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**Assessing employee perception of management success in remote and hybrid work environments - The effect of leadership style on remote employees' and managers outlook on remote leading**



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## Tiivistelmä

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COVID-19-pandemia johti nopeaan siirtymiseen etätöihin, mikä asetti haasteita sekä työntekijöille että johtajille. Huolimatta siitä, että pandemiaa edeltävät olosuhteet ovat palautuneet lähes ennalleen, monet organisaatiot ovat päättäneet jatkaa etätöiden sallimista havaitun tuottavuuden ja työntekijöiden joustavuuden kysynnän vuoksi.

Tutkielmassa tarkastellaan etätöympäristöjen dynamiikkaa työntekijöiden ja johtajien haastattelujen avulla. Tutkimuksessa käytetään strukturoituja sähköpostihaastatteluja ja puolistrukturoituja ryhmähaastatteluja, ja siinä tarkastellaan etätöiden ja etäjohtamisen eri näkökohtia, kuten etäkommunikointia, johdon tukea ja työntekijöiden hyvinvointia.

Teemoitteleva sisällönanalyysi paljastaa keskeisiä teemoja, kuten työntekijöiden hyvinvointi, luottamus, ennakoiva kommunikointi, ajanhallinta, aktiivinen kuuntelu, yhteisöllisyys ja motivaatio. Luottamus ja viestintä nousevat esiin etäjohtamisen onnistumisen kannalta keskeisinä tekijöinä, mikä heijastaa olemassa olevan kirjallisuuden tuloksia. Suosituksissa etätöiden kehittämiseen keskitytään työ- ja yksityiselämän tasapainon parantamiseen, luottamuksen rakentamiseen viestinnän avulla, etätöjärjestelyjä koskevien suuntaviivojen asettamiseen ja muihin kuin työhön liittyviin tapahtumiin, jotka edistävät tiimin yhteenkuuluvuutta ja lisäävät motivaatiota. Tutkimuksen mukaan viestintää, luottamusta ja yhteisöllisyyttä korostavat johtamistyylit ovat tehokkaimpia etäjohtamisessa, ja transformationaalinen johtaminen vastaa erityisen hyvin etätöympäristön tarpeita. Kaiken kaikkiaan tutkielma tarjoaa näkemyksiä ja suosituksia etätökokemusten ja etäjohtamiskäytäntöjen parantamiseksi.

## **Abstract**

**Author:** Ikävalko Katri

**Title of the publication:** Assessing employee perception of management success in remote and hybrid work environments – The effect of leadership style on remote employees' and managers outlook on remote leading

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**Keywords:** remote work, job satisfaction, employee motivation, leadership style, remote management

The COVID-19 pandemic catalysed a swift shift to remote work, presenting challenges for both employees and managers. Despite the return to pre-pandemic conditions, many organisations have decided to continue allowing remote working due to observed productivity and employees' demand for flexibility.

The thesis explored the dynamics of remote work environments through interviews with employees and managers. Utilising structured email interviews and semi-structured group interviews, the research investigated various aspects of remote work and remote management such as remote communication, management support, and employee well-being.

Thematic content analysis revealed key themes including employee well-being, trust, proactive communication, time management, active listening, community, and motivation. Trust and communication emerged as fundamental for successful remote management, reflecting on findings from existing literature. Recommendations focus on enhancing work-life balance, building trust through communication, setting guidelines for remote work arrangements, and creating non-work-related events for team bonding and increased motivation. The study suggests that leadership styles emphasising communication, trust, and community are most effective in remote management, with transformational leadership aligning particularly well with the needs of remote work environment. Overall, the thesis provides insights and recommendations for improving remote work experiences and remote management practices.

## Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	1
2	The current situation of remote work and remote management and the connection between leaderships styles and successful remote work .....	3
2.1	The central concepts of the work.....	3
2.2	New work norm: remote work.....	4
2.3	Remote management.....	6
2.4	Remote employment .....	7
2.5	Leadership styles .....	10
2.5.1	Generally accepted leadership styles .....	11
2.5.2	Emerging leadership styles in remote work environments .....	12
2.6	The research gaps in the existing literature .....	13
3	Research strategy .....	17
3.1	Qualitative approach .....	17
3.2	Group and E-mail interviews as a data collection methods.....	18
3.3	Thematic content analysis as a data analysis method .....	20
4	Execution and analysis of the research development work: how managers and employees could contribute to a better remote work environment.....	22
4.1	Navigating Challenges and Resources: How could remote work experience be improved -interview for employees .....	23
4.2	Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved - interview for managers .....	24
4.3	Thematic content analysis of the research data .....	25
4.4	Summary of the main findings .....	36
5	Discussion of findings and development suggestions .....	39
5.1	Analysis of the interview data .....	39
5.2	Findings of results and interpretation of Navigating Challenges and Resources: How could remote work experience be improved -interview .....	40
5.3	Findings of results and interpretation of Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved -interview .....	42
5.4	Improvement suggestions for remote work and remote management.....	44
5.5	Leadership styles promoting employee motivation and job satisfaction in remote work environment .....	49
6	Conclusions.....	52

6.1	Reliability, credibility, and ethics of the research development work.....	52
6.2	Reviewing the success of the thesis .....	54
6.3	Suggestions for further research.....	55
	Sources.....	56
	Appendix	

## 1 Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic changed the way of working for many people, as in-office working changed to remote working. The quick change to remote work environment caused many issues within organisations. Managers were not trained for remote managing; employees were left in the dark about future workplace and technology was not supporting such fast change. After remote work was not required anymore for the health of public, many organisations still held on to the new work model. Remote work was seen increasing productivity and employee demand for flexible work environments pushed for organisations to continue allowing remote working. The effects of remote work on employees have started to show with few years of remote work experience and the effects reflect on employer's decisions.

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how remote employees perceive the success of management in the context of remote work and how managers have had to adapt to remote working environments. In addition, the purpose is to gain a deeper understanding of how leadership style can affect employees' motivation and job satisfaction in remote and hybrid work environment. The aim is to identify and address issues leading to valuable insights that can help organisations to adapt to the needs of remote workers.

The key research problem is to clarify by assessing employee perception of management success in remote and hybrid work environment what are the areas where remote management needs to improve its practices, how management could be further supported in remote management, and how do managers view remote leading. Additionally, the effect of leadership style on remote employees will be considered by drawing conclusion from the research results. The research questions are: What are the current issues in remote management? How can leadership better enhance employee motivation and job satisfaction? Another objective is to map out how remote managers perceive the management success. This will be examined through the following research questions: What are the issues managers face in remote leading? How could remote managers be supported in remote management? Through the research data, the following question will also be answered: What type of leadership style is seen fit for remote work environment?

The effects of remote management methods on employee motivation and job satisfaction will be discussed. With a complex understanding of the remote work management's challenges, improvement suggestions will be made based on theory and research data. Areas to which managers and employees should show attention to are clarified. The goal is to have a deeper understanding of the issues of remote work and a comprehension on how to mitigate those problems.

The thesis outcome will benefit employees, managers, and organisations. Employees can benefit by acknowledging the issues in remote work and understanding how they can contribute toward an improved remote work experience. Managers will benefit from this thesis by acknowledging the needs of remote employees and recognise those factors in their own actions and improve management through the improvement suggestions. Organisations benefit from this thesis by encouraging managers to consider the improvement suggestions in their management methods and hence possibly increase employee motivation and job satisfaction.

Leadership styles have been developing fast and remote work environment brought its own challenges in managing methods. Managers had to adapt to new environment and new way of managing as the old methods were not as effective for remote work environment. Important factors that have been found to have positive impact on remote work are trust, openness, and communication. The leadership styles, that have emerged with development of remote work, demonstrate these abilities.

Employees perception of remote management and the long-term effects of remote work on employees are very relevant. The remote work model intends to stay and hence the long-term effects of remote work should be considered. It is important to listen to remote employees and understand how management can be improved to better support remote employees.

The theoretical framework of the study is constructed of the following: remote work, remote management, remote employment, and leadership styles. The thesis is carried out as a research development work, which has a qualitative research approach. The data collection methods are group interviews and E-mail interviews, and the data is analysed by thematic content analysis.

## 2 The current situation of remote work and remote management and the connection between leadership styles and successful remote work

The theoretical framework of the thesis consists of four parts: remote work, remote management, remote employment, and leadership styles. Understanding the concept of remote management and remote employment is crucial for this thesis. Remote management's responsibility in the success of remote work is immense. Therefore, management methods and leadership styles will be reviewed in remote environments in the theoretical part. Employee perception on remote management and remote work's challenges will also be reviewed in theoretical part.

### 2.1 The central concepts of the work

#### Remote work

Remote work is implemented somewhere else than the workplace and can be fully or partially remote (Vilkman 2016, 11–12). Remote work requires trust, collaboration, and supporting employees' self-efficacy. Instead of controlling, remote management and organisational culture should be based on trust for successful remote work. (Työterveyslaitos 2023.)

#### Hybrid work

Hybrid work combines remote work together with in-office work. Employee can work parts of the week or month remotely and parts from the office. (Työterveyslaitos 2023.) Hybrid work will be referred to as remote work in this thesis.

#### Remote management

Remote management is managing employees who work partially or fully remotely and the face-to-face contact with subordinates is limited. In remote management, managers need to have strong sense of leading and good technological and communicational skills. (Vilkman 2016, 16.) Remote management should enable collaboration and self-efficacy as well as show direction and communicate tasks (Ellimäki, Höykinpuro, Kähärä, Lehtoranta, Pakarinen, Pursiainen, & Rauramo 2023).

## Leadership style

Leadership style is a complex interactive behaviour. By leader's own behaviour, can leader influence their followers. (Kevin 1999, 79.) Leaders usually have two categories: those who are concerned with achieving goal and those who are concerned about group dynamics (Bales & Slater 1995.)

## 2.2 New work norm: remote work

The work dynamics have been changing through the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The change has been led by technological developments, evolving societal norms (Janani, Kumar, Nagaprakash, Patil & Shobitha 2024, 660) and growing demand of remote and hybrid work models. The shift has been accelerated by globalisation, digital connectivity, and the Covid-19 pandemic (Janani et al. 2024, 660). Technological advancement has enabled organisations to enhance collaborations and productivity between units which contributes to easier remote work. The biggest force driving toward remote working was the COVID-19 pandemic which pressured organisations to quickly abandon traditional office-centric models and adopt new, more flexible work arrangements. (Gebrehiwot, Kalahasthi, Raja, Shriya & Wadhera 2023.)

Remote work became the norm in 2020 with the rapid growth of COVID-19 pandemic which forced people to work remotely for the health of public (Alshurideh, Al Kurdi, Alshurideh, & Alkurdi 2022, 116–121). Later, remote work was enforced because employees demanded continuity for flexible work to which they had grown accustomed to (Alexander, De Smet, Langstaff & Ravid 2021) and remote work increased productivity because the social distractions that occurred in the office were removed or lessened (Ozimek 2020). The short-term effects of remote work have been studied and the effect of remote work on productivity depended on employer's approach to remote work management. Studies have found various changes in productivity in remote work environments. Some organisations saw decrease while others saw remarkable increase in productivity. Increased productivity was linked to organisations which were already familiar with remote work concept. (Goldberg 2023.)

Effective management was challenged due to the COVID-19 pandemic when remote work was enforced rapidly. The pandemic brought with it an organisational change, which was affected by decisions and socially constructed behaviours. (Pianese, Errichiello, & Da Cunha 2022, 325–326.)

Because the change to different work environment was so quick, organisations did not have the means to fully support employees in managing and adjusting to the remote work environment. This caused many issues as employees did not receive the technical support, they needed for working remotely and managers did not have the experience of managing employees digitally. (Alshurideh et al. 2022, 116–121.)

