Recontextualizing Employee Experience in a Remote Work Setting: A Flexible Pattern Matching Approach

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Abstract

The concept of Employee Experience (EX) has become increasingly important for many organizations, as they adjust their focus on engaging and retaining their employees. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the concept of Remote Work became another important topic for organizations, as employees around the globe were forced to work from home overnight. Existing research and academic studies investigate both topics, EX as well as Remote Work, separately. However, academic literature that follows a combined approach, i.e. exploring the EX within a Remote Work context, appears to be limited. As Remote Working routines are expected to continue throughout post-pandemic times, organizations are bound to create a positive EX, while being physically apart from their workforce. Thus, the purpose of this study is to reconsider the traditional approach to EX and adjust the concept to Remote Working conditions. We aim at exploring both concepts and combining them to REX as an entity. Therefore, the research questions of this study are:

1. *What constitutes Employee Experience in a Remote Work context?*
2. *How are the aspects of Employee Experience reconsidered in a Remote Work context?*

To answer these questions, a flexible pattern matching (FPM) approach is used to deductively derive expected patterns from theory that serve as a baseline for creating a theoretical framework. Following, empirical data was collected, by conducting semi-structured interviews with Human Resource (HR) executives. The findings were then compared to the expected patterns whereby the identified matches and mismatches were used to inform and modify the established REX Framework. The results indicate that REX constitutes three themes, i.e. '*Ways of Working*', '*Personal & Professional Needs*' and the '*Physical & Digital Workplace*', which are embedded in the dimension '*Organizational Culture*'. Within the three themes, 15 attributes were identified that are likely to influence the EX in a Remote Work context. These findings inform existing theory by providing an overview on EX attributes and their reconsideration in a Remote Work context. Furthermore, the results contribute to the understanding that EX is a variable and alterable concept and hence, should be approached differently, depending on the context. Lastly, the study's outcome is useful for practitioners to understand employees' needs when working remotely and serves as a baseline for developing initiatives with the aim to create and maintain a positive EX in a Remote Work setting.

Keywords: *Employee Experience, Employee Engagement, Remote Work, Flexible Work, Hybrid Work, Human Resource Management, Flexible Pattern Matching*

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1 Introduction

In today's economy, the demand for unique experiences increases and the focus on providing high quality goods or services often does not suffice to satisfy customers' needs (Pine, 2020). In this context, it is argued that such development indicates a transition of the economy from being a 'service economy' to becoming an 'experience economy' (Pine, 2020). Simultaneously, companies understand and internalize that offering a great customer experience depends on a positive experiences of employees (Ghosh & Itam, 2020; Pine, 2020). Thus, the focus of attention seems to increasingly shift from the customer to the employee, who is perceived as the most important asset of an organization (Green, 2017). In addition to this transition, the overall workplace changes, resulting from virtualization and automation (Ghosh & Itam, 2020; Plaskoff, 2017). Thereby the traditional relationship and interaction between organizations and their employees requires a reconsideration (Tucker, 2020). As a result, the concept of Employee Experience (EX) emerged (Mahadevan & Schmitz, 2020; Tucker, 2020), describing an organization's emphasis on employee engagement, retention and nurture (Bower, 2020; Claus, 2019).

Next to focusing on EX, companies increasingly adopt Remote Working arrangements with the help of advancements in technology, which enable employees to work anywhere (Choudhury, 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). However, in most industries, this practice seems to be not prevalent and fully implemented, yet (Wang et al., 2021). Popovici & Popovici (2020) state that in 2019 only 5,4% of employees in Europe made use of the option to work remotely. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, this voluntary and arbitrary option to work shifted into becoming mandatory for millions of employees in most industries across the globe (Wang et al., 2021). Thus, Remote Working became the new standard of work and had to be implemented almost overnight (Johnson, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). Moreover, Ferreira, Claver and Thomaz (2020) expect that many employees will continue to work remotely in post-pandemic times, which conforms with a study indicating that the number of Remote Working will substantially increase over the next few years. For Denmark, e.g. it is estimated that in 2022, the number of remote workers will be twice as high, compared to pre-pandemic times (Statista, n.d.). Thus, it is argued that the pandemic and related restrictions constitute an involuntary trigger for companies to reimagine their workplace and adopt Remote Work practices. Thereby, it is expected that the implementation of Remote Working will remain an essential part of organizational structures and work routines in the future (Johnson, 2020).

This Remote Work context seems to be particularly difficult for companies with creative products or processes as they rely on innovation and interactivity (Allen et al.,2015). The office is said to inspire employees and increase their creativity level (Morgan, 2017) and it is also stated that creative and innovative tasks are most effectively conducted when being together in the office (Boell et al., 2016; Lund et al., 2020). Due to a missing office in a

Remote Work context this seems harder to accomplish for companies within the creative industries and thus poses an interesting industry to derive data from.

1.1 Problem Statement

The current trend towards an increased implementation of a Remote Working model is expected to inform and shape the experience of employees, as such transition sustainably affects the organizations' internal structures and processes as well as existing working methods and patterns of the respective employees. In this context, it can be argued that the existing literature and concepts on Employee Experience have to be reconsidered, as existing models and theories are informed by the Remote Work methods and settings (Wang et al., 2021). Also, Johnson (2020) assumes that the EX is impacted by the results of the "*grand and unplanned experiment*" (p. 809) of the Remote Work during the pandemic. Thus, EX in a Remote Work context seems to be a topic of high importance. While there are existing articles and studies about the topic EX and Remote Work, literature that combines both concepts appears to be limited. Due to the current and rapid transition towards a Remote Work setting in many organizations and the simultaneous emphasis on creating and maintaining a positive EX, however, a combined approach and integration of both concepts appears to be particularly important. Consequently, instead of focusing on EX and Remote Work separately, the aim of this study is to contribute to close the gap in literature and to explore the combined Remote Employee Experience (REX) as an entity. Thereby, the research questions of this study are:

1. *What constitutes Employee Experience in a Remote Work context?*
2. *How are the aspects of Employee Experience reconsidered in a Remote Work context?*

These two questions reflect that in order to understand REX as an entity, the study is twofold. First, we explore what aspects belong to EX in a Remote Work context. Then, we go one step further and identify how the understanding of the attributes of EX is impacted when looking through the lens of Remote Work.

