices how to lead a hybrid team, the team leader's work, finding ways to secure the same tools and similar working environment for everyone, and taking care of visibility and sharing it with the team. It also described the hybrid work skills (Aalto-Setälä, 2022), best practices how to lead hybrid work (Aalto-Setälä, 2022; Bingham, 2022), hybrid power dynamics and how to best lead these power dynamics (Haas and Mortensen, 2022), and how to lead psychological safety in a hybrid team (Toivanen and Yli-Kaitala 2021). Fourth and last, the Customer element focused on a specific area of making video calls. The current state analysis identified that customers expect to have a video sales call nowadays. For this reason, the Customer element mainly discussed how to make video sales call highly effective and manage video sales calls (Blount, 2020). The identified best practice and elements of available knowledge were put together logically into a meta-construct called "the conceptual framework" that was used for guiding the next step, the development of the recommendations.

Based on the results from the current state analysis and guided by the available knowledge and best practice, the study then moved to building the Recommendations. The development was based on the inputs from the new round of data collection with the key stakeholders, Data collection 2. Data 2 collection included the workshop with the team that co-developed the recommendations for leading a hybrid team. The initial recommendations were subsequently presented to the management and were followed by conducting a survey to gather feedback and further improve this initial proposal. First, the initial recommendations focused on the Individuals and team, first element, and how to build psychological safety in the team. The current state analysis identified that the team was already in the performing state of team development. The literature suggested two assignments to build psychological safety in a hybrid team. The team tested one of the assignments in the thesis workshop and the other one was to be tested in the validation of the Individuals and team element. The initial recommendations in this first element included two separate group assignments to build up psychological safety in the hybrid team. Second, the initial recommendations for the Team rules and working methods included an action plan that was categorized to Communication, Focus, Helping, Visibility, Communitality and Giving feedback, i.e. for addressing the weaknesses identified earlier in the current state. The team workshoped around these topics and

gave inputs for developing the action plan. Third, initial recommendations for the Leadership element included the best practices how to polish own and team hybrid skills, how to establish hybrid work policies, how to lead hybrid power dynamics and how to improve psychological safety in the hybrid team. Fourth, the initial recommendations for the Customer element were compiled using the customer expectations from the customer interviews and co-worker expectations in the team member interviews, on the one hand, and the literature suggestions about virtual selling and especially using video connection with the customer, on the other hand. Based on the proposal, the hybrid team in this study was about to take a new video tool into use with customers. The initial recommendations included adding decision list to the customer journey, adding customer budget to the sales process and establishing best practices on effective video sales call policies.

Next, the initial recommendations were tested and validated, and during the testing and validation round, where the data was gathered and analyzed as Data collection 3. Testing included one testing round with the team and gathering feedback from the team in a team meeting to improve the initial recommendations into the final proposal. The hybrid team tested each action plan in the initial proposal. Feedback and validation discussion was held to check action by action if the tested actions were found useful for the team. Based on the findings, the initial proposals were updated to the final recommendations. The implementation plan was created to support getting the partially or not tested actions into use. The implementation plan included the roles and responsibilities, time and follow-up for taking the proposed actions into use.

As a conclusion, this thesis focused on improving the co-worker and the customer experience in a new, multi-located hybrid team by implementing best practices how to lead a hybrid team and how to effectively sell via video connection. This study is a step towards a more organized and well led hybrid sales team. The study provides tools and action points how to lead and organize a hybrid sales team. The implementation plan presented the company with the next steps recommended to follow. The core topics were to close the gaps found from the current state analysis and literature review and implement the action plan co-created with the hybrid team and the management. If the decisions are made and next steps get completed, the hybrid team will reach a new level on ways of working in a hybrid, multi-located working environment selling to customers via video connection. This will result on a high performing team, working together to achieve and exceed set goal in a new, complex working environment.

7.2 Thesis Evaluation

The objective of this thesis was to develop recommendations how to lead a hybrid team. The thesis produced an action plan to take the identified best practices into use. The action plan was co-created with the hybrid team, evaluated by the management, and further developed the hybrid team.

Based on the inputs collected from the stakeholders, the areas where this thesis succeeded related to producing a practical, hands-on outcome, including for example the exercises of the Individuals and team building psychological safety, the Team rules and working methods actions, the Leading a hybrid team actions, and some of the Customer actions.

Based on the inputs collected from the stakeholders, the areas where this thesis did not succeed related mostly to the Customer actions for introducing highly effective video sales calls. First of all, the Customer element needs a wider investigation about the customer needs in the current service and its ways of working. Ideally, it would require a special study where the identified needs may get more specified and new needs may be discovered. It was not possible to do in this thesis, so the current number of customer interviews here was quite limited. However, even in this limited form, the customer interviews brought up many insights into the current service and its ways of working that were important to check for moving on with the topic of *how to lead a hybrid team* at this stage. Second, the team would have needed more time to test all the actions in the Customer action plan, so that the testing would dig deeper into all the actions. Presently, some of the proposed Customer actions did not yet get tested. The team would need more change management to the Customer actions, and also more discussion around deciding on the customer budget expectation since it has already been tested before. If done differently, the thesis researcher would also have added two more workshops, one with the team around the topic of the Customer actions and another one with the management around the topic of Leadership & Team Leader for going deeper on this topic with the management and asking for feedback. However, even in this current version, both the Customer and Leadership & Team Leader actions were perceived as good, usable recommendations in the case company. As an example, the other team leaders in the case company's unit were keen on getting similar workshops with their teams even though their team set up was not exactly the same hybrid team and not multi-located. Also, the case company's global matrix partner noticed the study and especially

its proposed Customer actions as worth investigating if these practices could be implemented globally to similar teams.

Thus, this thesis managed to provide the expected outcome of actionable recommendations for the selected hybrid team in the case organization. The recommendations should improve both the co-worker and customer experience in a new and complex hybrid working environment, and also suggested the tools to conduct more efficient video sales when meeting with the customer. These actions can also be replicated by other hybrid teams in the case organization, as discussed and suggested by the management and key stakeholders.

7.3 Closing Words

At the start of this thesis, the hybrid work was merely a new way of working in the work life when recovering from the pandemic remote work. As the process went on and the year changed, it was easy to find fresh, new theories and best practices that had been published over the previous both nationally in Finland and globally. The topic was hot as was the subject itself. Now at the end of the thesis project, the situation has become more stable and the work life got familiar with the new hybrid ways of working. Even though the situation in different organizations may vary, the fundamentals of how to lead a hybrid team have become much more familiar to the leaders.

The outcome of this thesis is a package of actions and best practices on “How to lead a hybrid team”. It can be utilized in other hybrid teams according to the specific team needs. As the thesis researcher feels, the actions in the Individuals and the team, the Leadership & Team Leader, and the highly effective video sale calls can be replicated easily in other organizations, as these actions are pretty straightforward. The Team rules and working methods actions may not be directly repeated as they are more specific to the team context, but the ideas for development can be easily borrowed, such as having a workshop to find the team specific needs around the topics of communication, focus, helping, visibility, communality and giving feedback. They all make very important aspects of hybrid work.