Remote work heightens the importance of information and communication technology as well as flexibility. Because remote work environment increases coordination time and ambiguity but decreases socio-emotional support, employees need more job resources to deal with the change. Self-efficacy has been found to be one of the most important job resources in remote work. Flexibility should be embraced by organisations and leaders should trust employees with more responsibility. Other factors contributing to successful remote work experience are participative leadership and goal clarity. Participative leaders work well in remote environments as they involve employees in decision making and build trust, which is crucial for successful remote work management. (Orlandi, Veglianti, Zardini, & Rossignoli 2023, 2–4.)

Communication has been found to be one of the biggest issues because employees did not know what was expected of them and the future of work was very unclear. In remote work, trust, communication and openness were found to be crucial for successful remote work setting. (Alexander, De Smet, Langstaff & Ravid 2021, 1–6.) Well-being, productivity, and engagement decreased in the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The most crucial resources in remote work environment are self-efficacy and social support from colleagues. (Straus, Uhlig, Kühnel, & Korunka 2022, 2972–2977.)

In adapting to new work normal, technological advancements are highlighted, though with it becomes challenges too. Burnout and isolation were identified as results from remote working and technological development fuelled these symptoms. (Wadhera, Raja, Shriya, Kalahasthi, & Gebrehiwot 2023, 2924.)

For successful remote work experience, good relationship between manager and employee is important. One of the factors contributing to relationship building is trust. Because monitoring remote work arrangement can be difficult, trust must be built. Trust influences employee job satisfaction and autonomy which contributes to aligning objectives and goals with the company. Feeling of isolation is decreased by the feeling of trust between manager and employee in remote work environment. Trust also helps to overcome misunderstandings. (Pianese et al. 2022,

328, 335.) According to Gebrehiwot (2023), the most important role in effective remote work environment is communication. High-level communication contributes to relationship building and higher productivity. The lack of communication in remote work has caused anxiety and burnouts among remote employees. (Alexander et al. 2021.) Open management communication can sway employee commitment to organisation and intent to stay. Positive relationship is linked to open and supportive work environment and open communication methods. Open communication can reduce the feeling of professional isolation. (Lombardo & Mierzwa 2012, 5).

Organisations are seeing good and bad with remote work; remote working can reduce the spread of diseases in the office and hence lessen the sick days, however, remote work lowers the feeling of community and weakens collaboration between colleagues. Employees perception on remote work is positive if certain requirements are met. Employees need clear communication, instructions, and hours. Supportive measures for collaborations and training offered for remote working are also highlighted by employees regarding remote work. Team events would bring teams together even in virtual setting and hence improve the well-being and feeling of community. (Alexander et al. 2021, 12–13.)

### 2.3 Remote management

Supervisory management styles have an important role when it comes to aligning employee and organisational goals by guiding individuals' expectations, performance, and satisfaction. Managers oversee the implementation of monitoring norms and procedures and their style of leading affects the organisational goals along with employee expectations and type of relationships between employees and bosses. Trust between managers and employees is crucial for successful relationships. (Pianese et al. 2022, 328.)

Remote management is not a new concept; for some, remote or hybrid work has been part of their work for quite some time. Remote management has been carried out variously; some kept the same management style whereas some adopted new methods. Certain aspects of management are highlighted in remote environments even if the basics stay the same. Therefore, remote management need to be addressed and developed. (Vilkman 2016, 11–12.)

Employees satisfaction depends partly on organisational identification. If an employee has a sense of belonging, then they are much more likely to be motivated and productive. The sense

of belonging also works as an indirect level of control which influences employees' motivation. Along with the feeling of belonging, work identity works as a strong way of creating organisational control. Work identity aligns employee's and organisations objectives by regulating identity. Work identity is impacted by organisational culture, managerial practices, and the forming of self-identity. (Pianese et al. 2022, 328.)

Managers have been found to have certain perceptions of remote workers motivations for wanting to work remotely which have led to influence the performance assessment of employees. If managers have themselves worked remotely, were these prejudices mitigated. Because monitoring remote work arrangements can be difficult, trust must be assembled between managers and employees. Visibility and presence used to be the easiest way to monitor employees but with remote work that is no longer always possible. Remote workers feel the pressure to upkeep a good employee profile and therefore strive to build trust remotely. If employees feel trusted by their supervisors, then that would show in higher job-satisfaction and lesser feeling of isolation. Feeling of trust also contributed to aligning objectives and goals with the company. (Pianese et al. 2022, 331–335.)

Aligning one's objectives and goals with the organisation's goes hand in hand also with organisational identity. When employees feel they are supported technologically and socially, they are more likely to identify themselves with the organisation and create a work identity which aligns with the organisation's identity. Organisations can benefit from this by reducing monitoring costs when employees share the objective and goals with the company and are more open about their development. Communication technology supports employees feeling of connectivity, but it can also harm productivity if remote workers feel increased stress because of the advanced communication technology. (Pianese et al. 2022, 331–335.)

## 2.4 Remote employment

The future of work is hybrid virtual model as organisations saw increased productivity in remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic which drove most people to work from home (Alexander et al. 2021, 2–6). The quick change to remote work brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, raised concerns for the well-being of employees. Some of the issues employees faced in remote work environment were excessive connectivity, isolation, and increased workload. (Capone, Schettino, Marino, Camerlingo, Smith, & Depolo 2024, 2–4.) Employees have also been reporting

side-effects such as anxiety and burnout. Burnouts can be hard to detect by organisations when employees are working remotely and people with burnouts are less likely to talk about it. The lack in communication and clear instruction on working remotely during the pandemic caused a lot of anxiety amongst employees. Clear communication has been seen as a decreasing factor in burnouts. Organisation should share more as sharing increases employees' well-being. (Alexander et al. 2021, 2–6.)

#### Demand for hybrid work models and remote employees' well-being

With more remote work possibilities, the demand for flexibility in work increases. Adopting a hybrid work model can be beneficial to the organisation as it reduces costs and enhances productivity. For employees it would mean that they are heard, and their well-being would benefit. Hybrid model is seen to affect employees so much, that they would even consider changing employers if they had to go back to fully on-site work. Especially employees with children would prefer to be able to work partially from home as it makes their life simpler with arrangements at home. (Alexander et al. 2021, 8–11.)

#### Remote employees' well-being affected by the new work environment

Adults' mental health suffered during the Covid-19 pandemic. Rises in depression, anxiety, and stress were reported across the globe. With the shift to remote work environment, workplace mental health became a crucial concern when faced with job losses, financial insecurities, and new work environment. The effects of remote work on employee well-being and job satisfaction are important to comprehend when developing workplace policies. (Lyzwinski 2024, 4–6.)

Remote work raises concerns about decreased collaboration, isolation, and performance monitoring. To achieve employee well-being and organisational success, should the relationship between remote work, work-life balance, and productivity be understood. Through that, work arrangements can be optimised to support employee well-being and achieve better productivity. (Janani et al. 2024, 660.)

Some studies have proven improved work-life balance in remote work environments whereas others have shown decrease in the work-life balance. It was noticed that hybrid workers experienced the highest work-life balance. Work-life balance is largely affected by working conditions

and working hours. Increased working hours can increase conflicts, stress, and isolation. (Lyzwinski 2024, 13–14.)

Work-life balance contributes positively to employees' well-being and job satisfaction. Organisations should develop their strategies to endorse harmonious merging of professional and personal responsibilities in remote work environments. In remote work, the boundaries between work and personal life can become blurred and result in increased workload. Therefore, it is crucial to communicate clearly to remote employees and endorse transparency, so that the well-being and job satisfaction of employees can be enhanced and help draw lines between work-life and personal life. (Janani et al. 2024, 661–664.)

To cope with the new work environment and changed workload, should excessive work hours, stress reduction, and stress coping skills be addressed (Lyzwinski 2024, 13–14).

Organisations can support employees in remote work environments by communicating clearly, setting realistic workload expectations, and investing in mental health support. Employee productivity can be enhanced by offering flexible working hours, trusting employees, and offering training on remote work practices and time management. Clear and consistent communication among remote team building practices and development of organisational culture and trust help remote employees overcome challenges and work together. Other important factor affecting the success of remote work is technological support which affects the work experience and thus job satisfaction. (Janani et al. 2024, 661–664.)

The performance of remote employees is positively affected by well-being. Well-being consists of multiple factors such as job satisfaction, peer support, self-efficacy, and techno-complexity. Techno-complexity is a dimension of technostress. It refers to the feeling of inadequacy related to technological skills required in remote work arrangements. Organisations can reduce techno-complexity by providing training and equipment. (Capone et al. 2024, 6–8.) Social isolation increased stress and impacted mental health in remote work environments. To promote well-being in remote environment, social isolation could be lessened by employee support from colleagues and managers. (Lyzwinski 2024, 8–13.)

Job satisfaction in remote work varies across the world. Some have seen increase in job satisfaction due to more flexible work whereas others have seen decrease in job satisfaction. Job

satisfaction is also influenced by sleep quality, isolation, autonomy, work relations, work-identity, connectivity, and supervision. Poor work set-up at home decreased job satisfaction by causing neck and back pain. Trust is emphasised in higher job satisfaction and positive relationships at work improve sleep quality and lower stress, contributing to better job satisfaction.

(Lyzwinski 2024, 17–18.)

In remote teams, trust in leaders, effective communication, empowerment, and social cohesion are crucial for the success of remote work. Other factors contributing to employee well-being and job satisfaction in remote work environments are responsible management and strategic leadership, clear direction and work-identity, and self-leadership. Self-leadership is characterised as self-direction and personal initiative. Therefore, self-leadership is crucial for the success of remote work, emphasising the importance of employee role in managing and working together with the management. (Lyzwinski 2024, 20–21.)

Feeling included is very important for employees and it can increase productivity and well-being. Offering arrangements for high-level communications and providing well-articulated remote work specific policies and approaches can help reach greater productivity. Leaders' updates, even when the matter is still uncertain, can drive performance higher. Employees expressing anxiety or concern usually work in a company, where the communication about the future work landscape is unclear or does not exist. As an effect of anxiety, the employee performance decreases and employees show lower job satisfaction. Consequently, the employees' interpersonal relationships with colleagues suffer. (Alexander et al. 2021, 4–5.)

Anxiety could be lessened by clear guidelines, policies, and expectations regarding remote work. Employees' well-being and productivity could be increased by managers communicating more often and offering specific plans for the future workplace. (Alexander et al. 2021, 2.)

## 2.5 Leadership styles

The way of thinking of how work is done changed tremendously with the COVID-19 pandemic. The remote working conditions pushed on by the COVID-19 pandemic increased employees feeling of job responsibility. Job responsibility, can for some, increase the feeling of job satisfac-

tion whereas in high complex positions which require more time, the increased job responsibility is seen as a negative impact on employee well-being. (Alkurdi et al. 2022, 119–121.) Organisational culture affects the accepted leadership style (Lombardo & Mierzwa 2012, 3). Organisational strategy contributes to employee job satisfaction and engagement through managers decision to provide flexible, stimulating, and valuable work assignments (Rousseau & Wade-Benzoni 1994). By changing the organisational culture toward relationship orientated, the leaders can sway the employees' motivation, behaviour, and empowerment. Leaders act as role models for employees and therefore are responsible for creating psychological safety by establishing a positive vision and fostering a coaching and supportive environment. The connection between organisational strategy, human resource practices and psychological contracts have been recognised to contribute to the formation of organisational commitment. (Lombardo & Mierzwa 2012, 3.)