1.2 Delimitations

This study has the aim to fill the literature gap by investigating the concept of EX in another context, namely Remote Working. The study does not focus on the complete EX lifecycle but covers the employment period of the employee, which involves employees in their onboarding phase, already maintained employees and employees in their professional development. The lifecycle stages of the pre- and post-employment are excluded, as the goal of

this study is to identify reconsiderations of the experience of existing employees when working remotely. Furthermore, data is not collected from employees themselves but from HR executives that are responsible for creating EX as the study does not investigate the individual experience but how the aspects of EX in general are reconsidered. Moreover, it is not the goal to determine practices for these executives on how to create EX in a Remote Work setting, but to identify which aspects influence REX. Thus, EX design from the organizational perspective is not explored. Furthermore, the aim is not to thoroughly investigate each attribute or theme but to cover the overall topic of EX in a Remote Work setting broadly. This study only focuses on knowledge workers, comprising employees contributing with knowledge and excluding e.g. laborers performing factory tasks. Additionally, primary data collection does not include representatives of different industries worldwide but focuses on the creative industries in Europe as it seems to be particularly challenging for this industry, as mentioned before.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

Figure 1: Structure of the Thesis
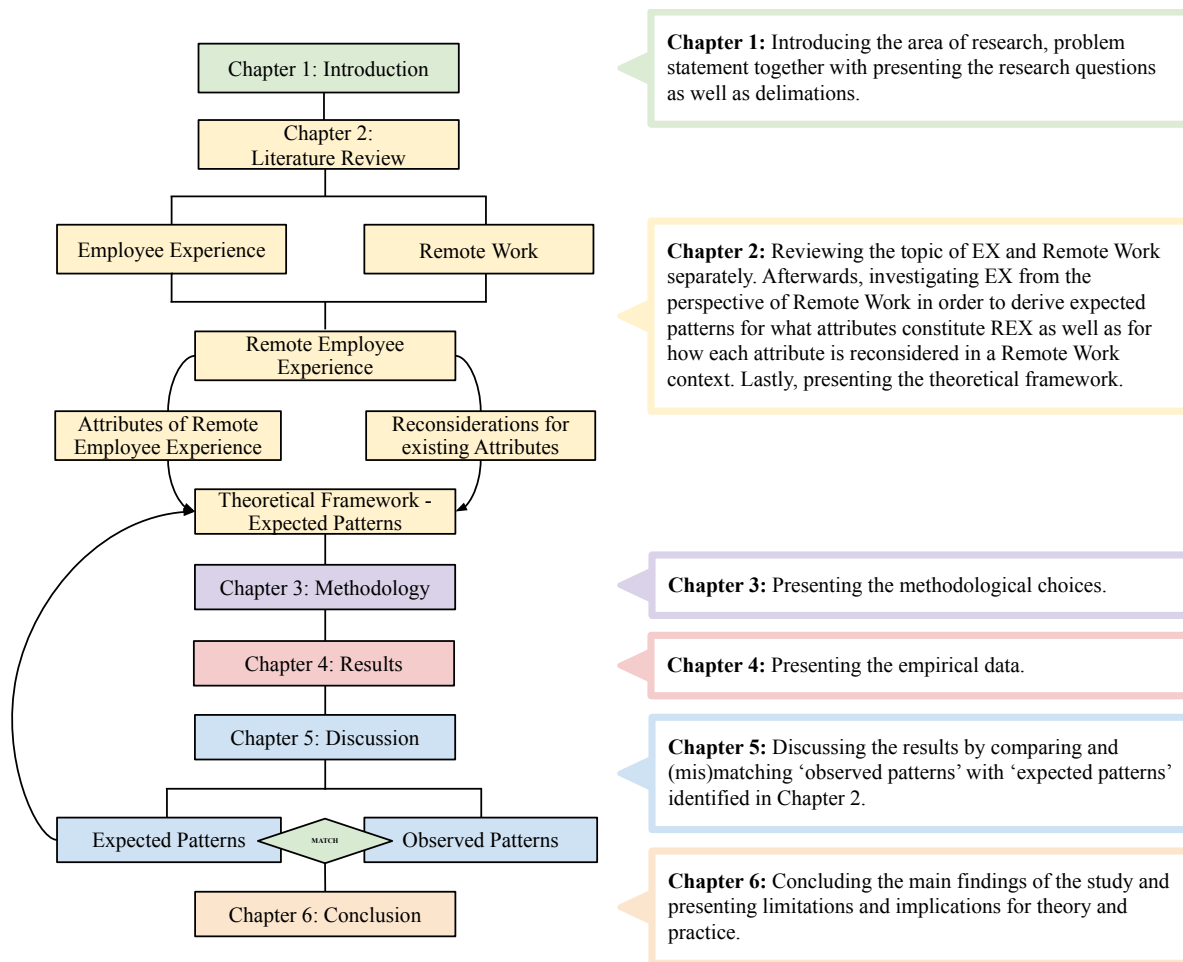
2 Literature Review

The following chapter provides a detailed review of relevant academic literature within the field of EX and Remote Work. The overall goal is to establish a baseline for answering the research questions. The review starts with a detailed description of what constitutes EX, followed by a section clarifying the concepts of Remote Work. Afterwards, EX is considered through the lens of a Remote Work context, where a framework over the attributes of REX will be presented as well as tables demonstrating how each attribute is reconsidered.