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Interview questions for the Current state analysis (Data 1)

Management

1. What expectations do you have to the hybrid team?
2. How do you see the current state of the team?
3. What strengths there is in the current state?
4. What weaknesses there is in the current state?
5. How would you develop the hybrid team?
6. What is the future goal state? How do you see the working would be like in the future?
7. What would you like to ask from the customer in the customer interviews?
8. What else comes to your mind at this stage?
9. *What do you see challenging in leading a hybrid team? (The current team leader)*
10. *What kind of resources you can give to the team (hours, money, traveling, use of time, efficiency)? (The unit manager)*
11. *What kind of support the team leader and the hybrid team gets from you? (The management)*

Hybrid Team

1. What expectations do you have to your team leader?
2. What expectations do you have to your colleagues? (in your team, in your physical unit)
3. What expectations do you have to yourself as a member of this team?
4. How do you see the current state of the team?
5. What strengths there is in the current state?
6. What weaknesses there is in the current state?
7. How would you develop the hybrid team?
8. What kind of support do you need as a member of this team and from whom?
9. What is the future goal state? How do you see the working would be like in the future?
10. What would you like to ask from the customer in the customer interviews?
11. What else comes to your mind at this stage?

Customers

1. Why did you choose the remote service?
2. In what stage is your buying process?
3. What expectations of this service did you have before the meeting and did the service meet your expectations?
4. What kind of interaction did you have with the planner?
5. What kind of plan did you receive and did the plan meet your expectations?
6. Where did we succeed and where not?
7. How would you develop the remote planning service and what kind of wishes do you have?

2nd interview with the Team Leader

1. How does the information flow in your team?
2. What communication channels does the team use?
3. How has the tools developed between our first interview and now?
4. How has the ways of working developed between our first interview and now?

CSA results (full records) for Category 1. Team and individuals' strengths, weaknesses, and expectations (Data 1)

Bolded texts in the tables show the most frequent answers from the interviews.

1. Team and individuals	
Strength	Competence
Strength	Keeping touch with the team
Strength	Helping each other, fast
Strength	Self-determination
Strength	Commitment
Strength	Openness
Strength	All in the same new situation - team is new
Strength	One, unite team
Strength	Colleagues are responsible
Strength	Nice people around Finland
Strength	Good team spirit
Strength	Tight group
Strength	Cheering
Strength	Ambition towards goals
Strength	One can be oneself
Strength	Warmth in discussions
Strength	Caring
Strength	No need to rival
Strength	Understanding
Strength	Colleagues support each other in same location
Strength	Inclusive colleagues
Strength	Always someone working at the same time
Strength	Teamwork
Strength	Welcoming, good feeling in physical locations
Strength	Helping and asking both ways in physical locations
Strength	Help i.e., IT is near in physical locations
Strength	In physical location one can see people during workday even though one cannot see own team
Strength	Is still part of physical work community

1. Team and individuals	
Weakness	Loneliness when working at home
Weakness	Lack of competence
Weakness	Unapproachability
Weakness	Lack of togetherness
Weakness	Team is new
Weakness	Some colleagues are invisible

Weakness	Team is separated
Weakness	Working alone
Weakness	Stress of meeting customers via video
Weakness	Workload feels overwhelming
Weakness	Helping colleagues is time-consuming
Weakness	Colleagues are too busy

1. Team and individuals	
Expectation	Faster working phase
Expectation	Widen knowledge
Expectation	Willingness to get to know one another
Expectation	Tight co-operation
Expectation	Giving feedback to one another
Expectation	Talking to and listening one another
Expectation	Sharing knowledge
Expectation	Sense of belonging, team building
Expectation	Team development
Expectation	Discussions and sharing opinions
Expectation	There might be some resistance
Expectation	Team is a group of seasoned professionals
Expectation	Ensuring knowledge
Expectation	Time management - workload, helping, information overflow
Expectation	Excellent quality of work
Expectation	Helping colleagues
Expectation	Taking care of wellbeing
Expectation	Good behavior to each other
Expectation	Permission to ask help
Expectation	Warm welcome to team
Expectation	Good working spirit also in the future

CSA results (full records) for Category 1. Team and individuals' strengths, weaknesses, and expectations (Data 1)

Bolded texts in the tables show the most frequent answers from the interviews.

2. Team rules & working methods	
Strength	Flexible schedule & place to work
Strength	Active Teams-group
Strength	High demand on planning timeslots
Strength	Team coffee break
Strength	Clear goals
Strength	Customer service
Strength	Individual Teams-discussions
Strength	Getting to know new products in physical locations is easier
Strength	Using new systems - documenting what is agreed and done
Strength	Remote work is meaningful
Strength	Answering to customers when colleague is absent
Strength	Good remote team meeting practices
Strength	Tools for communicating with the team
Strength	Team has improving mindset
Strength	All team members do the same tasks and are focused on same tasks
Strength	Using video connection with customers
Strength	Tracking booked planning timeslots
Strength	Support from specialists
Strength	Peaceful working conditions
Strength	Separate working space at physical location
Strength	Everyone can always find computer
Strength	Personal follow-ups
Strength	Tracking customer satisfaction
Strength	It is refreshing to work in physical location

2. Team rules & working methods	
Weakness	Information overflow
Weakness	Lack of common ways of working
Weakness	We have never met live
Weakness	Teams group is too active
Weakness	Remote introduction
Weakness	Remote work is new
Weakness	Difficult to communicate remotely
Weakness	Lack of rules how to take care of customers when someone is absent or working in other roles
Weakness	Can't sell that much as wanted to, working schedules

Weakness	Unclear physical HR matters i.e., parking slots, Christmas party
Weakness	Inequality - differences in physical working premises and tools
Weakness	Systems are unfinished, need to report lot of issues
Weakness	Availability issues
Weakness	Not knowing what one has sold
Weakness	Don't know where colleagues are
Weakness	Difficult when we are spread around Finland
Weakness	Too many customers in the beginning
Weakness	Confusion with working schedules at the beginning
Weakness	No common place to save documents
Weakness	Lack of Swedish speaking skills
Weakness	Communicating between team members
Weakness	Don't want to interrupt colleagues when needing help
Weakness	Tacit knowledge is missing from knowledge bank
Weakness	Slowness, so that customer does not escape to competitor or physical locations
Weakness	Lack of written communications skills
Weakness	Difficulties in recruiting, other units do not want to let go of their talents

2. Team rules & working methods	
Expectation	Reach and exceed set sales goals
Expectation	Excellent customer satisfaction
Expectation	Work becomes routine
Expectation	Meeting with the team physically
Expectation	Routines in place
Expectation	Everyone can decide whether they want to work at home or at the office
Expectation	Common ways of working
Expectation	Video tool in use to optimize planning
Expectation	Physical HR-matters, working spaces and tools are in order
Expectation	In the future team has fantastic, peaceful working spaces
Expectation	In the future team grows in headcount and sales
Expectation	In the future working is not fixed to physical locations
Expectation	Comprehensive planning - all customer needs
Expectation	Virtual store - inspiration, touch and feel like in physical locations
Expectation	Lot of customers in the future
Expectation	Team supports company strategy
Expectation	Efficiency
Expectation	Team internal communication
Expectation	Service is valid for the customer
Expectation	Making sure of communication - what are the wanted channels
Expectation	After long pause to teamwork, time to catch-up important information
Expectation	Getting every worrying or deferred issue fixed