### 2.5.1 Generally accepted leadership styles

Leadership styles influence tremendously the well-being of remote workers (Lyzwinski 2024, 20–21). Generally recognised leadership styles are democratic, autocratic or authoritarian, and laissez-faire. Democratic leaders are fair and show interest. They listen to subordinates and are receptive to ideas, whereas autocratic leaders, who work best in authoritarian environments, take a 'lead from a front' approach. Autocratic leaders are strict and task oriented. Laissez-faire leaders are non-directive and unbothered. They are not interested in the task nor group dynamics. (Kevin 1999, 79–108.)

Participative leadership and identity leadership have been found to positively affect employee well-being and job satisfaction (Lyzwinski 2024, 20–21). Participative leadership, also known as democratic leadership (IMD 2024), empowers employees as active decision-makers and identity leadership promotes sense of belonging and group cohesion, positively contributing to job satisfaction and reducing loneliness. (Lyzwinski 2024, 20–21.)

Participative leadership reduces stress in remote work environments by setting clear goals, having different job resource methods, and promoting self-efficacy. This shows how organisations should enhance employees' autonomy, provide necessary resources to adapting to the new work environment, and develop communication and support collaboration. (Orlandi et al. 2023, 4–8.)

Lower autonomy and higher workload negatively impact remote employees' well-being and mental health. Intrusive leadership has been noticed to lower remote employees' well-being and job satisfaction. Intrusive leadership promotes workaholism through excessive pressure and leads to heightened levels of stress which contributes to lower job satisfaction. Especially authoritarian leadership style weakens the work-life balance and increase technostress. Technostress refers to stress associated with using technology. (Lyzwinski 2024, 20–21.)

### 2.5.2 Emerging leadership styles in remote work environments

The elevation of employee involvement in work has led to new emerging leadership styles. Two of these emerged leadership styles are the reluctant leader and the reluctant follower. The changes brought on by remote work conditions affect the existing managers willingness to lead as there is constant change in the way of working. New individuals, however, rise to the front as they thrive to transition quickly into leadership roles, which can cause them to neglect some important tasks to achieve fast results. (Alshurideh et al. 2022, 119–121.)

Transformational leaders create change in individuals and teams. This has been seen to work well in remote work environments which has caused transformational leaders to emerge quickly. Remote work concerns adjustment to changed environment and transformational leaders lead the adaptation process to a new environment. (Pianese et al. 2022, 337–338.) Transformational leaders are known to create an open and supportive work environment. Transformational leaders fit well for remote environment as their leadership style matches with remote employees' expectations, which have grown with experience of what remote employment enables. (Lombardo & Mierzwa 2012, 4–5.) Transformational leadership display four key behaviours: inspirational motivation, idealised influence, individualised consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Transformational leaders create a work environment filled with enjoyment, fulfilment, flexibility, communication, and collaboration. These factors contribute to better employee engagement, organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and collaboration. Transformational leaders work well in remote work environment as they are known to communicate clearly and openly and to reinforce face-to-face interaction when possible. (Bass & Avolio 1994.)

Transformational leaders act as behavioural models by setting out examples of organisational values, influencing organisational culture, and pushing employees toward positive thinking, open communication, employee empowerment, and better team spirit. Leadership styles are

direct influencers of organisational culture and sway employee motivation and behaviour. (Bass, & Avolio 1994.) Transformational leadership behaviour, relational psychological contracts, and open management communication have positive impact on employees' organisational commitment and intent to stay (Lombardo & Mierzwa 2012, 5).

## 2.6 The research gaps in the existing literature

After thorough literature review, gaps in the existing research were detected. The long-term effects of remote work on employee's well-being have not been properly studied yet due to the long-term effects only slowly starting to show. Another gap found is the relationship between formal remote management training and remote management's success. The leadership styles in remote environment have not been thoroughly researched and neither has the effects of remote employees' contributions to assist remote managers to improve remote management nor the personal perception of employees and managers on how remote work could be improved in their opinion.

In the following figures, the research gaps are demonstrated by highlighting existing literature:

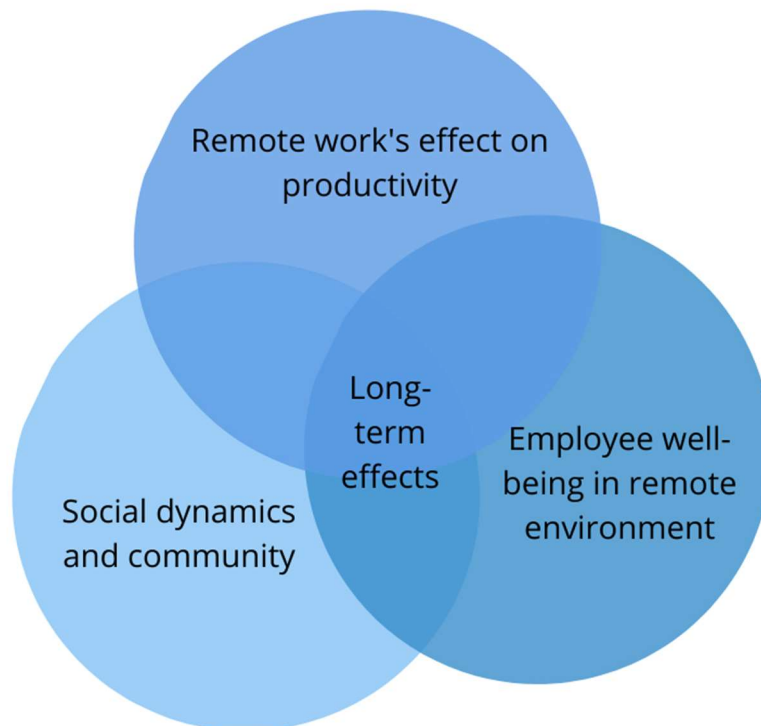


Figure 1. Visualisation of research gap; long term-effects of remote work

Figure 1 shows the long term-effects of remote work research gap. In theoretical literature review, it can be seen that the previous research has focus on productivity in remote work environments. The social dynamics as well as employee well-being have also been studied. However, remote work is relatively new concept in such a capacity that it currently is, and therefore the long-term effect on employees and remote management have not been able to study yet. With few years of experience of remote work, the long-term effects are starting to show and therefore, should be studied.

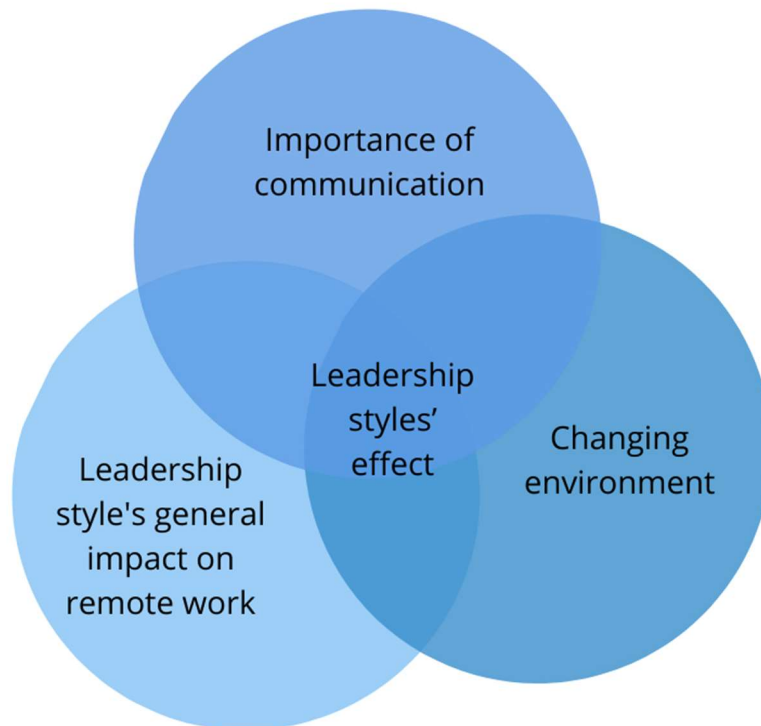


Figure 2. Visualisation of research gap; remote leadership styles effect on remote management success and remote work experience.

Figure 2 represent the remote leadership style's research gap. As seen from the theoretical part, leadership style can influence remote work. It has been noted that work environment has changed with remote work and remote work environment requires different approach from

leaders. The general leadership styles among new emerging leadership styles have been studied, however, their impact on remote employees' experience and their effect of remote management success have been given little consideration. Therefore, they should be researched.

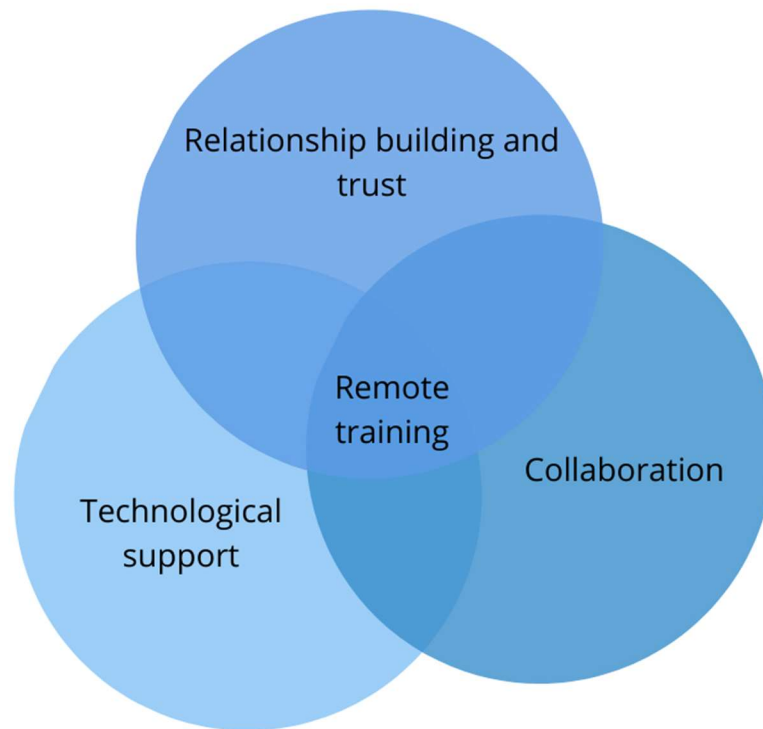


Figure 3. Visualisation of research gap; training and improvement of remote management

Training and improvement of remote management research gap is demonstrated in figure 3. Previous research has focused on technological support offered in remote work environments and how collaboration and trust could be increased in remote work environments. However, formal training for remote work for managers is not either studied or does not occur. Therefore, it should be given consideration.

This thesis will aim to fill those gaps by interviewing both remote employees and managers. The long-term effect of remote work will be discovered by interviewing both employees and managers on how they view the current situation of remote work, how content they are and how they think it could be improved. Suggestions for both employees and managers will be made on how to enhance remote work experience and improve remote management will be drawn based on

research data analysis. Leadership styles positively contributing to remote work success will be voiced through analysis of research results and theoretical framework. The personal experience of remote workers is crucial for understanding how remote work could be improved for them. Therefore, the focus is on perception and personal experience.

### 3 Research strategy

Theory is useful in explaining different meanings behind the research outcomes (Vilkkä 2021, chapter 2). The theoretical framework creates the foundation for the thesis and the research leans on a broad theoretical literature. The research strategy is qualitative in its nature and data is collected by interviews.

Research problem and research questions are based on using the findings from the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework and concepts are clearly stated and carefully chosen. From the theory, the research gaps are identified. Theoretical framework and concept definitions are used for creating the research frame and they guide the assessment of the research material.