2.1 Employee Experience

This section starts with a definition of EX. The three environments of Jacob Morgan's EX framework are then used to structure the following literature review about what constitutes EX. Firstly, the cultural environment is presented, followed by the technological environment and the section ends with a description of the physical environment.

2.1.1 Definition

The term EX describes the emotions and perceptions of an employee throughout every interaction with work and its environment (Morgan, 2017; Itam & Ghosh, 2020). Experiences are *"considered to be inherently personal, an outcome of one's feelings, belief, cognitive perception and emotions about inwardly directed external stimuli"* (Itam & Gosh, 2020, p.40). EX summarizes these feelings and the level of fulfilment arising from the interaction with the organization throughout all touchpoints of their employee journey (Maylett & Wride, 2017; Plaskoff, 2017; Tucker, 2020;). Consequently, EX captures every aspect that has an impact on the meaning of work (Maylett & Wride, 2017) and derives *"from all the activities, behaviors, and procedures [the employees] run across while working in the organization"* (Yildiz et al., 2020, p. 1044). The quality of these experiences is hence beneficial to create and increase satisfaction, engagement, productivity and loyalty (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Plaskoff, 2017).

The Three Employee Experience Environments

The most cited and consulted researcher within the field of EX is Jacob Morgan. According to the author, EX is mainly influenced by three dimensions, i.e. the cultural, technological and physical environments (Morgan, 2017), which can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The Three EX Environments, Morgan (2017)
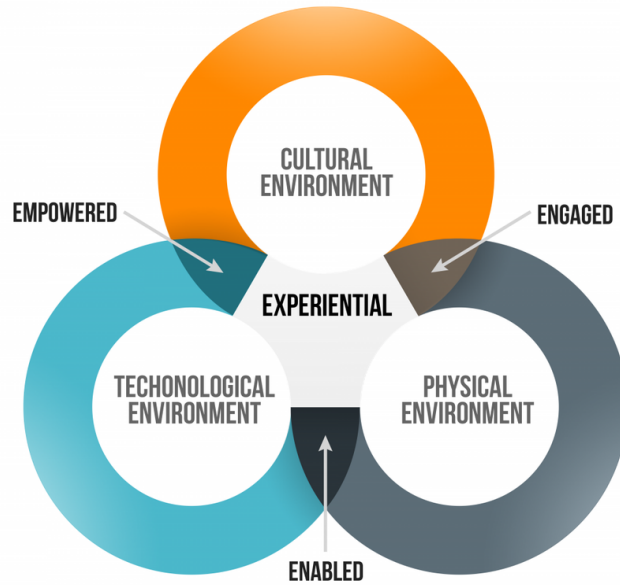
Each environment affects the EX and consists of 17 attributes in total. Morgan's (2017) three environments serve as a baseline for structuring the following literature review about the various concepts that constitute EX. However, as the purpose of this literature review is to understand what is generally known about EX, Morgan's (2017) seventeen attributes are combined and rephrased together with several other academic sources about the most important aspects of EX, as shown in Table 1. Therefore, this literature review does not follow Morgan (2017) but is highly influenced by his framework.

Table 1: Employee Experience Literature Overview

Environments	Our Attributes	Our Sub-Concepts	Concepts from Literature	Authors
Cultural Environment			Executives and Managers are Coaches & Mentors	Morgan, 2017
			Monitoring	Itam & Gosh, 2020
	Leadership		Leadership & Management	Gosh & Itam, 2020; Green, 2017; Johnson et al., 2021; Morgan, 2017; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016; Yildiz et al., 2020
			Clear Goals & Expectations	Yildiz et al., 2020
			Supportive Management	Gosh & Itam, 2020; Johnson et al., 2021;
			Positive Work Environment	Gosh & Itam, 2020
	Sense of Belonging & Purpose	Sense of Belonging	Feeling of Belonging	Gosh & Itam, 2020; Johnson et al., 2021; Itam & Gosh, 2020; Morgan, 2017
			Employees Feel Like They are Part of a Team	Johnson et al.,2021; Morgan, 2017
			Connection	Maylett & Wride, 2017
			Personal Values match Companies Values	Gosh & Itam, 2020; Green, 2017; Morgan, 2017;
			Company is Viewed Positively	Maylett & Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017
			Referrals Come from the Employees	Morgan, 2017
		Sense of Purpose	Legitimate Sense of Purpose	Itam & Gosh, 2020; and Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017; Pine, 2020
			Impact	Maylett & Wride 2017
			Meaningful Work	Gosh & Itam, 2020; Green, 2017
	Feeling Valued	Feeling Appreciated & Recognized	Everyone Feels Valued	Morgan, 2017
			Feeling Appreciated	Itam & Gosh, 2020; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016
			Being Recognized	Green, 2017; Itam & Gosh, 2020; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016
			Rewards & Reinforcements	Green, 2017; Morgan, 2017; Yildiz et al., 2020
			Compensation & Employee Benefits	Itam & Gosh, 2020; Maylett & Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016
		Employees' Voices are Heard	Giving Feedback	Debouk, 2020; Itam & Gosh, 2020; Johnson et al., 2021; Morgan, 2017; Yildiz et al., 2020)
			Taking Ideas into Consideration	Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016; Yildiz et al., 2020
		Being Treated Fairly	Treats Employees Fairly	Johnson et al., 2021; Morgan, 2017; Yildiz et al., 2020
	Ability to Develop & Advance	Employee Learning	Employee Learning	Itam & Gosh, 2020; Johnson et al., 2021; Maylett & Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017; Pine, 2020; Yildiz et al., 2020
			Training Opportunities	Green, 2017; Itam & Ghosh, 2020; Morgan, 2017; Yildiz et al., 2020
			Ability to Learn new Things and Given Resources to Advance	Morgan, 2017
			Development Opportunities	Morgan, 2017; Yildiz et al., 2020
			Performance Management	Green, 2017
			Receiving Coaching & Feedback	Green, 2017; Pine, 2020; Yildiz et al., 2020