Expectation	Focus on selling and planning
Expectation	Consistent service
Expectation	Peer coaching
Expectation	Specialists support available
Expectation	Liberty to add value to company and customer
Expectation	Unit HR is available for everyone
Expectation	Refresh trainings
Expectation	Information on new products
Expectation	Remote work - increases wellbeing
Expectation	Develop operations
Expectation	Taking care of customer when someone is in other tasks
Expectation	Helping and availability in Teams
Expectation	Willingness to see what happens after selling process
Expectation	Variations to working days, not just planning
Expectation	Sharing inspiration
Expectation	Giving positive image of our work, attracts when recruiting new team members
Expectation	Easier start of work to new colleague's (workspaces, tools, remote work)
Expectation	Better camera to video meetings and better headphones
Expectation	Better visibility of service to areas in Finland with no company physical locations
Expectation	Advanced digital tools
Expectation	Global co-operations and work cycle
Expectation	Automatized follow-ups, no manual work needed

CSA results (full records) for Category 3. Leadership & Team Leader's strengths, weaknesses, and expectations (Data 1)

Bolded texts in the tables show the most frequent answers from the interviews.

3. Leadership	
Strength	Support is available fast
Strength	IT knowledge
Strength	Presence
Strength	Reacting and coming back to the agreed matters
Strength	Feedback skills
Strength	Approachability
Strength	Active
Strength	Knows where we are
Strength	Warm
Strength	Responsible
Strength	Full trust
Strength	Easy to come along with
Strength	Caring
Strength	Unbiased, neutral, does not depreciate
Strength	Takes concerns seriously
Strength	Authoritativeness when needed

3. Leadership	
Weakness	Lack of team specific competence
Weakness	Is always available
Weakness	Does not keep in touch enough
Weakness	Does not share enough information
Weakness	Listens, but does not act on system issues enough

3. Leadership	
Expectation	Share and support where are we and what is happening
Expectation	Balance support to each individual and unify team ways of working
Expectation	Learn team specific work, to substitute when needed
Expectation	Is exceeding expectations
Expectation	Gives feedback
Expectation	Team leader to spar with own direct manager
Expectation	Team leader to set own boundaries
Expectation	Intensify co-operation to colleagues in other units

CSA results (full records) for Category 4. Customers' responses for the strengths, weaknesses, and expectations about the current service and its ways of working (Data 1)

Bolded texts in the tables show the most frequent answers from the interviews.

4. Customer	
Strength	Professional service
Strength	Excellent customer service
Strength	Informed how to get in touch after planning time
Strength	Video connection available
Strength	Availability of service
Strength	Easiness
Strength	Smooth service
Strength	Team member was precise
Strength	Clarity in availability and how order is proceeding
Strength	Lots of informative pictures
Strength	Plan responded to customer needs
Strength	Team member had bold opinions to different options and solutions
Strength	Service is logical
Strength	Team member was thorough
Strength	Good quality-per ratio
Strength	Short delivery time
Strength	Cheaper than competitor
Strength	Exact pre-information asked
Strength	Better concept than competitor
Strength	Better pictures than competitor
Strength	Link to plan can be shared
Strength	Virtual visualization
Strength	Brand

4. Customer	
Weakness	Lack of video connection
Weakness	No physical products
Weakness	Needed products missing from product range
Weakness	Product availability issues
Weakness	Planning time run up
Weakness	Multiple versions of the plan
Weakness	Feeling of rush
Weakness	Team member was cautious to offer solutions
Weakness	Problems in the beginning, no access to check measurements
Weakness	Team member used product names when speaking to customer

Weakness	Team member spoke about product order in the plan in phone
Weakness	E-mails came to two separate e-mail address
Weakness	Contact person changed
Weakness	No availability on physical service
Weakness	Competitor price was lower
Weakness	Competitor had the same price
Weakness	Cannot attach plans when booking planning time
Weakness	Many orders (availability issues)
Weakness	Payments in several instalments (many orders)
Weakness	Several separate deliveries (many orders)
Weakness	When booking planning time there are irrelevant questions that cannot be passed
Weakness	Link out dates in 7 days, separate pdf-files needed
Weakness	Pictures are rough, more photographic would be better
Weakness	Original plan in old planning system, lots of time to checkup

4. Customer	
Expectation	Decision checklist: what customer needs to decide in planning phase
Expectation	Availability of service
Expectation	Professional help to decision making
Expectation	Ready plan
Expectation	Video connection
Expectation	One contact person in the company
Expectation	Map customer budget
Expectation	Planning time customer need
Expectation	Affordable price

Preliminary assignments in the workshop (Data 2)

E-mail sent 23.4.2022:

Hi!

Warmly welcome to your team workshop!

In this meeting we will focus on the themes identified from the current state analysis based on your, management and customer interviews and the conceptual framework findings:

- **Individuals and the team**
- **Team rules and common ways of working**
- **Leadership & Team Leader**
- **Customers**

We will workshop based on attached preliminary assignment:

1. **Get to know your teammates**
2. **Designing new work** – there were few development areas about working together based on the interviews:
 - a. **Communication** – You have an amazing teams-group where you catch up, ask for and give help, communicate about ongoing matters – The challenge was when absent from work, you need to go through every conversation to not miss necessary information. How would you make sure essential information does not get lost to the conversations?
 - b. **Focus** – Everyone wants to help each other and simultaneously there is a need to find time to focus on planning tasks. How do you make sure colleagues have time to focus based tasks?
 - c. **Helping** – Everyone wants to help and want to ask for help. How do you make sure that everyone takes part in helping others, team members dare to ask for help from everyone and how do you organize help requests in your daily work, what kind of response time do you agree on?
 - d. **Visibility** – How to make sure everyone knows where you are and what work are you doing? Home, office, different tasks, working time. How to make sure everyone contributes to common discussions? Agree on few guiding rules that everyone commits to follow. What are these?
 - e. **Communality** – How to make sure communality in this team situation where you are in different locations? How to use the time when you are physically together? How to carry out team meetings and get together digitally to increase togetherness
 - f. **Anything else** in mind?

Here is a sheet you can add your ideas in the workshop. The headlines guide to these listed topics. Everyone has their own column where to add own ideas with name or anonymous. In the workshop we will divide in small groups to share ideas. There is 20minutes to common discussion and to modify the sheet in the discussion. The sheet is open until 27.4. if you don't manage to write everything down. There is 5 minutes in the end for everyone to share essential ideas. I will add these to your action plan and use these also in my Thesis.

See you soon!

Best regards,
Linda

Communication	Focus	Helping	Visibility	Communality

The Power Point presentation for the workshop is attached below.

The Power Point presentation for the workshop, distributed in a pre-assignment (Data 2)

The hybrid team workshop

Forewords

Hi!

I have interviewed your team, management and customers in November-December 2021. Based on these interviews and finding best practices from literature review I have gathered these findings.

Now it is time to work together and find best working methods to your team. We will meet with this topic in a remote workshop 26.4.2022, 13.30-15.

I will introduce you the initial proposal 15.6.2022, 14-15.

See you soon!