#### 3.1 Qualitative approach

Qualitative research is a comprehensive approach which aims to gain detailed insights from participants perspective. Qualitative research occurs in natural settings (Williams 2007) and qualitative data is usually nonquantitative in its nature (Beretwas, Leavy, & Saldana 2018). Qualitative research inspects meanings between human and social concepts (Vilkkä 2021, chapter 5.) Data is purposefully described, explained, and interpreted to help formulate new theories. Typical for qualitative research is that they are less structured, and the reasoning is inductive in its nature. (Williams 2007.) Typical for qualitative research is that it documents human experiences through interview transcripts, fieldnotes, artifacts, photographs, video recordings, and internet sites. (Beretwas et al. 2018.) The goals of qualitative research can be numerous (Beretwas et al. 2018) and it allows the researcher to dive into the complexity of the phenomenon in more detail (Williams 2007).

According to Vilkkä (2021), Varto (1992) states that qualitative research investigates the human experience and the meanings of the research originate and result in human activities. Qualitative research emphasises the meanings of the research, which must be clarified. Meanings can focus on experiences or perceptions. (Vilkkä 2021, chapter 5.)

Researcher's own perceptions always affect the analysis of research materials. Therefore, researcher must be receptive and sensitive to changes. It is important that the research questions answer what and why to ensure that more options are considered in decision making. Analysing qualitative research is comparable to solving riddles. The aim is not to discover the truth but rather to decode the puzzle. The research subjects give clues, and those clues can be used to form conclusions. The interpretations lead to models and guidelines regarding the research. (Vilkka 2021, chapter 5.)

The nature of qualitative research highlights three perspectives on the research target: context, intention, and process. Context explains to which types of connections the research relates to. Context can be for example social, cultural, historical, and professional. The research situation during the execution of the research must be explained. Motives and purposes of the research subjects reveal the intentions behind the way of delivery. Intention does not equal to lying. Intentions can deprive from covering or protecting someone, belittling, or highlighting, and remembering differently. Sometimes the experiences can be generalised which hides the actual experience of the research subject. Process creates a relationship between research timeframe, the research requirements for research material, and the understanding of the research topic. The time spend on the process does not equal quality. The quality of the work comes from the skills of the researcher and research quality. (Vilkka 2021, chapter 5.)

### 3.2 Group and E-mail interviews as a data collection methods

Interviews as a data collection method can act as the primary source of data for the research (DiCisso & Crabtree 2006). Interviews have a purposefully chosen goal and hence are an organised method to collecting information (Vilkka 2021, chapter 5). Interviews can be unstructured, semi-structured or structured (DiCisso & Crabtree 2006). Structured interviews follow a carefully planned order, though the order does not have to be followed exactly (Vilkka 2021, chapter 5). Semi-structured interviews are organised using predetermined open-ended questions (DiCisso & Crabtree 2006). For semi-structured interviews, it is typical to form central themes and topics which are necessary to go through to answer to the research problem. Interviewees should be able to answer to all the chosen themes. (Vilkka 2021, chapter 5.)

The aim of collecting qualitative research data focuses on the scope of content rather than on the amount of data. The amount of data does not equal in quality in qualitative research. (Vilkka 2021, chapter 5.)

Interviews are typically held as individual or group-interviews. In individual interviews, the researcher can receive a deeper understanding of social and personal matters whereas in group interviews a wider span of experience can be collected. (DiCisso & Crabtree 2006.) According to Vilkka (2021), Hirsijärvi & Hurme (2001) describes group interviews as a useful method for collecting qualitative research data. Hirvisjavi & Hurme characterise group interviews to be purposeful, where 6-8 interviewees give insights on the research topic. Qualitative research interviews are usually interactive in their nature; the questions evolve based on theoretical findings and the direction the interview answers take it. (DiCisso & Crabtree 2006.)

With technological advancement, digital interviewing methods rise to the front. E-mail interviews have been recognised to be an effective way to generate qualitative data. If conducted well, e-mail interviews can be as reliable as in-person interviews. E-mail interviews are especially good for carrying out in-depth interviews and gaining an understanding of the complex social practices on the internet. E-mail interview's benefits are participant reflection, well-articulated responses, and access to more participants. E-mail interviews do, however, lack non-verbal cues and can generate superficial responses. Additionally, E-mail interviews are more time consuming than in-person interviews. (Dahlin 2021.)

Creating relationships with interviewees grows more difficult in E-mail interviews. Other issues of E-mail interviewing include possible absenteeism and maintaining communication. Follow-up questions are found to be an effective way of maintaining communication and building trusts. To mitigate absenteeism, a response strategy should be implemented. Response strategy allows for reflection and decision-making yet keeps the interview flowing. (Dahlin 2021.)

Research interviews should be emancipatory. Emancipatory creates a learning environment for both researcher and interviewees. Interviews should also contribute to the understanding of the interviewees and not just researchers. The emancipatory of the interview can be reinforced by creating conversational culture and encourage interviewees to form a united view on the research themes. This can increase interviewees' motivation, continuity of the interview and result in better research data. (Vikka 2021, Tutkimushaastattelun muodot.)

It is important to create a relationship with interviewees as it builds trust and respect and creates an environment where interviewees can safely share personal experiences. The stages of building relationship in interview environments are apprehension, exploration, cooperation, and participation. The purpose of these steps is to have interviewees speak freely, be engaged, and allow clarifications. The aim of the interview is to have interviewees provide knowledge in their own words. To gain a complex understanding of the matter, it is important to propose follow up questions to complement the conversation. Leading the interviewee in their answers is not allowed. (DiCisso & Crabtree 2006.)

The interview group should be homogenous as the interview tries to extract similar ideas and understandings which contribute to the research findings. The participants are chosen carefully by selected requirements. (DiCisso & Crabtree 2006.)

Interviews as research data collection method face analytical issues. Analysing interviews requires interpretation of speech and words. For better quality, interviewer can ask for clarification when needed. Practical experiences can be useful way of asking the interviewee to clarify the matter. Interviewees can be asked to explicate their understanding of key words and concepts to help the analysing process. In E-mail interviews, the interviewer must confirm before receiving the interview answers, whether the interviewee has understood all the interview questions. Understanding the interviewee group aids in forming the interview questions. Question that can result in yes or no answers should be avoided. (Vilkka 2021, chapter 5.)

### 3.3 Thematic content analysis as a data analysis method

Content analysis as data analysis method is a way of interpreting, identifying, and extracting data for qualitative research. The key to content analysis is to recognise significant concepts from the data and to form them into groups which then describe or explain a phenomenon. The concepts are grouped by identifying patterns, similarities, and differences. Content analysis can be observed as a manifest or a latent analysis. Latent analysis is suitable for qualitative research as it explores implied meanings. Latent analysis requires active evaluation and recognising hidden content, which are relevant to the research. Latent content analysis is suitable for using theoretical frameworks to analyse data. Latent content analysis can be separated into latent pattern, in which the patterns of the collected data are emphasised, and latent projective, in

which the researcher's interpretation is key element. (Kleinheksel, Rockich-Winston, Tawfik & Wyatt 2020.)

Codes are a tool for organising and interpreting content analysis data. Codes are short and symbolic and give meaning to different unit found in the data. To create the codes for content analysis, the researcher must be familiar with the content analysis data and understand the data. Codes are divided into categories and subcategories are created as needed. Codes are used to identifying themes and describing behaviours. (Kleinheksel et al. 2020.)

#### 4 Execution and analysis of the research development work: how managers and employees could contribute to a better remote work environment

The purpose of this research was to find out areas for development in remote working environments by conducting interviews for both employees and managers. Interviews were chosen as the data collection method for the research as they are a method of qualitative research and allows for further inspection and reasoning of the research data. From the results, suggestions for further development of remote work will be drawn and conclusions made on which type of leadership style best suits remote conditions. The goal is to better understand the issues and corner stones in remote work and how managers and employees could contribute to a better remote working environment.

The implementation of the research was executed in Spring 2024. By then, remote work model had become a norm beside in-office working model. Most of the interview participants had first experienced remote working due to the big changes brought upon by Covid-19. The research purpose was to gain an understanding of what the current situation of remote work is and what are the side effects of working remotely, after few years of experience of it and how it could be improved by focusing on remote management methods.

To gain a wider perspective and receive more data from various remote work experiences, the interview participants were chosen from different companies and different fields. Many of the interviewees had international background and lived abroad. This factor was felt to enrichen the results. During the implementation of the research, all the participants lived and worked within Europe.

The participants had various experiences of remote working and work life in general. Some have had decades of experience in working life while some have just entered working life few years ago. Remote work experience varied from few years to few months. Remote environment was familiar to some from studying prior to gaining remote work experience. Younger participants clearly felt the transitioning to remote environment less challenging than others.

#### 4.1 Navigating Challenges and Resources: How could remote work experience be improved - interview for employees

The interviews for remote employees were conducted as email-interviews and two group interviews. The Email-interviews were structured for clear understanding and the group interviews were semi-structured. For the group interviews, the same themes were used as in the email-interviews, however, the questions were open-ended, and the conversation was guided through by the interviewer while allowing the interviewees to converse with each other rather freely on the topic. The goal of the interviews was to find out the current situation of remote work conditions as perceived by remote employees and how it could be improved. The focus of the interviews was on how managers have tried to enhance the remote work experience and how employees could themselves contribute to a better remote work experience. Additionally, the organisations' commitment to remote employees and employees' preference of remote, hybrid or in-office working models were emphasised.

The interview questions were developed utilising the research problem and theoretical framework of the research. The questions were well thought out to best support the outcome of the research. The interview answers help to make conclusions of how remote work could be improved going forward.

The interview questions were categorised into the following themes:

1. Introduction
2. Remote work experience
3. Communication, collaboration, and trust
4. Management support
5. Employee well-being
6. Organisational adaptation
7. Improvement suggestions

The group interviews were held on 21.3.2024 and 25.3.2024. The first group interview had 6 participants. Due to difficulties scheduling the interviews with multiple people, the second group interview was held with only 5 participants. The one who couldn't participate the second interview offered to participate in the email-interviews.

Even though a group interview should have 6-8 participants, the interview method was not changed for the second interview, as it was thought that being one short would not affect the results and therefore was not enough to rethink the interview method.

Email-interviews were also held for others, with difficulty to arrange a group interview with due to busy schedules or different time zones. The email-interviews along with cover letter were sent out between 11.3.-25.3.2024 to 5 participants. The questions were sent out once a positive confirmation for participation of the thesis research was received. The answer time provided was 2 weeks from receiving the questions. The answer rate was 100 %.

#### 4.2 Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved - interview for managers

The interviews were conducted as email interviews, which were structured. The interviews were answered by 5 remote managers and the goal of the interviews was to determine the current situation of remote managing and what are the challenges remote managers face in managing remote team members. Additionally, understand how remote management could be developed to better accommodate the needs of remote employees. The focus of the interviews was on how remote managers have had to adapt to remote environment and how they try to upkeep and enhance employee motivation, organisational commitment, and job satisfaction in remote environments. Additionally, managers' way of communicating, building trust and supporting collaboration as well as training for remote working conditions were highlighted.

The interview questions were developed utilising the research problem and theoretical framework of the research. The interview answers help to make conclusions of how remote management could be improved to better support employees to manage remote working.

The interview questions were categorised into the following themes:

1. Introduction
2. Manager's purpose
3. Remote work experience
4. Remote training
5. Communication, collaboration, and trust
6. Organisational commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction
7. Improvement suggestions

The email-interviews were sent out between 11.3.-25.4.2024. The questions were sent out once a positive confirmation for participation of the research was received. The answer time provided was 2 weeks from receiving the questions. The answer rate was 83 % as one out of six did not reply.

#### 4.3 Thematic content analysis of the research data

The interview answers were analysed using a thematic content analysis. Thematic content analysis allows for extraction of reoccurring themes from the research data which then contributes to the results and conclusions of the research. In this research both latent pattern and latent projective methods were used. For finding themes, the latent pattern method was used in analysis and for drawing conclusions on which type of leadership style best suits remote environment, the latent projective method was used for analysing the data. Codes were used in the thematic content analysis to organise the data and for interpreting it.