Table 1 continued

Environments	Our Attributes	Our Sub-Concepts	Concepts from Literature	Authors
Cultural Environment		Progress in Career	Advancement	Morgan, 2017
			Career Planning & Development	Green, 2017; Itam & Gosh, 2020; Yildiz et al., 2020
			Career Goals	Johnson, et al., 2021
			Career Growth	Itam & Gosh, 2020
	Flexibility	Flexible Options to Work	Flexible Work Arrangements	Yildiz et al., 2020
			Offers Flexibility	Morgan, 2017
			Flex Time	Green, 2017
			Flexible Work Policies	Bower, 2020
		Work-Life Balance	Work-Life Balance	Itam & Gash, 2020; Morgan, 2017; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016; Yildiz et al., 2020
		Job Autonomy	Job Autonomy	Maylett & Wride, 2017; Yildiz et al., 2020
			Empowerment	Itam & Gosh, 2020; Yildiz et al., 2020
	Health & Well-Being		Dedicated to Employee Health & Wellness	Itam & Gosh, 2020; Johnson et al., 2021; Morgan, 2017
			Fitness	Dash, 2020; Morgan, 2017
			Psychological Well-Being	Dash, 2020; Morgan, 2017
	Transparent Communication		Share Company Goals & Scores	Green, 2017
			Transparency	Green, 2017; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016; Yildiz et al., 2020
			Communication	Green, 2017; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016; Yildiz et al., 2020
			Knowledge Sharing	Yildiz et al., 2020
Technological Environment	Equipped with Technology		Employee Needs vs. Business Requirements	Morgan, 2017
			Required Tools in Place	Itam & Gosh, 2020
			Technological Availability	Morgan, 2017
	User Experience		Consumer Grade Technology	Morgan, 2017
			User Experience	Raia, 2017
			User-Friendly Apps	Gosh & Itam, 2020
Physical Environment	Social Opportunities		Social Opportunities	Green, 2017; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016
	Organizational Values are Reflected		Chooses to bring in Friends or Visitors	Morgan, 2017
			Organizational Values are Reflected	Morgan, 2017
	Supportive Office		Leverage Multiple Workspace Options	Green, 2017; Morgan, 2017
			Physical Workspace	Itam & Gosh, 2020; Morgan, 2017; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016
			Ergonomics	Green, 2017

2.1.2 Cultural Environment

Organizational culture is often defined as an organization's shared beliefs, values and basic assumptions (Schneider et al., 2017). The organizational culture sets the context of everything an organization does and it is established and reinforced in the organization through communication, actions and behaviors. Thus, the cultural environment of an organization determines how employees behave, how they feel and how they are treated (Morgan, 2017).

Based on the reviewed literature, important aspects of the cultural environment that influence the EX are grouped into seven categories, which can be seen in Table 1 above. These are *'Leadership', 'Sense of Belonging & Purpose', 'Feeling Valued', 'Ability to Develop & Advance', 'Flexibility', 'Health & Well-Being',* and *'Transparent Communication'*, which are described in the following.

Leadership

By stating "*employees don't leave organizations (or jobs); they leave managers*" (p.123), Morgan (2017) implies that the EX is highly impacted by the way employees are led by leaders and managers. In addition, Green (2017) argues that leadership[1] is the most influential part of the organizational culture. Leadership does not only affect employees' work, but also their motivation and feeling about attending work. An important part of creating and stimulating motivation for employees is for leaders to set and communicate well-defined goals and expectations that employees work towards (Yildiz et al., 2020). Likewise, Tetzlaff and McLeod (2016) and Gosh and Itam (2020) emphasize that leadership is a crucial factor and a main driver for creating a suitable work environment, in which satisfied and loyal employees can grow and develop. According to Itam & Gosh (2020) employees are furthermore in need of leaders who are supportive, acknowledge their wishes and needs in order to feel valued and heard and take employee feedback into consideration. Furthermore, the feeling of trust and experiencing a fair treatment is mentioned to be an important factor of the relationship employees have with their leaders , and hence, to facilitate an improved EX (Yildiz et al., 2020). The following attributes that constitute EX, all indirectly include aspects of how employees are influenced by leadership, as leadership is visible in almost every aspect of EX Green (2017).

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[1] When mentioning 'leadership' henceforth, the term describes both leaders and managers and does not distinguish between them, as both terms are often used interchangeably in literature.

Sense of Belonging & Purpose

In literature, it is stated that EX is positively reinforced when employees feel a connection to their organization (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Maylett & Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017) as well as when they sense that they contribute to the success of the organization (Maylett & Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017). As shown in Table 1 on p.10, concepts around these themes are grouped together as an employee's sense of belonging and sense of purpose and are described in the following.

Sense of Belonging

It is generally argued that employees want to feel a sense of belonging and to be part of something bigger, when working for an organization (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Maylett & Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017). Therefore, in order to achieve and maintain a positive EX, employees, employees should feel a connection to both colleagues and leaders as well as to the organization's values and culture (Maylett & Wride, 2017). When employees feel a sense of pride for working for an organization, because they have a positive view of the company and the values match their own, the EX is positively impacted (Maylett & Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017). Johnson et al. (2021) and Morgan (2017) stretch the importance of employees to feel like they are part of a team in order to feel a sense of belonging. This in turn positively affects EX, as it creates psychological safety and the feeling of getting social support. Today, most firms adopt team work in their individual organizational structure, indicating that collaborative tasks and team work is both, important and inevitable (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Morgan, 2017).