Themes

- **Individuals and the team** Me as a member of this team, our team (10 min)
 - Workshop Get to know each other (30min) – **Preliminary assignment**
- **Team rules and working methods** (10 min)
 - Workshop Designing hybrid work: Working smoothly and belonging to a community (30min) - **Preliminary assignment**
- **Leadership** Leading a hybrid team(5 min)
- **Customer** Virtual selling (5 min)

In this event you can share your opinions bravely and safely

Every opinion counts and everyone's voice is important, it is important to feel heard and get to influence to your own work equally

Working with me

Reflect these questions in advance, lets share our own answers:

- **What is important**
 - What are you most excited about in this role?
 - When do you feel most happy at work?
 - In or outside of work, what are 1-2 things that you haven't made enough time for that you wish you did more of?
 - Include 1-2 pictures of yourself or pictures that you have taken that capture who you are and explain why.
- **Quirks**
 - What are your pet peeves?
 - What are your scheduling quirks or scheduling preferences?
 - What is something about yourself that people might not know in their first time meeting you?
 - What is something you're actively working to improve?
- **Stressors**
 - How do we know when you're stressed?
 - Is there anything in a work setting that makes you uncomfortable?
 - When you're upset, do you like space? Distractions? To talk it through with the team?
- **Expectations**
 - How do you like to receive feedback?
 - How do you like to receive praise?
- **Learning styles**
 - What is your favorite way to learn a new tool/skill?
 - When are you most productive or most energized?
 - Is there a certain time of day that you feel most productive?
 - How do you measure your success?"

Please notice that we do not have time to go each question through. Instead you can use these in your get togethers like common coffee breaks, team meetings etc.

Designing new work

Reflect these themes in advance:

- **In what ways should the work be designed so that working together is smooth?**
 - What ways of working should we agree together so that independent, focus work and being available are in balance?
 - When do we need to work together in same working space and when is remote better?
 - Do we inform where we are? How?
- **How do we foster communality and sense of belonging?**
 - When it is important to meet face to face?
 - What do we prioritize and what can be demanded?
 - How do we foster communality with remote and hybrid meetings, so that culture does not build among team members meeting face to face?
 - What kind of meeting places and rituals do we create to our everyday life at work so that we can strengthen our communality?

Designing new work - Disclaimer

Please consider these preconditions:

- We have this team and this team leader working together
- We have current units to be used as physical work spaces, everyone has their own physical work place defined
- Remote work can be done from home, but the employer does not arrange office furniture to home office. Notice that you can deduct office furniture and other tools purchased for remote work in you own taxation
- We have current systems we are working with even though they are not perfect
- We have agreed amount of customers per day and per week and agreed goals
- We have agreed two physical meetings per year with the whole team

When we focus on matters and development outside these preconditions, we get most benefit out of our time together.

These listed matters are important and changing, and feedback on these matters is forwarded to management.

Lets focus on what we can influence and change now, inside our circle of influence.

The Power Point presentation from the workshop (Data 2)

Let's start with a test

Survey

For each of the following statements, rate your level of agreement or disagreement

1 = disagree, 2 = undecided, 3 = agree

1. I clearly understand the goals and purpose of my team
2. I understand my role on this team and the role of my fellow team members
3. I can openly disagree with another team member's ideas in order to find a better solution
4. I can openly debate with another team member about an idea I have submitted
5. I clearly understand the meeting rules and guidelines our team has developed to govern how we work together
6. Our team members regularly follow the meeting rules and guidelines we have set forth
7. Our team can successfully complete tasks we have been assigned
8. I can ask for help when I am in danger of failing on an assignment
9. Our team takes time to celebrate successes and recognize the contribution of members at the completion of a project
10. Our team can successfully orient new team members and continue performing at a high level with little interruption

Scoring

Score	Stage
10-14	Forming
15-18	Storming
19-22	Norming
23-26	Performing
27-30	Adjourning

Individuals and the team Team development stages

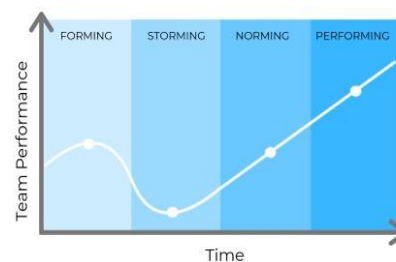
Forming – Searching for own place in the group, creating ways of working, group acts formally, and leadership is needed, there are no conflicts in the group

Storming – Clear common expectations, there are disagreement and conflicts in the group, own needs are above group needs, finding inner hierarchy, rebelling against leader

Norming – Established ways of working, better operation, willingness to settle and avoiding conflicts, different opinions are valued.

Performing – Relaxed working atmosphere, functioning interaction, own place in the team is clear, the group is efficient since the conflicts are clarified, team members are flexible with their individual needs and seek for consensus in solutions

Adjourning – The stage when performing team is split up, it can be sad, hard, and distressing experience and it can happen if the team gets a new team member or operation is coming to an end



Why this is important?

Team members can be in different stages. This was noticeable in current state analysis. When the team is having a new member, the team goes through all the stages from the beginning. When the team knows these stages, it can get quicker to perform. And the team members understand better the stages they self and colleagues are going through. Also, it is important for the leader to know and to recognize in what stage each individual and the team are, to lead the team members and the team accordingly.

Individuals and the team

- **Basic needs and motivation**
 - Individual needs
 - Common discussion
- **Inclusion and hybrid work**
 - I am valued member of the team and supported to take part in the organization
 - Introduction
 - Working together
 - Solving conflicts
 - Team togetherness
 - Rewarding
- **Psychological safety**
 - I can take risks into the group and be myself
 - Remote work challenges psychological safety
 - Psychological safety and being present need special attention

Working with me

Let's share our own answers:

- **What is important**
 - **What are you most excited about in this role?**
 - When do you feel most happy at work?
 - In or outside of work, what are things that you haven't made enough time for that you wish you did more of?
 - Include 2 pictures of yourself or pictures that you have taken that capture who you are and explain why.
 - **Quirks**
 - What are your pet peeves?
 - What are your scheduling quirks or scheduling preferences?
 - What is something about yourself that people might not know in their first time meeting you?
 - What is something you're actively working to improve?
 - **Stressors**
 - How do we know when you're stressed?
 - Is there anything in a work setting that makes you uncomfortable?
 - When you're upset, do you like space? Distractions? To talk it through with the team?
 - **Expectations**
 - **How do you like to receive feedback?**
 - **How do you like to receive praise?**
 - **Learning styles**
 - What is your favorite way to learn a new tool/skill?
 - When are you most productive or most energized?
 - Is there a certain time of day that you feel most productive?
 - How do you measure your success?
- Please notice that we do not have time to go each question through. Instead you can use these in your get togethers like common coffee breaks, team meetings etc.

Team rules and working methods

- **Characteristics of hybrid work**
 - Place and time
 - Accepting people as they are
 - Develop remote work further
 - Highlights the importance of technology
 - Enables finding knowledge wider
- **Designing hybrid work**
 - Critical drivers of productivity: energy, focus, coordination and co-operation
 - Employee preferences
 - Projects and workflows
 - Inclusion and fairness
 - The meaning of work
 - What can be done individually, what digitally present

Designing new work

Reflect these themes in advance:

- In what ways should the work be designed so that working together is smooth?
 - What ways of working should we agree together so that independent, focus work and being available are in balance?
 - When do we need to work together in same working space and when is remote better?
 - Do we inform where we are? How?
- How do we foster communality and sense of belonging?
 - When it is important to meet face to face?
 - What do we prioritize and what can be demanded?
 - How do we foster communality with remote and hybrid meetings, so that culture does not build among team members meeting face to face?
 - What kind of meeting places and rituals do we create to our everyday life at work so that we can strengthen our communality?