For data analysis, the group interviews were transcribed. The Navigating Challenges and Resources: How could remote work experience be improved and the Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved interviews were analysed separately. The group interviews and email-interviews targeted for remote employees were analysed together.

From the interviews, occurring terms, sentences and expressions were written down. These formed themes for the data analysis.

In the following figures, the data from the Navigating Challenges and Resources: How could remote work experience be improved -interviews, is analysed by themes.

Theme	Modified original expressions for accessibility	Simplified expression	Subcategory	Main category
Employee well-being	Working from home can make it harder to separate work life and personal life. This can burden personal life by making it hard to leave work thoughts behind during free time	Balancing personal life and work	Work-life balance	Self-management
	At home, it can be hard to keep breaks because the room or company doesn't change during the breaks and it is too easy to check email while having lunch	Having breaks	Prioritising	
	Isolation increases in remote work and can cause lack in sense of belonging when you don't feel connected with your colleagues. Hence it is important to sometimes be present in the office and see your colleagues	Feeling isolated	Community	Creating organisational culture and encouraging active collaboration
	Remote working can positively impact resilience and motivation but may negatively affect mental health if carried out excessively (fully remotely)	Caring for mental health by utilising hybrid work model	Mental health	

Figure 4. Well-being. Thematic content analysis: Navigating Challenges and Resources: How could remote work experience be improved.

As can be seen from figure 4, employee well-being rose as one of the main themes in the interview data. Well-being of employees was both increased and decreased in remote work environment. The declines in well-being were caused by difficulty in separating work from personal life and growth in feeling of isolation, when working from home. Additionally, poor self-efficacy and prioritising skills lowered well-being in remote work environment. Even then, remote work was clearly seen as positive factor in employee well-being. Remote work allowed for improved time management and scheduling non-work-related matters into weekdays. Most participants felt that they were less tired when working remotely, because they could sleep longer, and they were not exhausted by the social contacts that happen in the office environment. However, fully remote work was seen negatively and for improved well-being, employees feel the need to go to the office at least once a week to feel part of the work community.

Theme	Modified original expressions for accessibility	Simplified expression	Subcategory	Main category
Trust	Flexibility to arrange working hours and places allows better time management and makes balancing work-life balance easier	Flexibility in work arrangements	Autonomy	Contribution to job satisfaction and professional confidence
	Provision or other incentives can increase motivation and improve job satisfaction	Offering incentives	Motivation	
	Remote work environment requires employee and manager to build trust so that both can feel confident in their own tasks and not feel monitored or having to monitor	Creating foundation for trust	Relationship	

Figure 5. Trust. Thematic content analysis: Navigating Challenges and Resources: How could remote work experience be improved.

Figure 5 demonstrates that the second occurring theme from the interview data was trust. For employees to be able to work at home, must managers be able to trust them that they will perform their tasks just as well as in the office. The interview data shows that employees feel very trusted by their managers, yet it is still felt as an ongoing process which needs continuous attention. Flexibility to arrange working hours, in-office days, and working place was felt as a very important factor in increased trust. Incentives were seen as a way of managers trying to enhance trust in employees; through motivators, employees are more likely to work harder, and managers can feel more confident that employees are doing their very best to achieve their goals. Good relationships and regular communication help in creating relationship with managers. Good relationships automatically increase trust.

Theme	Modified original expression for accessibility	Simplified expression	Subcategory	Main category
Proactive communication	The contact in remote environment is usually limited to task related communication and therefore the “how are you” which comes naturally in-office setting is not asked.	Being seen	Dialogue	Manager’s support and open communication
	If cameras are off during remote meetings, then it is hard to know if anyone is listening to you. Facial expressions are important part of communication	Being heard	Active listening	
	Professional confidence can suffer in remote environment, therefore regular check-ups with managers and appraisals for good work help increase professional confidence	Recognising employee effort and talent	Feedback	
	Actively sharing information, to participate in creating open communication and spreading knowledge	Sharing silent information	Openness	
	Task and expectations should be clearly communicated by managers and monthly target discussions help both parties feel up to date with employee’s goals and manager’s expectations and increase employee commitment and motivation	Setting targets	Motivating	

Figure 6. Proactive communication. Thematic content analysis: Navigating Challenges and Resources: How could remote work experience be improved.

Figure 6 shows that the third theme that rose from the interview data, was proactive communication. Communication was seen to decrease in remote work environment, and it was easy to feel isolated and separated from the work community. Especially in the beginning of a new job, some of the interview participants felt very alone and they had no work identity because they did not know any of their colleagues. Lack of communication significantly decreased job satisfaction.

In remote meetings it is easy to feel unheard and the office chit-chat does not occur in remote environment, which however, was seen as both positive and negative. With less chit-chat, the work tasks can be done without disruptions. Unfortunately, this also means that communication in remote environment is limited to task related matters only, meaning that the “how are you” is not asked, leading to increased isolation and lessened connectivity from the work community.

Regular check-ups with manager, feedback and goal setting were seen to increase professional confidence. However, communication is not a one-way street and therefore, employees must also show activity in communication. Sharing information and tips on working methods was felt important as well as letting manager know where they are with their tasks and goals. Proactive communication increases the spread of information, staying up to date, and connectivity.

In the next figures, the data from the Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved -interviews, is analysed by themes

Theme	Modified original expressions for accessibility	Simplified expression	Subcategory	Main category
Time management	It can be challenging and time consuming for a remote manager to make sure everyone is on the same page. Managers need to have enough time to spend with each individual and see that their needs are taken care of.	Scheduling enough time for each team member	Scheduling	Management communication and presence
	Communication in remote environment is often limited to task related topics. Therefore, it is important to take the time to connect with subordinates to improve the relationship and therefore trust	Take the time to connect with team members	Communication	

Figure 7. Time management. Thematic content analysis: Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved.

From the Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved -interview data, time management was one of the main occurring themes as can be seen from figure 7. Time consumption for setting meetings with each team member and scheduling time for communication was increased in remote work environment. Because the face-to-face contact is limited or in some cases, does not exist, it takes more time to schedule meetings with each team member. Regular contact becomes even more crucial in remote environment, because isolation and communication easily drops in remote environment and therefore, it is important to schedule time for communication with each team member. Lack of in person presence also makes it more difficult for everyone to stay up to date with work related matters. Hence, managers need to schedule more time for making sure everyone is up to date. Time management, therefore, is an important skill in successful remote management.

Theme	Modified original expressions for accessibility	Simplified expression	Subcategory	Main category
Active listening	Because of the lack in formal remote management training, it is important to listen to other managers how they have decided to manage remotely	Learning from other managers	Learning	Continuous development
	Listening to your subordinates; understanding how the work is done best and how you could better help them. Employees usually see the bigger picture of the operations	Learning from team members on what actually works best	Listening	

Figure 8. Active listening. Thematic content analysis: Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved.

Good remote management also requires active listening. Figure 8 shows that active listening rose as an important theme from the data. Due to the lack of formal remote management training, the participants had noticed that listening to other managers was very insightful and helped improve their own remote management methods. Also sharing own experiences of successes or downfalls in remote management were felt necessary to increase information sharing between managers and hence allow everyone the chance to reflect and improve. Also listening to team members is crucial. Especially when in remote environment, it becomes even more important to listen to and learn from team members regarding their work. Managers aren't always experts in the tasks that the employees perform. Employees, however, know how the work is done exactly and what works best. Therefore, listening to them and learning from them helps in managing and understanding them.

Theme	Modified original expressions for accessibility	Simplified expression	Subcategory	Main category
Motivation	Monthly discussion about goal setting and updates on tasks is important for team members to feel confident and motivated in their job	Goal setting and updates	Targets	Meaningful leading
	It is important to invest the time and effort in giving feedback and praises because it increases employee confidence and motivation	Giving praises for job well done	Feedback	
	To increase employees job satisfaction, it is important to also have non-work related events such as recreation days or have after work clubs for sports etc.	Coming together for other than work related matters	Job satisfaction	
	Offer ergonomic equipment for employees without reasonable access to the office to improve their working conditions and therefore increase motivation	Offer ergonomic office equipment for those in need	Foundation for working	

Figure 9. Motivation. Thematic content analysis: Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved.

In figure 9 it can be seen that managers clearly felt that meaningful leading increases motivation through goal setting, feedback, and connectivity. These contribute positively to the success of remote work. Especially monthly discussions with team members, praises, and good ergonomics were seen to increase employees' motivation according to participants. Another factor enhanc-

ing employee motivation was events. Non-work-related events allow employees to come together and connect in more personal level. These events are seen to positively increase motivation.

Theme	Modified original expressions for accessibility	Simplified expression	Subcategory	Main category
Trust	Regular contact and transparency help team members feel more confident to do the job well and be sure of what is going on in the office and where the company is headed.	Building trust by open communication	Transparency	Creating good foundation for remote working
	Allowing flexibility requires trust. However, balancing flexibility is important so that everyone feels satisfied and content with their work but also that no one is left alone at home all the time and becomes isolated	Setting guidelines for flexibility	Work arrangement guidelines	

Figure 10. Trust. Thematic content analysis: Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved.

Figure 10 demonstrates trust as an very important factor in successful remote management. Transparency is a good way of building trust and engaging employees. Regular contact and clear communication also aid in building trust with team members. For managers, a way of showing trust, is to allow for more flexibility and autonomy in remote work. However, flexibility should come with guidelines, so that everyone can feel equal and to maintain and develop organisational culture. Additionally, guidelines can aid in avoiding isolation and maintaining presence.

Theme	Modified original expressions for accessibility	Simplified expression	Subcategory	Main category
Community	Maintaining effective and open communication between team members can be hard in remote environment. Therefore, it is important to provide avenues for open communication and feedback	Offer tools for communication and collaboration	Enabling collaboration	Offering the tools needed and setting rules for remote work
	It can be difficult to engage people in remote meetings. Therefore, it is important to set meeting guidelines, such as having cameras on and encourage people to speak up	Enforce active participation in remote meetings	Meeting guidelines	
	In remote environment communication is reduced and the face-to-face contact limited. Therefore, addressing employees' feelings of isolation becomes even more crucial in remote environment. Managers need to create open communication and enforce active interactions within team	Addressing feeling of isolation by enforcing open communication and team gatherings	Create trust and encourage interactions	
	Remote work removes some of the conflicts that might happen if meeting every day in the office. Everyone is staying away enough from each other's way that there isn't the time to get annoyed by someone	Conflicts are reduced when not seeing each other every day in person	Addressing conflicts	

Figure 11. Community. Thematic content analysis: Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved.

Another important theme that rose from the data was community, as can be seen from figure 11. Managers felt it necessary to enable collaboration through offering avenues for communication, setting meeting guidelines to enforce participation and to encourage interactions to increase the sense of belonging. Additionally, addressing conflicts is important to improving community.

By offering avenues for communication and feedback, team members can communicate with each other's, give feedback, and work together with less effort. Setting guidelines for remote meetings enhances participation and dialogue. Increased interactions can improve trust between team members and decrease the feeling of isolation. Contrary to theory, some managers noticed that the conflicts were lessened in remote environment, because everyone was staying away from each other enough not to annoy each other.

#### 4.4 Summary of the main findings

The interview data demonstrates that the most important factors for better remote work experience and good remote management are trust, communication, well-being, listening, community, motivation, and time management. Below some figures of the main research findings:



Figure 12. What employees feel as necessary for successful remote work experience.

Figure 12 shows the factors which remote employees consider important for successful remote work experience. Remote employees emphasised the need for proactive communication, stating that everyone must actively participate in open communication and information sharing. The need for increased trust was also highlighted. Trust was felt essential for feeling confident in executing tasks and not having to worry about being constantly monitored for performance in remote work environment. Additionally, employee well-being emphasised to play a huge role in successful remote work experience. Employees were able to identify the negative effects of working alone from home but also to point out the positive effects. Remote work increased well-being, by allowing for more flexibility, better concentration, and reduction in fatigue but also decreased it by increasing the feeling of isolation, reduction in casual conversation, and decline in professional confidence.