Sense of Purpose

Employees' sense of purpose in the workplace refers to the notion of seeing oneself in the bigger picture of the organization (Morgan, 2017). Green (2017) argues that organizations that successfully create a sense of purpose within their workforce, are in a much better position of creating positive EXs for their employees. Employees feel purposeful when they understand and see, how their involvement, contributions and work outcomes contribute to the success and performance of the organization (Maylett & Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017). Maylett and Wride (2017) refer to impactful work as employees' ability to see effective, positive and worthwhile results from their work. Having purposeful work and tasks helps employees to feel more connected to their organization and constitutes a core facet of EX (Itam & Gosh, 2020).

Internal communication efforts where the organization successfully communicates its mission, vision and purpose is crucial for employees to be able to feel meaningful within the organization (Morgan, 2017). In addition, it is important that leaders inform their employees about the company's performance and, as well as emphasizing and appreciating the crucial role of the workforce in achieving these goals, highlighting the beneficial impact of their

work (Green, 2017). Consequently, employees are said to feel as if they are at the very heart of the business, which gives their work meaning. It is important that employees feel that what they do matters, so they feel as if they have meaningful work (Green, 2017; Itam & Gosh, 2020).

Feeling Valued

According to Morgan (2017), the employees' feeling of being valued in their workplace describes another important driver for establishing a positive EX (Morgan, 2017). As shown in Table 1 on p.10, it can be identified that an employee's feeling of value is influenced by feeling appreciated and recognized, the fact that employees' voices are heard, and being treated fairly. In the following, these four concepts are presented.

Feeling Appreciated & Recognized

Appreciation is about acknowledging a person's value as a colleague and who they are as individuals (Robbins, 2019). Appreciation is important for EX as employees tend to have a desire to feel worthy and valued for being there (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016). Recognition, on the other hand, is about acknowledging an employee's performance or achievement (Morgan, 2017; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016). Recognizing employees is important for motivation and for creating a positive EX as it is assumed that the majority in an organization wants to feel valued and recognized for their efforts (Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016).

In this regard, recognizing employees' efforts, by linking individual performances with certain rewards, can contribute to a the establishment of a positive EX (Yildiz et al., 2020). Notably, employees should not only be recognized with tangible and monetary initiatives, but the rewards should also appeal to employees from an emotional perspective (Morgan, 2017). Informal, everyday gratitude and verbal recognitions are often seen as being the most powerful rewards in infusing a positive EX (Green, 2017). To build these informal recognitions into the everyday work environment is, according to Green (2017), one of the best opportunities to positively impact the culture.

Employees' Voices are Heard

Employees who feel that their voice is heard are more likely to feel that they are valued in their workplace, which can influence EX positively (Morgan, 2017; Yildiz et al., 2020). Being encouraged to share ideas, opinions, feedback or personal needs leads to employees viewing their organization more positively (Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016; Yildiz et al., 2020). However, when employees perceive that leaders do not ask for this, or even worse, when they do ask, but don't act accordingly, the EX is influenced negatively (Debouk, 2020, Morgan, 2017). In an hierarchical organizational structure where controlling, decision making and power flows strictly from the top

down, it can sometimes be challenging for employees to feel that their ideas and objections are being heard and received Tetzlaff and McLeod (2016) argue that this means that organizations that follow such an top-down approach often fail to effectively engage its employees.

Being Treated Fairly

Finally, employees who are treated fairly are more likely to feel like they are valued in the organization (Johnson et al., 2021; Morgan, 2017; Yildiz et al, 2020). According to Morgan (2017), fair treatment describes an honest treatment of employees that is not influenced by prejudice or leads to inequality. In addition, Johnson et al. (2021) add respect and recognition as important aspects of a fair treatment of employees. While Morgan (2017) states that an unfair treatment leads to a negative EX, Yildiz et al. (2020) add that it can also result in a burnout of employees. Fairly treated employees on the opposite, are more likely to effectively contribute to the company and experience the organization as a positive work environment (Yildiz et al., 2020).

Ability to Develop & Advance

EX is positively influenced when employees perceive that their employer invests in their career (Green, 2017), both in terms of learning, training and development, as well as in terms of advancing and moving forward in the career. As shown in Table 1 on p.10, concepts around these topics are grouped into employee learning and progress in career, which are presented in the following.

Employee Learning

According to Morgan (2017) the desire to learn and acquire specific knowledge is inherent in humans nature. Therefore, it can be expected that when employees perceive that they have learning and development opportunities in their workplace, they often enjoy a greater EX (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Maylett & Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017; Pine, 2020; Yildiz et al., 2020). Learning is important for EX, as it addresses the employees' desires and ambitions to grow (Maylett & Wride, 2017). Acquiring new skills and qualifications seems to help employees to feel more competent and empowered in their roles, which in turn has been shown to have a major influence on employees' positive emotions at work. Furthermore, employees' perception of the work environment is said to increase when they perceive that their employer invests in their self-development (Morgan, 2017; Yildiz et al., 2020). In order for employees to feel that they are able to learn and develop, it is of high importance that they are trained and advised with respect to their individual strengths, weaknesses and contributions to the company (Green, 2017; Pine, 2020; Yildiz et al., 2020). Thus, creating a culture where employees feel like they can regularly receive feedback on their performance and are assisted in gaining abilities and skills (Green, 2017), is seen as a crucial

aspect in order to give employees the possibility to grow (Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016; Yildiz et al., 2020) and accomplish high performance (Green, 2017).

Progress in Career

EX is also positively impacted when employees perceive that they can move forward in their career at their current employer (Green, 2017; Itam & Gosh, 2020; Morgan, 2017; Yildiz et al., 2020). In the existing literature, this is often captured by the term advancement, referring to an employee's progress in the individual career, and is typically associated with a promotion into a new role or added responsibilities (Morgan, 2017). A common reason for individuals to quit their jobs is the perceived lack of opportunities to advance (Green, 2017; Morgan, 2017). In addition, it is found that EX is positively influenced when employees perceive that their career goals can be met in the company (Johnson et al., 2021). Therefore, Green (2017) argues that career development constitutes a central aspect for long-term commitment, as employees, who are provided with opportunities for career advancement in their workplace, are more likely to stay.