Designing new work Disclaimer

Please consider these preconditions:

- We have this team and this team leader working together
- We have current units to be used as physical workspaces, everyone has their own physical workplace defined
- Remote work can be done from home, but the employer does not arrange office furniture to home office. Notice that you can deduct office furniture and other tools purchased for remote work in your own taxation
- We have current systems we are working with even though they are not perfect
- We have agreed number of customers per day and per week and agreed goals
- We have agreed two physical meetings per year with the whole team

When we focus on matters and development outside these preconditions, we get most benefit out of our time together.

These listed matters are important and changing, and feedback on these matters is forwarded to management

Let's focus on what we can influence and change now, inside our circle of influence.

Leadership

- Leading a hybrid team
- Hybrid skills
- Leading with empathy
- Leading hybrid power dynamics
- Psychological safety

Customer findings

Strengths: competence, excellent customer service, communication how to contact after the meeting, meeting via video connection, availability of the service, easiness, smoothness, precise and thorough salesperson, clarity on the sales order and how the delivery proceeds, salesperson had bold suggestion, service was logical, good price - quality ratio, quick delivery, cheaper than competitor, better concept and pictures than competitors, link to plan, virtual visualization, brand

Weaknesses: Lack of video connection, no physical products, shortages on product range, availability issues, planning time ran out, multiple versions of the plan, feeling of hurry, salesperson was cautious, salesperson used product names and numbers in the phone, there was two emails to communicate about the plan, contact person changed, there was no physical service available, competitor had same or lower price, the delivery divided in to two separate orders with multiple payments, there is no possibility to attach a plan when making a reservation to the service, irrelevant questions when booking the meeting, the link to the plan outdates in 7 days (gladly a pdf -file was also provided), pictures were rough, the old plan was in the old system so it took lots of time to check everything was noticed in the new system

Expectations: Decision list in advance – what customer needs to decide in the meeting, availability of the service, competent help to decisions, ready plan, video connection, one contact person, map customer budget, adjust the planning time to customer needs, affordable price

Customer –Tips to video sales call

Framing of the camera – as a news reader

Body language

Monitor your concentration

Listen

Be video ready

Professional calendar invitation to video sales call

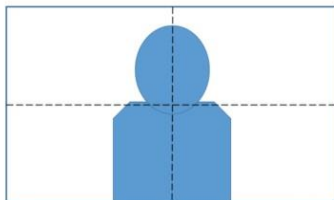


Figure 14.2 Proper video framing.



Figure 14.3 Improper video framing.

Next

- I will create a proposal how to lead a hybrid team
- In May I will meet the management and introduce the proposal to them. I will send a survey after the meeting to ask for feedback on the proposal
- In June we will meet next time 15.6. 14 -15 and I will introduce to you the proposal. I will send a survey after the meeting to ask for feedback on the proposal
- After the correcting the proposal from the feedback rounds. I will send you the initial proposal to test. Testing time is a month.
- In July we will meet last time to go through the testing of each action to validate the proposal as a final proposal
- I will finish this thesis in the autumn of this year

Big thanks to all of you for participating! But most importantly I hope you will get tangible actions to support your work.

Initial proposal, Action plan

Actions in “Individuals and Team”
Work with me - questions
Rose, bud, thorn - method
Actions in “Team rules and working methods”
Weekly newsletter from the team leader
Pinning conversations in the team Microsoft Teams group chat
Separate list to collect product information
Using Microsoft Teams statuses
Do not disturb status on when having a meeting with a customer
Do not disturb status or muting conversations
Always have courage to ask for help
Take a Microsoft Teams call with a colleague
Recap how to make a call to a specialist
Answer the same day, if issue is urgent tell it or ask from other channels
Everyone writes hellos and goodbyes to the team group chat
Taking part on conversations in the team group chat
The new application informs where everyone is remote, office, in other tasks
Everyone writes something to the team group chat in a workday
When working in other tasks inform it in Teams status
Common office days
Face-to-face team meetings
Everyone helps and answers the questions from other colleagues
Everyone takes part to team virtual coffee break at least once a week
Customer meetings and customer plans reviewed in team meetings regularly
Common rules - a questionnaire what is needed, workshop in a team meeting
Positive feedback can be given anywhere however
Constructive feedback is given one-to-one via Teams call, avoid e-mail
Think first and form the constructive feedback before giving it to a colleague
Tell the constructive feedback and guide how to do it differently
Actions in “Leadership & Team Lead”
Listen, settle, follow-up
Make caring visible
Polish own and team hybrid skills
Learn the work the team is doing
Learn the success factors of each team member
Ensure business needs when designing new working methods
Seek insights of how well the schedule is working
Lead hybrid power dynamics: Track and communicate, design, educate, follow-up
Improve psychological safety
Make virtual meetings participatory

Actions in “Customers”
Decision list for customers
Mapping customer budget to sales process
Video framing
Body language
Attention control
Active listening
Deep listening
Pause 3 seconds after customer speaking
Prepare to listen
Be video ready - physical appearance
Professional etiquette

Feedback to the Initial Proposal from the Management before the Validation (survey questions, Data 3)

Survey about the thesis proposal - Management

Hi!

16.5. I presented a proposal for thesis, how to lead a hybrid team. I have sent you the material via e-mail. Now I kindly request your feedback to further develop the thesis proposal.

I will modify the proposal based on your suggestions and I will present it to the team 15.6. You have time to answer until 23.5. I value everyone's opinions and feedback.

The goal is that this thesis has tangible actions to support the work of the hybrid team.

Big thank you for participating!

Kind regards,

Linda

1. What do you think about the interview results and the categorization of the results?

- Lots of things has been done compared to the moment of interviews, it is great to see that we have moved on to right direction. The categorization was good even though there were duplications to some points seen as a strength and a weakness. → Changed to the team presentation.
- Interesting results and raised a lot of development areas, it is not something to take for granted to lead a team scattered around the country.

2. What do you think about the used theories and how those fit to the team?

- Good theories which are beneficial for the team and to other teams as well.
- Raised a lot of ideas

3. What do you think about the findings and the proposal?

- The proposal is actionable and realistic
- How could we best develop the team and the ways of working? → Added to the action plan

4. What would you keep and what would you fix in this thesis so far?

- The research was executed well and the communication and the material were clear. It would be nice to have comparison to then and now, what things have already moved on during the process. → Added to the team presentation.
 - Very comprehensive study. You could develop further with tips, recommendations, and suggestions. → List of tips added to conclusions
5. How do you see is the proposal repetitive to other teams in the organization?
- I believe that the results can be utilized because there are lots of hybrid teams in the organization at the moment even tough with a different setup than our hybrid team.
 - Absolutely we can utilize these findings to other teams as well
6. Anything else coming into your mind at this point?
- Great execution of the research. You gave us tools 😊

(This letter was followed by a presentation, with almost the same content as was used with the Hybrid team and shown in Appendix 10, below).