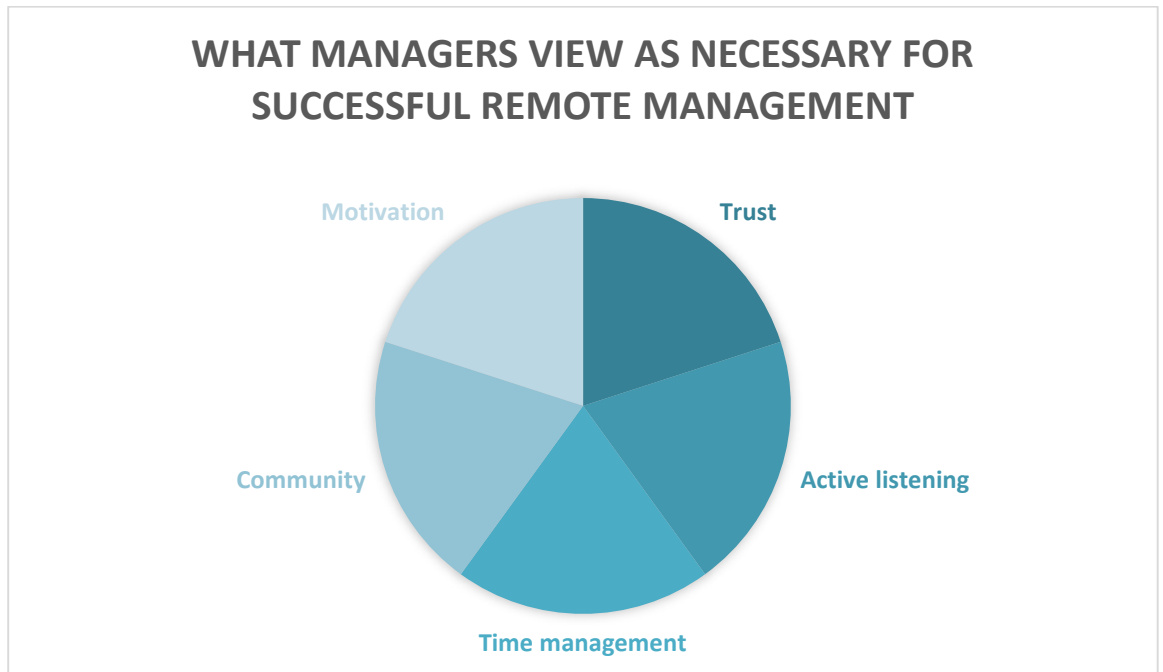


Figure 13. What managers view as necessary for successful remote management.

As it can be seen in figure 13, managers highlighted the need for time management, trust, motivation, community, and active listening as key factors in successful remote management. Time consumption was noticed to increase notably in remote management and therefore managing time by actively scheduling and prioritising was felt important in remote management. Managers emphasised active listening in remote management by stating that it is important to listen to both team members and other remote managers to gain a deeper understanding of the work and hence the needs of team members and to learn other practices on how to lead remotely. Managers too felt that trust is a big factor in contributing to better remote work experience and making remote managing easier. Community building was also felt to improve the remote work experience and to aid managers in achieving their goals. Managers highlighted motivation as an increasing factor in successful remote management because it was seen to help engage employees in their tasks, commit employees to the organisation, and to increase job satisfaction.

## 5 Discussion of findings and development suggestions

In this chapter, the interview results will be considered from both employee and manager point of view and then compared with theory. Research questions and the themes extracted from the data will be reviewed together with the results. After thorough consideration, development suggestions for remote management will be made and on how remote work can be improved. Later, the connection between good remote management methods and different leadership styles will be clarified.

### 5.1 Analysis of the interview data

The thematic content analysis on the Navigating Challenges and Resources: How could remote work experience be improved -interview data revealed three key themes regarding remote work. Employee-wellbeing was highlighted in the data analysis, with both negative and positive impacts noted. While remote work reduced fatigue and increased flexibility, challenges such as difficulty in separating personal life from work and feelings of isolation were reported. Secondly, trust emerged as a key theme, with remote employees appreciating the trust placed in them by managers but also emphasising the need for ongoing actions to maintain good trust. Other factors brought up to contribute to trust were flexibility in work arrangements and incentives. Lastly, proactive communication was identified as essential for maintaining confidence and job satisfaction in remote work environment. Remote communication lacks the informal interactions of office environment. Therefore, regular check-ups, feedback, and active communication were seen as essential for raising professional confidence and connectivity.

Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved -interview data brought up several key themes in the thematic content analysis. Time management was highlighted as a main theme due to the increased time needed for scheduling meetings and ensuring continuous communication with team members. Making sure that everyone stays up to date and no one is feeling uncertain about work tasks or the company direction, consumes more time in remote environment than in-office environment. Active listening was identified as another essential aspect of effective remote management. Managers recognised the value of learning from each other's experiences and actively listening to their team members to better

understand their tasks and understand how to improve management methods to better answer to the needs of remote employees.

Community was also emphasised as a theme, with managers focusing on creating avenues for communication, setting guidelines for meeting practices, and addressing conflicts to enhance collaboration and the sense of belonging. Trust was highlighted as fundamental, with transparency, regular communication, and flexibility being key factors in building and maintaining trust with team members. Managers noted that meaningful leadership, including goal setting, feedback, and connectivity, positively impacted employee motivation in remote work settings, with non-work-related events also contributing to increased motivation.

## 5.2 Findings of results and interpretation of Navigating Challenges and Resources: How could remote work experience be improved -interview

The long-term effects of remote work can be seen to reflect on the results of the interview data. Most participants had already gained a few years of experience in remote working and the ones who were new to remote work, had gained remote experience through school. Therefore, the results of the interviews can be seen to fill the research gap on long-term effects of remote work.

The data from interviews targeted toward remote employees showcases that proactive communication, together with trust and openness are the building blocks of good remote leading. The findings are supported by Alexander et al. (2021), who have stated poor communication to be the biggest issue in remote work along with lack in openness and trust. Communication has also been mentioned by Gebrehiwot (2023), Lombardo & Mierzwa (2012), and Pianese et al. (2022) to be an important factor in successful remote work. Korunka et al. (2022) have stated self-efficacy and colleagues' support to be the most important resources of remote working. Lyzwinski (2024) has written self-leadership to be crucial for the success of remote work and emphasises employees' role in management. The interview data also reflects self-efficacy to be important as well as self-management. Self-efficacy is important skill to get tasks done in remote environment and self-management aids in the ability to control oneself and to arrange breaks and not get distracted by dirty laundry or dishes when working from home. Self-management lessens the manager's burden in leading. Colleagues' support increases the sense of belonging and confidence.

High-level communication contributes to relationship building (Alexander et al. 2021) which contributes to creating trust. Trust increases employee autonomy and decreases feeling of isolation. (Pianese et al. 2022.) Employees felt trust as a big factor in remote work and most felt trusted by their managers and hence felt confidence in their tasks. However, trust is seen to be negatively impacted by poor communication and therefore trust must be continuously built and deepened.

Alexander et al. (2021) noticed a decrease in collaboration in remote work environments. The interview participants, though, did not notice such effect. Many of them worked in a field where collaboration was a natural part of the job, or the nature of the work was very independent. Collaboration was still not actively encouraged by managers, but rather an effort of the employees.

According to Capone et al. (2024), excessive connectivity, isolation and workload increased in remote working. Employees mentioned that technological connectivity increased in remote environment, and it was hard to separate oneself from the work computer or phone during lunch break or after finishing work. Even though connectivity increased, communication decreased and that easily led to feeling of isolation. Increased workload, however, was not noticed among the participants. The workload was felt to be similar as before or it had nothing to do with the work arrangements.

Organisational commitment increases sense of belonging and job satisfaction (Pianese et al. 2022, 328). Sense of belonging was felt as an increasing factor of motivation and job satisfaction, however, not everyone could share the goals and values of the organisations due to what the organisation was doing under the current leadership. This did not mean that the employees were not satisfied with their own job, but rather, they could not identify themselves with the organisation due to the differences in the overall goal. Even if the values differed, work community made a big difference in job satisfaction.

Even though remote work environment brings with it its challenges, employees would not be willing to give up hybrid work model. The participants would need very good reasoning and monetary compensation to even consider giving up the possibility to work remotely. Alexander et al. (2021) also supports this statement by showing that employees would even consider changing employees if they were demanded to go back to fully in-office work model. Even if remote work possibility is not an option to give up, the participants feel that it is just as important

to be able to go to the office and see others. Excessive remote working causes loneliness and loss in professional confidence. Communication is also felt easier when meeting the other workers every now and then.

The biggest contributions to employee well-being in remote work environment were seen to be flexibility to arrange working hours and places, time management due to less commuting, and increased sleeping time. According to Capone et al. (2024), well-being consists of job satisfaction, peer support, self-efficacy, and techno-complexity. The participants did not experience technostress due to having good technological skills from previous school or work experience. Technostress was only felt when organisation went fully remote during the Covid-19 pandemic and the previously said organisation had not allowed or accommodated remote employees prior to the pandemic.

### 5.3 Findings of results and interpretation of Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved -interview

Both Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved and Navigating Challenges and Resources: How could remote work experience be improved -interview data expressed importance toward communication and trust in remote work environment. Chosen leadership approach affects the relationship between managers and employees and trust is essential for good relationships in remote environment. Trust leads to increased organisational commitment, higher job satisfaction, and lesser isolation. (Pianese et al. 2022.) According to Lyzwinski (2024), trust in leaders, effective communication, empowerment, and social cohesion contribute to the success of remote work. The participants of the Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved -interview, said that trust should be build through open communication. Communication should be transparent and regular and include the information of the company direction. Managers can demonstrate trust by allowing flexibility for team members. In remote environment, trust means believing in the employees that they will and can do the job. Even though flexibility increases job satisfaction, guidelines should be set for working arrangements so that no one gets accidentally isolated form the work community and that equality can be had.

Theory has illustrated that communication is a key factor in successful remote management. Managers also agree on that. Active communication has been noticed to increase motivation

according to managers and monthly meetings, where work up-dates are shared, and targets set are important for increasing motivation and confidence. Feedback and praises have also been felt to increase employee motivation. Other factors that the interview data connects with increased motivation are offering good ergonomics and organising events for employees.

Development of organisational culture and team building practices assist employees to overcome challenges and work together (Janani et al. 2024). Managers feels important to offer tools for team members for better communication and collaboration. Communication in remote environment can be improved by setting remote meeting guidelines to encourage active interaction. Lyzwinski et al. (2024) writes that conflicts increase in remote work due to increased working hours. Managers did not, however, experience increased working hours in remote work model and therefore conflicts did not increase either. On the contrary, conflicts were seen to lessen due to everyone staying away from each other's way long enough not to cause annoyance. Even if communication can become harder in remote environment and interpreting messages can sometimes cause hardships, the situations rarely advanced far enough to become a conflict in remote work environment.

Another crucial factor in successful remote management is active listening. Managers think it is important to listen to subordinates, especially in remote work environment, where communication and presence is limited. Employees knows best how the work is done and therefore listening to them aids managers to know how to best support them and develop practices further. Listening to other managers can also aid managers to improve their management. Learning from other managers can give insight on what others have experienced as good methods of leading and what should be avoided.

Remote managing consumes more time. Therefore, time management is an important skill for remote managers. Managers need to schedule enough time for each member to have everyone's needs met and be sure that everyone is up to date. Because remote communication is often limited to task related topics only, should managers schedule time for more casual discussions as well to ask their subordinates how they are doing. Casual talks develop relationship, increase trust, and improve job satisfaction and motivation.