Flexibility

As shown in Table 1 on p.10, it is identified in the literature that EX is influenced by employees having flexible options to work, work-life balance and job autonomy. These three concepts are grouped together under the attribute Flexibility and are presented in the following.

Flexible Options to Work

According to Green (2017), providing employees with flexible work arrangements is a credible strategy for creating a better EX. Morgan (2017) argues that organizations shift towards allowing employees a greater flexibility in where and when to work. This includes abandoning the traditional workday of physical attendance from 9 to 5. When employees are granted a greater freedom, they feel more in control of their time and in a better position to balance their personal and professional life (Green, 2017).

Work-Life Balance

Research has shown that a sufficient balance between employees' private and work-life has another positive impact on EX (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Johnson et al., 2021). As a result of being constantly connected, Morgan (2017) argues that work-life balance has been substituted by work-life integration. Thereby, the author implies that the border between work and personal life gets increasingly blurred, leading to employees taking their personal life to work and vice versa. Also Yildiz et al. (2020) indicate that employees have difficulties to create an efficient work-life balance because of increasing working hours and a stressful environment at work. Therefore, it is expected that

the employees increasingly demand and wish for an organizational culture that supports them with flexible work arrangements and the possibility to work from anywhere and at any time. As a result of having this culture, employees are often more satisfied and have a greater EX (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Morgan, 2020; Yildiz et al., 2020).

Job Autonomy

Another aspect of high importance for employees is receiving the freedom of job autonomy (Yildiz et al., 2020). Autonomy can be defined as *"the power to shape your work and environment in ways that allow you to perform at your best"* (Maylett & Wride, 2017; p. 163). Nowadays, employees prefer to work independently and creatively. By giving them the possibility to work autonomously within a flexible environment, employees tend to feel more empowered and self-determined for decision making (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Yildiz et al, 2020) as well as respected and involved (Maylett & Wride, 2017). In addition, autonomy creates a feeling of control and the ability to make a difference, leading to a more positive EX (Yildiz et al., 2020).

Health & Well-Being

According to Morgan (2017), the focus on mental and physical health in today's workforce is of high importance to create a positive EX. As a result of an increasing workload, longer working days and the constant feeling of connectedness, some employees are more likely to ignore their own personal health. One common health issue is workplace stress, which can lead to e.g. insomnia (Morgan, 2017) anxiety or burnout (Lussier & Hendon, 2018). In order to prevent this, companies increasingly take certain initiatives with the goal to maintain their employees' well-being, by offering e.g. health and nutrition programs, stress workshops and fitness or meditation activities (Morgan, 2017; Dash, 2020).

Transparent Communication

Employees perceiving the communication to be open and transparent tend to have a better EX with their organization, as it impacts the trust factor (Yildiz et al., 2020). Tetzlaff and McLeod (2016) argue that effective and clear communication, where the sender ensures that the messages are heard and understood by the recipient, is important for the EX. Transparent communication refers to openly sharing internal and external factors that affect the work of employees. The efficient and consistent implementation of such practice can increase the employees' trust towards their employer who is perceived as being honest with them (Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016). According to Tetzlaff and McLeod (2016), limited trust between leaders, employees and departments can build barriers within the organization, impairing an efficient flow of communication and knowledge sharing as people

do not listen or talk to each other. Ultimately, this affects EX in the workplace negatively (Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016; Yildiz et al., 2020).

2.1.3 Technological Environment

The technological environment encompasses software, hardware, apps and tools employees use for managing and operating their individual work tasks (Morgan, 2017). Organizations increasingly recognize the significant role technology has in enabling a positive EX (Dash, 2020; Itam & Gosh, 2020). Based on the reviewed literature, attributes regarding technology are combined and categorized into two main aspects, i.e. *'Equipped with Technology' and 'User Experience'*, of the technological environment, which play an important role for creating and maintaining EX. These are shown in Table 1 on p.10.

Equipped with Technology

In most organizations, employees are the main users of technological equipment and infrastructure as well as digital tools and technical appliances within a workplace. One way of enhancing a good working environment is to make the technology available to everyone (Morgan, 2017). In order to successfully install the required technical appliances, employees' needs must be understood. This in turn, can be crucial to design a positive EX, as employees feel that they are enabled and empowered to work efficiently and provide a high quality of performance (Itam & Gosh, 2020). Morgan (2017) highlights that *"technology can either empower people or render them powerless"* (p.86). Therefore, organizations can be advised to invest in technology that supports employees in their tasks and activities in order to cultivate a better work experience.

User Experience

User experience refers to how users feel when they interact with technology and how they perceive the usability, adoptability and value of technology (Raia, 2017). Expectations for greater experiences when interacting with technologies at work are rising, as employees tend to compare the tools at work with the ones they use in their personal lives. Even though employees have access to very well designed technologies and platforms in their personal lives as consumers, organizations often continue to rely on relatively old and outdated tools and technological infrastructure that is provided for its employees to conduct their operational tasks. This misalignment cab be expected to be negatively influencing EX as the functionality and efficiency of technical equipment, provided at the workplace, is limited and does not meet the employees' expectations (Raia, 2017). Instead, when employees have access to user-friendly technologies, enabling them to have consumer-like experiences, the EX can be positively impacted (Gosh & Itam, 2020).

2.1.4 Physical Environment

According to Morgan (2017), the physical environment describes the tangible space where employees conduct their work. Therefore, the author states that a positive physical environment can energize, engage and inspire employees to be more creative at work. Likewise, several researchers declare that the physical environment constitutes an important factor when creating EX (Green, 2017; Itam & Gosh, 2020; Gosh & Itam, 2020; Morgan, 2017; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016; Yildiz et al., 2020). As shown in Table 1 on p.10, aspects of the physical environment in terms of EX that are identified in reviewed literature are grouped together to the attributes *'Social Opportunities', 'Organizational Values are Reflected'* and *'Supportive Office'*.