Validation session of the Initial Proposal with the Hybrid Team (Data 3)

Findings: How to lead a hybrid team

Themes

- Forewords (3min)
- **Individuals and the team** Me as a member of this team, our team (5 min)
- **Team rules and working methods** Designing new work (10min)
- **Leadership** Leading a hybrid team (5 min)
- **Customer** Virtual selling (15 min)
- **Wrap-up and next steps** (2min)
- **Action plan** (10 min)
- **Survey** (10 min)

Next steps

- I have reserved 10 minutes as the last topic in this meeting to take a survey and give feedback on the findings and the proposed actions. I will give you the link to the survey in the meeting chat. If you want to open it already and proceed with the presentation.
- After the feedback round, I will fix the proposal and communicate to you during this week if there is changes to the action plan
- Your next task is to test these agreed action point
- We will meet the next time in July to go trough the tested actions. And evaluate of there is a need to continue with a second testing round or are we happy with the results and the effects of these actions
- I am here to help if you have anything to ask or need my support. You can contact me via e-mail, Teams or phone
- **A big thank you for participating!**

Individuals and the team – Findings from the interviews

- **Strengths:** Competence, staying connected, help available fast, self-determination, commitment, openness, all in the same new situation, one unite team, colleagues taking responsibility, nice people from all over the Finland, good team spirit, tight group
- **Weaknesses:** Loneliness in remote work, lack of approachability, lack of togetherness, new team, colleagues are not visible, team is scattered
- **Expectations:** Desire to get to know the teammates, tight co-operation, giving feedback, discussing and listening, sense of belonging, team building, team development

Individuals and the team - Theory

I have searched for theories linked to hybrid work and based on the findings from the interviews:

- Basic needs and motivation
- Team development stages
- Psychological safety

Individuals and the team – Findings from the workshop

- **The team development stage**
 - The test done in the workshop indicated that the team is already in the Performing stage of the team development and in November-December different individuals were in the Forming and Storming phases of team development. It was great to hear that the team had moved on to performing well in their teamwork.
- **Working with me assignment**
 - Assignment from building psychological safety workbook
 - We went through the question of What are you most excited about in this role?
 - We went through the questions on How do you like to receive feedback?
 - We created a team working method of how to give positive and constructive feedback
 - This was also linked to interview findings about giving feedback
 - We agreed with the team leader that the team would continue using these questions in different meetings like common coffee breaks and team meetings

Proposal: The team will continue using collected assignment in different get-togethers to get to know each other more, strengthening psychological safety and individual motivation and team togetherness

Team rules and working methods– Findings from the interviews

- **Strengths:** Flexibility in the place and time of work, active Teams-group, team common virtual coffee beaks, clear goals, customer service
- **Weaknesses:** Information overflow, Teams-group is too active, lack of ways of working when someone is sick, can't sell as much as wants to (work shifts), unclear HR-matters (parking, parties), not knowing what has been sold (follow-ups)
- **Expectations:** Excellent customer service, everyone can decide where they want to work in, implementing the new video tool

Team rules and working methods– Findings from the interviews

You have developed your ways of working between the time of interviews and now:

- You have agreed on the ways of working when someone is absent
- Team members working for two teams has moved to work 100% in this team, so that everyone can focus on selling more than in the interviews
- There are individual sales follow-ups developed and taken into use
- The customer service in this team is in excellent level
- You can decide from where you want to work
- You have implemented the new video tool to your team

Team rules and working methods– Theory

I have searched for theories linked to hybrid work and based on the findings from the interviews:

- Characteristics of hybrid work
- Designing hybrid work
- Inclusion

Team rules and working methods Findings from the workshop

We agreed on these actions in the thesis workshop:

Actions Team rules and working methods		
Visibility	Commonality	Giving feedback
Everyone writes hellos and goodbyes to the team group chat	Everyone helps and answers the questions from other colleagues	Positive feedback can be given anywhere however
Taking part on conversations in the team group chat	Everyone takes part to team virtual coffee break at least once a week	Constructive feedback is given one-to-one via Teams call, avoid e-mail
The new application informs where everyone is remote, office, in other tasks	Customer meetings and customer plans reviewed in team meetings regularly	Think first and form the constructive feedback before giving it to a colleague
Everyone writes something to the team group chat in a workday	Common rules - a questionnaire what is needed, workshop in a team meeting	Tell the constructive feedback and guide how to do it differently
When working in other tasks inform it in Teams status		
Common office days		
Face-to-face team meetings		

Team rules and working methods – Findings from the workshop

We agreed on these actions in the thesis workshop:

Actions Team rules and working methods		
Communication	Focus	Helping
Weekly newsletter from the team leader	Using Microsoft Teams statuses	Always have courage to ask for help
Pinning conversations in the team Microsoft Teams group chat	Do not disturb status on when having a meeting with a customer	Take a Microsoft Teams call with a colleague
Separate list to collect product information	Do not disturb status or muting conversations	Recap how to make a call to a specialist
		Answer the same day, if issue is urgent tell it or ask from other channels

Leadership – Findings from the interviews

- **Strengths:** IT-knowledge, presence, approachability, one can get to know the products and the news in physical locations
- **Wishes and expectations:** Learn the work the team is doing, share and tells where we are and what is happening, common ways of working, physical HR-matters, workspaces and tools are in order

Leadership – Theory and findings

I have searched for best practices how to lead a hybrid team for the team leader of this hybrid team as an action list. **Proposal: the team leader utilizes these collected theories in the leadership work for the team.**

Leading a hybrid team

- Listen, settle, follow-up, **make caring visible**
- Get to know your people and **the work they are doing**, individual and business needs are both taken into considerations, find out are the new ways of working functioning

Hybrid skills

- Innovate, networking, **digital skills**, one thing at a time, control processes, lead with empathy

Leading hybrid power dynamics

- **Hybrid location** and hybrid competence, not to put team members into unequal situation
- Hybrid power dynamics can be led: **Tracing and communicating**, designing, training and follow-up

Psychological safety

- Modify expectations, Invite to take part, Answer constructively
- **Focus on results, not the ways of doing or time used**
- Ask what people need to smooth the work, interaction requires listening, remember one-to-one time
- Make the virtual meetings participatory

Customer - Findings from the interview

- Five customer were interviewed
- Three customers from the capital area, others not near to any physical location
- Three customers were served via phone, two with video connection
- Three customers were planning to buy, two already purchased
- Three customers tendered the offers, two did not
- Four customers received a pdf -plan and a link, one only the pdf -plan

Customer - Findings from the interview

Strengths: *competence, excellent customer service, meeting via video connection*

Weaknesses: *Lack of video connection, no physical products, planning time ran out*

Expectations: *Decision list in advance– what customer needs to decide in the meeting, video connection, map customer budget*

First proposal: Decision list in advance would be taken into use and to communicate to customer when booking the meeting or in the booking reservation email, so that customer can prepare for the meeting.

Second proposal: Mapping customer budget to be added to ways of working.