Remote managers reported to not have had any formal remote training. Some felt it unnecessary, yet some felt that it would offer an opportunity for both managers and employees to get the best out of remote work. The interview results support theory: formal remote work training

has not been offered nor studied. Which is surprising considering the difficulties many have felt in the beginning of remote work.

From the interview data and its analysis, it can be concluded that remote managers prefer a hybrid work model, where job satisfaction and autonomy is increased by flexibility. Remote managers have noticed the positive effects of having a hybrid work model, where work can be better arranged to accommodate personal life, and hence are strong advocates for supporting remote working, even though remote environment requires more effort and consumes more time from the managers. Taking all into consideration, it can be said, that managers view remote work positively and would not be willing to give up the possibility of working remotely.

#### 5.4 Improvement suggestions for remote work and remote management

Based on the analysis of remote work experiences and management challenges, several development suggestions can be proposed for both managers and employees to enhance the remote work environment:

How could remote employees contribute to successful remote work:

1. Proactive communication
2. Self-management and self-efficacy
3. Adaptability

Remote employees have a big responsibility when it comes to achieving successful remote work experience and assisting remote managers to better manage themselves. Employees can actively engage in communication with colleagues and managers to create trust and enhance collaboration. Giving feedback to managers is just as important as managers providing feedback to team members; managers need to know where they are doing well and what they could do better. Feedback increases managers' confidence in their actions and positively contributes to their

job satisfaction. Feedback also allows managers to reflect on their actions and consider the right way forward.

To increase the remote work experience, employees should indulge in casual conversations with their colleagues and managers. Having discussions regarding other than task related topics can help defeat feelings of isolation and aid in fostering good team spirit and openness. Casual conversations can be encouraged by having for example remote coffee moments. These meetings could be brief moments, where team members get together virtually and talk how their week is going and what plans they have for the weekend. Work related topics should not be the focus in these meetings because the purpose is to increase the feeling of belonging and being seen. Additionally, these meetings can reduce the feeling of isolation and loneliness which can occur in remote work environments.

Remote working often means increased flexibility and autonomy. Having different work environment requires adaptation, especially if the workplace changes often from home office to in-office. Changes are also created by technological advancements which are driven by increased remote working possibilities and preferences. Therefore, for remote employees, it is crucial to be able to adapt to ever changing work landscape. Adaptation includes adhering to guidelines set for remote working arrangements.

Other important skills for remote employees are self-management and self-efficacy. Self-management and self-efficacy are skills that can be practised. For some, they come quite naturally whereas for others, they can be very hard to achieve. When working from home, it is important to make the working space as calm as possible and remove all distractions. Good lighting and ergonomic work set-up promote improved self-management and self-efficacy. Employees can establish clear, achievable goals for both short-term and long-term objectives to achieve better self-efficacy and self-management. Breaking down larger goals into smaller, manageable tasks can help maintain focus and motivation. Additionally, celebrating achievements can build confidence and reinforce belief in one's abilities. Implementing effective self-management techniques such as prioritising tasks, planning schedules, and setting deadlines helps in organising workloads and reducing stress. Engagement in continuous learning through training, and self-study aids to develop new skills and knowledge. Strategies and approaches to remote work can be adapted based on feedback to further develop self-management skills. Self-discipline plays a big role in reaching self-efficacy and self-management. Removing all distractions from workplace, can be the best way to promote self-discipline.

Remote employees play a vital role in achieving successful remote work experiences by actively engaging in communication and providing feedback to foster trust with managers and to help managers improve their management methods. Advocating for casual conversations and virtual coffee meetings with colleagues can combat feelings of isolation and increase team spirit. Adaptability to changing work environments and adherence to remote working guidelines are essential skills for remote employees. Practicing self-management and self-efficacy, maintaining a calm workspace, setting clear goals, and implementing effective time management techniques are crucial for successful remote work.

How could remote management be improved:

1. Enhance communication and trust
2. Focus on community building and active listening
3. Improve time management
4. Promote motivation and well-being

Managers should focus on fostering open and transparent communication to build trust with and among team members. Trust can be built by having regular contact and by informing team members of the company direction and communicating manager's expectations. Managers can demonstrate trust by allowing flexibility in work arrangements while ensuring guidelines are in place to maintain equality and prevent isolation. Having a strong foundation for relationship building increases trust. A good foundation for relationship building is active communication, listening, and setting guidelines for work arrangements. Guidelines support equality and equity within team members and contributes to community building.

Equity allows for all team members to have the same foundation for working. Equity should be considered in the way employees are treated, because individuals need different types of support. "Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome." (Milken Institute School of Public Health 2020). Therefore, it could be argued that equity is even more important than equality and equity should be managers' concern in leading team members. Giving employees

the resources they need to perform their job contributes to enhanced job satisfaction and community building.

Creating and encouraging team members to use avenues for communication increases sense of community. It is important to foster an atmosphere where there is no threshold for asking help or reaching out. Managers should listen to team members on what avenues they feel as best for easy communication that also allows for good collaboration. To increase sense of community in remote environment, guidelines should be set for remote meetings. Team members should be encouraged to have cameras on during official meetings so that everyone can see each other's faces which increases the sense of belonging. Seeing facial expressions also contribute to feelings of being heard and seen. Additionally, it can increase dialogue. Addressing and recognising conflicts can be harder in remote environments, and therefore creating positive team spirit and community aids in lessening conflicts and having employees solve conflicts on their own or bring them to managers attention if needed. Conflicts can even be reduced in remote environment because team members stay away from each other's way enough not to get on each other's nerves. Additionally, occurring misunderstandings are easier to solve in positive atmosphere and with good communication. Other ways for managers to build community and hence better remote management are organising events for employees to get together and socialise. managers can also encourage employees to organise after work activities such a sport clubs or board game clubs.

Motivation and job satisfaction promote employee well-being and hence contribute to remote management success. To increase motivation and job satisfaction, managers should offer team members regular feedback and give praises for their efforts. Recognition of employee effort and successes increases professional confidence and therefore employee well-being. Providing ergonomic office equipment and developing tools and practices to promote team building also enhance motivation and job satisfaction. Having monthly development discussions with team members individually assist manager to stay up to date with subordinates' tasks and allow for manager and subordinate to discuss the expectations and goals that have been set and met.

Another important factor in improving remote management is time management. Managers should be able to allocate enough time for scheduling meetings, ensuring regular communication with team members and implement strategies to keep everyone up to date with work-related matters, considering the limitations of remote communication. Additionally, managers

should schedule regular check-ups, not only for task-related discussions, but also for casual conversations to strengthen relationships and overcome feelings of isolation. Time management is a skill that can be learned, and managers should not feel ashamed for asking help in organising their schedules and learning better time management. Organisations should also consider the increased time consumption of remote management when creating teams. Team sizes should be rather small for managers to have the time to properly manage their subordinates and to make sure each team member feels appreciated and has the necessary tools for executing tasks.

The results emphasise the essential elements of effective remote management, highlighting the significance of open communication, trust-building, managerial support, and fostering a sense of community among team members. By prioritising regular feedback, recognition, and efficient time management, managers can cultivate a productive and supportive remote work environment adding to the remote management success.

When considering developing remote work experience and remote management, the long-term effects of remote work should be considered, and employees should be listened to and included in decision making. Long-term effects of remote work can either be positive or negative. Negative effects have the biggest impact on employee job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Remote training should be also considered when developing remote management and remote work experience. Remote training could offer the chance for everyone to take the best out remote work's benefits and learn self-management and time management, which are important for successful remote work experience.

By implementing these development suggestions, both managers and employees can work together to improve communication, trust, and overall effectiveness in remote work environments, leading to increased job satisfaction and motivation as well as better remote management.

## 5.5 Leadership styles promoting employee motivation and job satisfaction in remote work environment

Theoretical background review finds a research gap in the leadership styles' effect on remote employees and the experience of remote work. According to the research data findings and the background theory on leadership styles, particularly the influence of leadership styles on employee well-being and job satisfaction, it can be said that effective remote management requires a leadership style that prioritises open communication, trust and community building, active listening, and flexibility. Based on these findings, conclusions can be drawn on which type of leadership style best suits for remote management.

Democratic leadership encourages open communication by involving employees in decision-making processes, which aligns with the emphasis of remote employees' and managers' need for proactive communication and feedback. Trust is built through transparency and involvement in decision-making, which are hallmarks of democratic leadership. Community building, which rose as a key theme in the interview data analysis, is promoted as democratic leaders value collaboration and teamwork, encouraging participation and engagement among team members. Active listening is a key aspect of democratic leadership, ensuring that all voices are heard and considered.

While autocratic leadership may ensure clear communication of directives, it can hinder open communication due to its top-down approach. Trust may be harder to establish in an autocratic environment where decisions are made without input from team members and community building is limited as autocratic leaders focus more on task completion rather than fostering a sense of belonging among team members. Active listening may be missing in autocratic leadership, as the focus is primarily on implementing the leader's directives rather than hearing input from others.

Laissez-faire leadership promotes autonomy and flexibility as it allows employees considerable freedom to make decisions and manage their own tasks. Trust building may occur naturally in a laissez-faire environment where employees are empowered to take ownership of their work, however, little input from managers can also damage the trust. Community building is discouraged as laissez-faire leaders provide too much space and autonomy for team members, negatively affecting collaboration. The responsibility of active listening and communication is thrown

on employees only, as laissez-faire leaders rely on their team's expertise and feedback to guide decision-making.

Transformational leadership emphasizes open communication, trust, and community building by inspiring and motivating team members toward a shared vision. Trust is built through inspirational motivation, individualised consideration, and intellectual stimulation, which can lead to a strong sense of trust between leaders and followers. Community building is promoted through a shared vision and values, which are communicated by leaders. This can create a united and motivated team. Active listening is essential to transformational leadership as leaders seek to understand the needs and goals of their team members to inspire and empower them.

Considering the research findings and their comparison with the theoretical background, transformational leadership style appears to best suit the remote working environment. This style emphasises the importance of communication, trust, community, and active listening, all of which are needed for effective remote management and good remote work experience according to research results. Transformational leaders also navigate change effectively, which is important for remote employees to feel confident in their future workplace and the ability to adapt to changes. By inspiring and motivating team members, creating and enhancing trust and collaboration, as well as actively listening to team member's needs, transformational leaders can create a supportive and productive remote work environment.

Other leadership style that could work well in remote work environment, is democratic leadership. Democratic leaders take employee needs and wants into consideration and fosters open communication, trust, and community, hence demonstrating the ability to navigate well in remote environments according to the research results. Laissez-faire and autocratic leadership styles can be seen to fit remote work environment the least, as they do not support open communication and do not involve employees in decision-making, which can lead to uncertainty and isolation in remote environments.

After assessing the interview data and comparing it with the theoretical background, as well as analysing which leadership styles best suit for remote work environments based on the results, it can be concluded that democratic and transformational leadership styles best support employee well-being, job satisfaction, and motivation in remote work environments, which are important factors for successful remote work experience and remote management. Therefore, it can be said that these types of leaders have positive effect on remote employees, improving the

remote work experience for them. Taking all the information provided into consideration, it can also be argued that in comparison, laissez-faire and autocratic leadership styles have negative impact on remote employees by increasing unawareness and causing insecurities regarding work.

## 6 Conclusions

In this chapter, the correlation between the research and the theoretical background will be reflected upon. The reliability, credibility, and ethics of the research development work will be clarified as well as the success of the research. Additionally, further research suggestions on the topic will be voiced.