Social Opportunities

One potential reason for employees to feel engaged in and connected to their workplace is their personal and/or professional relationship with their co-workers and leaders (Green, 2017). Even though relationships can be formed without physically seeing and interacting with each other, the physical environment plays an important role in facilitating relationships and creating social ties. Opportunities for socializing and having fun together often take place within the office, the spontaneous situations in particular (Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016). Moreover, the physical environment seems to have an effect on psychological comfort, as employees have a social identity linked to the workplace and can feel as part of a social group (Morgan, 2017). Such feeling of social connection is likely to positively influence EX (Morgan, 2017).

Organizational Values Are Reflected

According to Morgan (2017), it is not enough for organizations to simply communicate their values through words, they need to be embedded in the culture and observed through actions. In addition, the author argues that the organization's values should also be reflected and represented in the physical workplace. The physical environment seems to play a part in representing what the organization stands for indicating that the office has a symbolic value for the organization and for the employees who work there (Morgan, 2017).

Supportive Office

It is argues that the layout of the physical environment can have an impact on the EX (Green, 2017; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016). The layout includes ergonomics, which is the design and creation of safe and comfortable workspaces in terms of e.g. seating, desks and light. According to Green (2017), ergonomics improves both safety and productivity. In addition, the office layout is expected to include multiple workspace options (Morgan, 2017). Due to different personalities and characteristics of individuals, it can be expected that employees have different

preferences, strategies and perspectives when conducting operational tasks (Morgan, 2017). Therefore, by offering multiple workspaces with various characteristics within the office, the organization actively shows its employees that it understands, respects and reacts to their different needs. Furthermore, according to Morgan (2017), employees are in need for different types of surroundings and environments, depending on the kind of task that is performed, i.e. collaboration or focus spaces. The author also states that when employees feel that their employer respects and takes care of their preferences, instead of assuming that they want to work in the same way as everyone else, they have a better EX and perceive their employer as understanding and committed.

2.2 Remote Work

In this section, the topic of Remote Work is thoroughly investigated. After defining the concept, the structure follows five main topics identified in the reviewed literature, i.e. *'Operational Decisions', 'Technology', 'Interpersonal Processes'* and *'Impact on Employees'*. These categories are based on grouping several attributes from literature with each other, which can be seen in Table 2, below.

2.2.1 Definition

Based on the literature it can be observed that the term Remote Work is often used interchangeably with similar concepts, like 'work from anywhere' (Popovici & Popovici, 2020), 'telecommuting' (Matli, 2020), 'distributed work' or 'virtual work' (Allen et al., 2015). However, not all terms convey the same meaning (Allen et al., 2015). Nowadays, the concept of Remote Work describes a flexible work arrangement in a location that can be offside the traditional place of work (Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Matli, 2020; Wang et al., 2021), while being physically apart from colleagues and primarily using technology to operate (Wang et al., 2021). This relatively new concept of working from multiple locations is increasingly applied by organizations today (Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Popovici & Popovici, 2020) and transforms the ordinary composition of the workplace and routines (Matli, 2020).

According to Rose (2019), Remote Work can emerge in multiple compositions, e.g. being constantly remote, partly or 'hybrid' remote or 'pseudo remote', describing employees being physically in the same area but in different locations. Likewise, Ancillo et al. (2020) state that Remote Work does not necessarily imply that all employees work from home, but can include employees who are partially present in the office and partially at another place. Thereby the authors argue that organizations are required to have a complete vision of what Remote Work means for the respective organization.

Table 2: Remote Work Literature Overview

Themes	Our Attributes	Concepts from Literature	Authors
Operational Decisions	Remote Working Models	Policies for Remote Work	Alexander et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2020; Rose, 2019
		Impact on Culture	Alexander et al., 2020
	Suitable Tasks & Activities	Interdependencies & Interpersonal Processes	Allen et al., 2015, Boell et al., 2016, Ferreira et al., 2020; Kaufman et al., 2020; Lund et al., 2020
		Need of On-Site Equipment	Kaufman et al., 2020; Lund et al., 2020
		Need for Supervision	Kaufman et al., 2020
		Suitable Activities	Alexander et al., 2020; Boell et al., 2016; Ferreira et al., 2020; Kaufman et al., 2020; Lund et al., 2020
	Use of Physical Office	Use of Office	Ancillo et al., 2020; Anderson, 2020; Dahik et al., 2020; Muddit, 2020
		Reshape & Resize	Anicillo et al., 2020; Dahik et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2020; Hileberath et al., 2020
		Smart Office	Hilberath et al., 2020; Muddit, 2020
Technology	Equipment & Collaboration Tools	Devices	Ferreira et al., 2020; Matli, 2020
		Collaboration Tools	Boell et al., 2016; Dahik et al., 2020; Hilberath et al., 2020; Rose, 2019; Williams & Schubert, 2018
		Social & Learning Tools	Ferreira et al., 2020;
Interpersonal Processes	Communication	Miscommunication	Allen et al., 2015; Rose, 2019; Wang et al., 2021
		Inefficiency	Allen et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2021
	Collaboration	Knowledge Sharing	Alexander et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2015; Donnelley & Johns, 2020; Wang et al., 2021
		Changing Routines	Alexander et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2020; Hilberath et al., 2020
		Teamwork	Alexander et al., 2020; Boell et al., 2016; Ferreira et al., 2020
		Creative & Innovative Work	Allen et al., 2015; Ferreira et al., 2020
		Socialization	Dahik et al., 2020; Ferreria et al., 2020
	Leadership	Monitoring	Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Ferreira et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2016
		Clear Expectations	Alexander et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 2020
		Trust	Donneley & Johns, 2020; Ferreira et al., 2020
		Creating a Unified Culture	Alexander et al., 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 2020
		Feedback	Ferreira et al., 2020; Kaufman et al., 2020
		Coaching	Dahik et al., 2020; Muddit, 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 202
		Providing Training & Development	Ferreira et al., 2020
		Performance Management	Ferreira et al., 2020; Kaufman et al., 2020