Customer- Findings from the interview

You have implemented a new system and developed your processes between the time of interviews and now

- You have taken the new video tool into use
 - when you fix the customer weakness of lacking the video connection and expectation to have the video connection
- New sales process in use
 - customer gets more video meetings than one, when you can correct the customer expectation to planning time not to run out
 - and where you ask customer to visit physical location between these video meetings to confirm the choices made about the products, when you can correct the weakness of not having physical products

Customer – Theory and findings

Because the video connection is repeated in every customer interview, I have collected best practices for effective video sales call to the hybrid team. **Third proposal:** The hybrid team utilizes these collected best practices in the customer work.

- Virtual selling: Video sale call
- Virtual selling: Tips to video sales call
- Virtual selling: The five elements of highly effective video sales call

Findings summary:

- **Individuals and the team: Proposal,** The team will continue using collected assignment in different get-togethers to get to know each other more, strengthening psychological safety and individual motivation and team togetherness
- **Team rules and working methods: Proposal,** the team continues to work with co-created action plan with topics of communication, focus, helping, visibility, communality and giving feedback
- **Leadership:** I have searched for best practices how to lead a hybrid team for the team leader of this hybrid team as an action list. **Proposal,** the team leader utilizes these collected theories in the leadership work for the team.
- **Customer: First proposal,** decision list in advance would be taken into use and to communicate to customer when booking the meeting or in the booking reservation email, so that customer can prepare for the meeting. **Second,** mapping customer budget to be added to ways of working. Because the video connection is repeated in every customer interview, I have collected best practices for effective video sales call to the hybrid team. **Third,** the hybrid team utilizes these collected best practices in the customer work

Feedback to the Initial Proposal from the Hybrid Team (survey questions, Data 3)

Survey about the thesis proposal – The hybrid team

Hi!

Today I presented a proposal for thesis, how to lead a hybrid team. Now I kindly request your feedback to further develop the thesis proposal.

I will modify the proposal based on your suggestions and I will send you the corrected version during this week via email. I value everyone's opinions and feedback.

The goal is that this thesis has tangible actions to support the work of your hybrid team. That is why your next step is to take these actions into use and test them. We will meet next time in July to evaluate the tested actions.

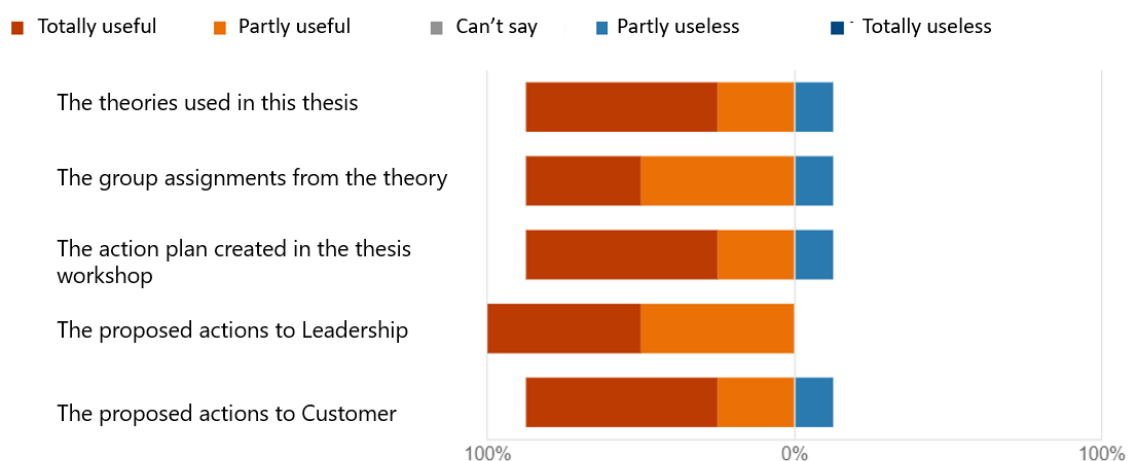
Big thank you for participating!

Kind regards,

Linda

1. How valuable do you perceive?

Evaluate between 1-5 where 1 is totally useful and 5 is totally useless



2. What would you keep in this thesis so far?

- It is nice that someone has delved into the team ways of working and communality

- Thorough analysis
 - Good pointers to ways of working. It is nice to hear the customer experience of remote meetings and how it has been working for the customer
 - Individuals and the team, Customer and Workshop action plan
 - Maintaining current ways of working, I feel that reflecting the question list and exploring own behavior and of course getting to know each other develops us all further and are important. I noticed as a personal development area listening section in the customer part. Usually, I am so excited so I am often too speedy. Although I think I still listen and hear the customer but the excitement and a little lag in the sound of video connection has guaranteed that both customer and me speak over each other. So, I will have to learn to pause.
3. What would you develop further in this thesis so far?
- Video meetings are all different and customers are all different. I felt useless the tips to video meetings. Everything comes so naturally to me, and the situations vary. → Great to hear that you are in a good situation with this action. There was also opposite feedback in the survey answers. Because this thesis has searched for different areas of work and based on customer interviews video meetings are important, I hope this theory part is useful for your whole team. I think you have these skills already. I encourage you to share your good example to your team.
 - Noticing different types of individuals → You are right, and this was one topic that I was researching and discussing with my thesis supervisor. But I needed to limit the number of topics. Individual differences were one finding from the interviews, I think the wideness of the answers tells this same story. I think it is important that the team consists of different individuals with strengths and development areas, the diversity brings a lot of good to the group but might sometimes feel challenging. I did not take this theory since I had to limit the number of topics. I tried to bring individual differences with the topics of inclusion and psychological safety theories and actions, that everyone can be themselves and that you get to know each other even deeper than you already know each other now.
 - In the team it would be nice to go through customer cases together and how the plans have gone. Groupworks are important since those tie us together. It would be nice to meet the team live regularly. → I think it is a great idea to go through customer cases together. I suggest that you take this to your next team meeting and agree how this is executed and take this topic as a repetitive action to your team meetings. **This is added to the action plan.** → Each and everyone of you is expecting the live, face to face meeting with the team. Your team leader is finding out how much money is budgeted to your live meetings. **This is added to the action plan.**
 - Common rules, the team would work better together → I think this is necessary and I am sorry we did not have enough time to this in the thesis workshop. This is something that you as a team should specify. What kind of rules are you missing? Please use your team meeting time for this topic. **This is added to the action plan.**
 - I am wondering do we have enough time to invest and get the benefit out of this and take into use. Customer meetings are short and succinct, so the decision list and other factors should be smoothly integrated into ways of working. I asked the budget in the beginning of my career, but customers did not tell, or

they felt embarrassed. Nowadays I feel the atmosphere and ask if it is suitable. I should take it into use even though it is not that simple. → You are absolutely right. This time to test all the actions is very short. I do not expect you to test all by July. I suggest that you pick the ones you want to test, and we will see in July if we need another test round. In August I will make a survey instead of a meeting if the other round is needed. → Good point and I agree, the decision list matters are the ones you go through with the customer in the meeting. This list was for the customer so that they can prepare for the meeting, and the meeting is more efficient for the both of you → Thank you for this observation. Now I have only heard the customer perspective and not yours. I think it is good that you have already tested mapping the budget. I understood that the budget would be added to the customer preliminary communication, so that customer orientates to discussion about the budget and hopefully any discomfort will be cleared out. I think it sounds good to feel the atmosphere and it gives the customer the possibility to decide to answer or not. One good guiding question could be; Have you considered your budget to your purchase already? It is a closed question and gives the possibility to answer yes or no and also to tell more if the customer wants. **The question is added to the action plan.**