### 6.1 Reliability, credibility, and ethics of the research development work

This thesis was conducted as a development research work with qualitative approach and interview as data research method. The research data was analysed using thematic content analysis. The goal of the research was to find areas and ways of improvement for remote management and how remote work experience could be enhanced.

The research material and its findings were compared with the theoretical foundation; the quality, credibility, and ethics of the thesis were evaluated as well as the success of the work. Suggestions for future research will be made based on the findings of this research.

To examine research work, reliability concepts can be used. The common reliability measures are reliability and validity. Reliability measures the stability of results and validity measures that the right subjects are studied. The reliability of the study must be considered already in the planning phase of the work. (Kananen 2017, 81–175.)

The research work must be well documented, as the generalisation of the results is based on the documentation. Research based results are only relevant to the specific research and the transferability is not the focus of qualitative research. (Kananen 2014, 134–135.)

Research strategy examines a group of phenomena which tries to stem a change through research. The cycle of the research can be proven successful if the issue at hand has been able to be solved or minimised. (Kananen 2014, 127–137.)

Reaching objective

The objective of the research was to gain insight on the issues of remote work and remote management and draw conclusions on how to develop them to improve remote work experiences. The conducted interviews collected important data which allowed for further comprehension of remote working experiences and displayed clear areas for improvement in remote working and management. Therefore, the objective of the research was reached.

#### Adherence to timeframe

Adherence to timeframe was overall quite successful. Theoretical background research was done in the set timeframe and the first email-interviews were able to be sent out as planned. Group interviews were also had within the preliminary timeframe. The analyses of the interviews were slightly delayed due to scheduling difficulties. However, the analyses were done, conclusions drawn, and suggestions made well ahead of the final deadline. The research development work was finished well prior to the initial timeframe.

#### Comparison with theoretical foundation

The research findings were supported by the theoretical background as well as new findings made. The theoretical background and research findings emphasised the need for trust, open communication, and community building in creating successful remote work experience and remote management. New findings also emerged from the research. Active listening was not strongly emphasised by theory, however, the research results found active listening to be very important aspect of remote work along with open communication. Another finding was time management. Surprisingly, manager's time management skill was not considered in theoretical background while clearly having a tremendous impact on remote management's success. Employees increased time consumption for adapting to the change was considered but not manager's increased time consumption to schedule in all team members. The research results also brought up some new views to remote work contrary to prior research findings; conflicts were lessened, and collaboration improved in remote environment. Additionally, working hours were not seen to have increased in remote work.

#### Credibility, reliability, and ethics

The research demonstrates credibility through its complex thematic content analysis of interview data, aligning findings with the theoretical background on remote work and management.

The reliability of the research is enhanced by its systematic approach to data collection and analysis. Reliability can be measured by stability and validity. Stability was reached to a certain extent. In qualitative research, data analysis depends on drawing connections, interpreting data, and making conclusions based on human experience. Therefore, stability can be variable, however, the data repeat specific themes and hence contributes to the reliability. Validity is measuring the correct subject. The research data collection focused on gaining information on the thesis subject and contributed to easy analysis and drawing conclusions. Thematic content analysis provides a structured framework for identifying key themes, ensuring consistency in the interpretation of interview data. Additionally, the research data collection methods, consisting of group interviews and email interviews, allows for comprehensive data collection, further enhancing reliability. However, to improve reliability further, the research could consider increased consistency in coding the analysis.

Ethics were considered throughout the research. The research protects participant confidentiality and anonymity. The research protects the privacy of interview participants by not revealing any identifiable information of the participants. Additionally, the research follows ethical principles by obtaining informed consent from participants prior to data collection and ensuring voluntary participation. Overall, the research demonstrates a credible and reliable approach to examining remote work experiences and management challenges. By adhering to ethical guidelines and integrating findings with existing literature, the research provides valuable insights for improving remote management practices.

## 6.2 Reviewing the success of the thesis

The thesis was successful in overall. The theoretical background on research strategy offers valuable insights into the research approach used in the study, particularly focusing on qualitative research methods and data collection techniques. The research strategy implements a qualitative approach, applying various interview methods and thematic content analysis to gain insight into the phenomenon under study. The emphasis on understanding human experiences and meanings, coupled with thematic content analysis techniques, enhances the validity and reliability of the research findings.

The theoretical background on the research topic was very complex and covered all the areas needed for understanding the research goal. The theory also helped to form interview questions which supported the goal of the thesis and helped in drawing conclusions.

For better success, more time could have been spent on analysing the interview data, drawing conclusions, and forming improvement suggestions. However, the interview data was very clear, direct, and informative and hence the analysis was very straightforward. Another improvement area for achieving better success, is communication. One of the interviewee's did not reply because they had forgotten. Communication could have been improved by sending reminders to participants about the email-interview deadline and to make sure no one had any ambiguities regarding the research goal or the interview questions.

### 6.3 Suggestions for further research

During the research process, several interesting topics emerged. While remote management processes are settling, there is still clearly improvements to be made. Especially how new remote managers can be better supported in the transitioning phase could be explored and how formal training could be offered for remote management. Training possibilities for how remote employees could take the best out of remote working and how to manage the environment could be considered.

Further research on the topic of remote work and management could explore several areas to deepen the understanding of remote work's development areas such as the long-term effects of remote work on employee well-being and productivity. Additionally, the role of leadership and leadership styles in remote environment could be studied. The impact of remote work on diversity, equity, and inclusion within organisations could also be examined to investigate how remote work guidelines and practices can either worsen or mitigate disparities in accessibility, opportunity, and inclusion for diverse groups of employees.

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The cover letter for Navigating Challenges and Resources: How could remote work experience be improved -interview 11.-25.3.2024

Dear receiver,

I politely ask you to participate in an interview which aims to gather knowledge about the current issues of remote work and how remote management could be improved. The purpose is to understand employee and management perspectives on remote work and how it could be developed further to enhance employee motivation and job satisfaction. Additionally, the aim is to understand how managers could be better supported in leading remote teams.

A consent form which explains the rights of the interviewee and the usage of the interview data is attached in the files. Please forward a signed consent form along with the interview answers so I can use the interview data in my thesis.

This interview contributes to my thesis which is a part of my studies conducted in Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. My thesis' supervisor is Maarit Vuorinen, lecturer, Kajaani UAS/Business.

Thesis title: Assessing employee perception of management success in remote and hybrid work environments – The effect of leadership style on remote employees' and managers outlook on remote leading

The interview questions can be answered in both Finnish or English and if there are any questions regarding the interview, please contact me.

I ask you to return the answers by *(two weeks from receiving the interview questions)*.

Thank you for your participation

Katri Ikävalko  
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## Navigating Challenges and Resources: How could remote work experience be improved -interview questions

- 1 Introduction
  - 1.1 Full name
  - 1.2 Position
  - 1.3 Remote work experience
- 2 Remote work
  - 2.1 Could you describe your overall experience of remote working?
  - 2.2 What are the main challenges you have faced in remote work?
  - 2.3 Would you be willing to give up remote work completely? Please elaborate your answer.
  - 2.4 What resources do remote employees need for remote work?
- 3 Communication, Collaboration & Trust
  - 3.1 How would you describe the general management communication in your organisation?
  - 3.2 How have the tasks and expectations been communicated to you in remote work setting?
  - 3.3 How is collaboration between remote team members supported by your manager?
  - 3.4 How has your manager tried to create trust in remote work environment?
- 4 Management support
  - 4.1 How would you describe the level of support you receive from your remote manager?
  - 4.2 How would you describe the relationship between you and your manager?
  - 4.3 How could you support your manager to improve remote management?
  - 4.4 How could the relationship between you and your manager be improved to positively contribute to remote work experience?
- 5 Employee well-being
  - 5.1 How would you describe your well-being in remote work environment?
  - 5.2 What steps has your manager taken to increase employee motivation in remote setting?
  - 5.3 How does management support and enhance employees' job satisfaction?
  - 5.4 How has remote work environment affected your work-life balance?
- 6 Organisational adaptation
  - 6.1 How, in your opinion, has your organisation adapted its practices to accommodate remote workers?
  - 6.2 Have you received training for remote working? If you have, could you describe the training and its importance?
  - 6.3 How do you identify yourself with the organisation and its goals in remote work environment?
- 7 Improvement suggestions for remote work
  - 7.1 How could management better support you in remote working?

The cover letter for Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved -interview 11.-25.3.2024

Dear interviewee,

I politely ask you to participate in an interview which aims to gather knowledge about the current issues of remote work and how remote management could be improved. The purpose is to understand employee and management perspectives on remote work and how it could be developed further to enhance employee motivation and job satisfaction. Additionally, the aim is to understand how managers could be better supported in leading remote teams.

A consent form which explains the rights of the interviewee and the usage of the interview data is attached in the files. Please forward a signed consent form along with the interview answers so I can use the interview data in my thesis.

This interview contributes to my thesis which is a part of my studies conducted in Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. My thesis' supervisor is Maarit Vuorinen, lecturer, Kajaani UAS/Business.

Thesis title: Assessing employee perception of management success in remote and hybrid work environments – The effect of leadership style on remote employees' and managers outlook on remote leading

The interview questions can be answered in both Finnish or English and if there are any questions regarding the interview, please contact me.

I ask you to return the answers by *(two weeks from receiving the interview questions)*.

Thank you for your participation

Katri Ikävalko  
Business management and leadership student / Bachelor's degree  
+358400137966  
katriikavalko1@kamk.fi

## Navigating Remote Leadership: how could remote management be improved -interview questions

- 1 Introduction
  - 1.1 Full name
  - 1.2 Position
  - 1.3 Remote work experience
- 2 In your own words, describe the main tasks and purpose of a manager.
- 3 Remote work
  - 3.1 How would you describe your overall experience of remote management?
  - 3.2 Can you describe the main challenges in managing remote teams?
  - 3.3 What resources does remote management require from managers?
  - 3.4 Would you go back to fully in-office work? Elaborate your answer.
- 4 Training
  - 4.1 Have you received training for remote management?
  - 4.2 If you have received training for remote management, how would you describe the training has helped you in remote management?
  - 4.3 How could your subordinates better support you in managing them?
- 5 Communication, collaboration, and trust
  - 5.1 How do you build trust between you and your subordinates in remote environment?
  - 5.2 What measures have you taken to ensure team collaboration in remote environment?
  - 5.3 How do you encourage open communication in remote work environment?
- 6 Supporting employee's organisational commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction
  - 6.1 Describe your actions for improving employee motivation in remote environment.
  - 6.2 How have you tried to enhance job satisfaction in remote environment?
  - 6.3 What steps have you taken to develop organisational culture to better accommodate remote employees?
  - 6.4 What are the challenges you have faced upkeeping and improving employee motivation, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment in remote environment?
- 7 Improvement suggestions
  - 7.1 How could remote management be further improved in your opinion?

The consent form to take part in the research for group interviews

*Assessing employee perception of management success in remote and hybrid work environments – The effect of leadership style on remote employees’ and managers outlook on remote leading*

Katri Ikävalko

**Consent to take part in research**

I **First and last name** voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind. I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. I agree to my interview being audio- or video-recorded. I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially. I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings and transcripts will be retained on researcher’s private computer accessed only by her until the thesis has been approved and graded or latest until July 2025. I understand that under the freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

Researcher’s signature

Participant’s signature

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date and Place

Date and Place

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The consent form to take part in the research for email-interviews

*Assessing employee perception of management success in remote and hybrid work environments – The effect of leadership style on remote employees’ and managers outlook on remote leading*

Katri Ikävalko

**Consent to take part in research**

I **First and last name** voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind. I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially. I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. I understand that signed consent forms and interview data will be retained on researcher’s private computer accessed only by her until the thesis has been approved and graded or latest until July 2025. I understand that under the freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

Researcher’s signature

Participant’s signature

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date and Place

Date and Place

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