4. Anything else coming to your mind at this point?

- Very useful and enlightening analysis of our team
- Thank you, Linda, for these tips and going through this important topic
- I am still confused are we doing remote work or working from office, because in both places we are alone since there are no other team members working from office simultaneously. I think it is because we are scattered around. Thank you for investing time and effort, I hope we did also invest so that it contributed to the thesis. → I have understood that you have common rules to remote and office work, and you can inform where and when you are working inside these frames. You could agree on office days together and work together in the same place. This is quite typical in a hybrid working environment that 1. the team gets to choose the place and time of work 2. agree office days together. **This is added to the action plan.**

Testing the Proposal & Results (Data 3)

Element in the initial proposal	Parts commented in Validation	Description of the comment/ feedback by experts (in detail)	Development to the Initial proposal
Actions in “Individuals and Team”			
Work With Me – questions	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Rose, bud, thorn – method	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Actions in “Team rules and working methods”			
Weekly newsletter from the team leader	Tested	Team leader picks topics from Microsoft Teams group chat	NA
Pinning conversations in the team Microsoft Teams group chat	Tested	This is not technically possible	Remove
Separate list to collect product information	Tested	This list should be activated more	NA
Using Microsoft Teams statuses	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Do not disturb status on when having a meeting with a customer	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Do not disturb status or muting conversations	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Always have courage to ask for help	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Take a Microsoft Teams call with a colleague	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Recap how to make a call to a specialist	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Answer the same day, if issue is urgent tell it or ask from other channels	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA

Everyone writes hellos and goodbyes to the team group chat	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Taking part on conversations in the team group chat	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
The new application informs where everyone is remote, office, in other tasks	Partially tested	Not working as it should, informing in team chat group	Remove
Everyone writes something to the team group chat in a workday	Not tested	Focus to do this every day, everyone	NA
When working in other tasks inform it in Teams status	Not tested	Team members uses group chat for this purpose	Change
Common office days	Tested	This has been tested in some units and the team will continue with this action	NA
Face-to-face team meetings	Not tested	First meeting coming	NA
Everyone helps and answers the questions from other colleagues	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Everyone takes part to team virtual coffee break at least once a week	Not tested	The team needs a reminder	NA
Customer meetings and customer plans reviewed in team meetings regularly	Not tested	Coming	NA
Common rules - a questionnaire what is needed, workshop in a team meeting	Not tested	Coming	NA
Positive feedback can be given anywhere however	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Constructive feedback is given one-to-one via Teams call, avoid e-mail	Not tested	Will be used when needed	NA
Think first and form the constructive feedback before giving it to a colleague	Not tested	Will be used when needed	NA
Tell the constructive feedback and guide how to do it differently	Not tested	Will be used when needed	NA
Actions in “Leadership & Team Leader”			

Listen, settle, follow-up	Tested	The team leader will continue to use this	NA
Make caring visible	Partially tested	Add communication in teams chat group, routine in place to catch-up all team members individually regularly	NA
Polish own and team hybrid skills	Tested	The team leader will continue to use this	NA
Learn the work the team is doing	Partially tested	In progress. The team leader will continue to use this	NA
Learn the success factors of each team member	Tested	The team leader will continue to use this	NA
Ensure business needs when designing new working methods	Tested	The team leader will continue to use this	NA
Seek insights of how well the schedule is working	Tested	Uses Microsoft Forms to ask for feedback. The team leader will continue to use this	NA
Lead hybrid power dynamics: Track and communicate, design, educate, follow-up	Partially tested	There is still inequality with the working permits, the team leader will continue to use this	NA
Improve psychological safety	Tested	The team leader will continue to use this	NA
Make virtual meetings participatory	Tested	Anonym feedback channel in use, the team leader	NA

		will continue to use this	
Actions in “Customers”			
Decision list to customer	Partially tested	Initial list done, send link to customer when customer books meeting	NA
Mapping customer budget to sales process	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Video framing	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Body language	Not tested	The team will start to use this	NA
Attention control	Not tested	The team will start to use this	NA
Active listening	Not tested	The team will start to use this	NA
Deep listening	Not tested	The team will start to use this	NA
Pause 3 seconds after customer speaking	Tested	The team will continue to use this	NA
Prepare to listen	Not tested	The team will start to use this	NA
Be video ready - physical appearance	Not tested	The team will start to use this	NA
Professional etiquette	Not tested	The team will start to use this	NA

Final Proposal (full records), Action plan

Actions in “Individuals and Team”
Work With Me – questions
When do you feel most happy at work?
In or outside of work, what are the things that you haven't made enough time for that you wish you did more of?
Include 1-2 pictures of yourself or pictures that you have taken that capture who you are and explain why.
What are your pet peeves?
What are your scheduling quirks or scheduling preferences (favorite times to conduct meetings, etc.?)
What is something about yourself that people might not know in their first time meeting you?
What is something you're actively working to improve?
How do we know when you're stressed?
Is there anything in a work setting that makes you uncomfortable?
When you're upset, do you like space? Distractions? To talk it through with the team.
What is your favorite way to learn a new tool/skill?
When are you most productive or most energized?
Is there a certain time of day that you feel most productive?
How do you measure your success?"
Rose, bud, thorn – method
Everyone tells three things from a work week in turn:
1. Rose something that went well
2. Bud something that brings hope or inspires
3. Thorn something that did not go well or was a mistake
Actions in “Team rules and working methods”
Communication
Weekly newsletter from the team leader
Separate list to collect product information
Focus
Using Microsoft Teams statuses
Do not disturb status on when having a meeting with a customer
Do not disturb status or muting conversations
Helping
Always have courage to ask for help
Take a Microsoft Teams call with a colleague
Recap how to make a call to a specialist
Answer the same day, if issue is urgent tell it or ask from other channels
Visibility

Everyone writes hellos and goodbyes to the team group chat
Taking part on conversations in the team group chat
Everyone writes something to the team group chat in a workday
When working in other tasks inform it in the team chat
Common office days
Face-to-face team meetings
Communality
Everyone helps and answers the questions from other colleagues
Everyone takes part to team virtual coffee break at least once a week
Customer meetings and customer plans reviewed in team meetings regularly
Common rules - a questionnaire what is needed, workshop in a team meeting
Giving feedback
Positive feedback can be given anywhere however
Constructive feedback is given one-to-one via Teams call, avoid e-mail
Think first and form the constructive feedback before giving it to a colleague
Tell the constructive feedback and guide how to do it differently
Actions in “Leadership & Team Leader”
Listen, settle, follow-up
Make caring visible
Polish own and team hybrid skills
Learn the work the team is doing
Learn the success factors of each team member
Ensure business needs when designing new working methods
Seek insights of how well the schedule is working
Lead hybrid power dynamics: Track and communicate, design, educate, follow-up
Improve psychological safety
Make virtual meetings participatory
Actions in “Customers”
Decision list to customer
Mapping customer budget to sales process
Video framing
Body language
Attention control
Active listening
Deep listening
Pause 3 seconds after customer speaking
Prepare to listen
Be video ready - physical appearance
Professional etiquette