Table 2 continued

Themes	Our Attributes	Concepts from Literature	Authors
Impact on Employee	Flexibility & Autonomy	Autonomy	Alexander et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Donnelley & Johns, 2020; Gajendran et al., 2015; Matli, 2020; Peters et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2021
		Flexibility	Alexander et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2015: Boell et al., 2016; Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Gajendran, et al., 2015; Matli, 2020; Rose, 2019; Peters et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2021
	Work-Life Balance	Work-Life Balance	Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Popovici & Popovichi, 2020; Wang et al., 2021
		Work-Home Interference	Allen et al., 2015; Basile & Beauregard, 2016; Boell et al., 2016; Popovici & Popovichi, 2020; Wang et al., 2021
		Irregular Work Hours	Peters et al., 2016; Popovici & Popovici, 2020; Rose, 2019; Wang et al., 2021
	Workload	Constant Availability	Boell et al., 2016; Matli, 2020
		Workload	Donnelley & Johns, 2020; Ferreira et al., 2020; Matli, 2020; Rose, 2019; Wang et al., 2021
	Health & Wellbeing	Stress	Allen et al., 2015; Peters et al., 2016
		Mental & Physical Health	Allen et al, 2015; Dahik et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2016; Popovici & Popovici, 2020
		Ergonomics	Allen et al., 2015; Dahik et al., 2020; Mudditt, 2020
	Personal & Professional Isolation	Belonging	Boell et al., 2015; Donnelley & Johns, 2020
		Decreased Chances of Promotion	Allen et al., 2015; Donnelley & Johns, 2020
		Decreased Training Opportunities	Popovici & Popovici, 2020
		Missing Work Activities	Allen et al., 2015; Hilberath et al., 2020; Matli, 2020
		Social Support	Allen et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2021
		Isolation	Boell et al., 2016; Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Popovici & Popovici, 2020
		Loneliness	Allen et al., 2015; Lund et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021

2.2.2 Operational Decisions

When shifting towards a Remote Work setting, it appears crucial for organizations to define clear targets, make critical decisions about the scope of such transition and assess how it will affect the company in the long-term (Ferreira et al., 2020). As aforementioned, Remote Working can be operationalized in different ways and organizations deploy policies that suit their own circumstances. As shown in Table 2 on p.21, several concepts that are mentioned in the reviewed literature can be combined into three attributes of operational decisions. In the following, operational decisions regarding Remote Working Models, Suitable Tasks & Activities and the Use of the Physical Office, are presented.

Remote Working Models

As mentioned before, Remote Working does not necessarily mean that employees are away from the office full time (Ancillo et al., 2020). Rather than having employees, who are either completely remote or completely physically present, companies are increasingly trying to achieve the best of both worlds by. This is accomplished by implementing a hybrid working model, combining both remote and on-site working (Rose, 2019). Organizations that commit to such a hybrid model must set a vision for what the model will look like for them and regulate who works outside the office and how often they do so (Ferreira et al., 2020). These models have to account for the rotation dynamics, meaning how many days employees can work outside the office and the degree of flexibility they are given. Ferreira et al. (2020) argue that it is critical to be clear about these decisions as they change and impact the organization's operating practices.

Furthermore, it appears to be important for organizations to be aware of the effects the choice of a hybrid working model has on the organizational culture and norms (Alexander et al., 2020). An organization that significantly shifts to a Remote Work setting risks diminishing the shared culture, as a hybrid model impacts standards for interactions, behaviors and ways of working. According to Alexander et al. (2020), managers and workers who continue being located in the office might develop their own culture, which virtual employees feel excluded from. As a result, Remote Workers could lose their sense of belonging and may start to feel isolated. Thus, Ancillo et al. (2020) argue that in order to support Remote Working, organizations should rethink their corporate culture.

Suitable Tasks & Activities

Several studies indicate that the process of determining the potential to work remotely should not be based on roles but on employees' tasks and activities instead (Boell et al., 2016; Lund et al., 2020). Policies about what

occupations are suitable for Remote Work need to consider the nature of work, as some activities appear to be more suitable for Remote Work than others (Boell et al., 2016). Certain tasks require physical presence in an office where e.g. on-site equipment needs to be utilized, and hence, cannot be done remotely (Kaufman et al., 2020; Lund et al., 2020). However, simply because it is theoretically possible to perform certain activities remotely does not mean that they are suitable for it (Lund et al., 2020).

When deciding which occupations has potential for remote working, organizations need to consider and review these in relation to e.g. interpersonal processes and interdependencies (Allen, Golden & Shockley, 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Ferreira et al., 2020; Kaufman et al., 2020; Lund et al., 2020). In addition considerations about the need for supervision (Kaufman et al., 2020), the demand for equipment and facilities (Kaufman et al., 2020; Lund et al., 2020), and the diversity of work activities performed in a job occupation (Boell et al., 2016; Lund et al., 2020) have to be taken into account. In this regard, it can be expected that some activities can be conducted more effectively in the office, even though it is possible to conduct them elsewhere (Lund et al., 2020). These are for example collaborative tasks like problem-solving, creativity, innovating and exchanging ideas (Boell et al., 2016; Lund et al., 2020) and building relationships with customers and colleagues (Ferreira et al., 2020; Lund et al., 2020).

Use of Physical Office

A consequence of the spatial shift that Remote Work entails is that the workplace is moving from the physical space to a digital space (Anderson, 2020). When employees are granted greater freedom to work from anywhere, the need for the traditional office might decrease, as employees use alternative spaces for conducting their work. Thus, a Remote Working model seems to be less centered around the physical office (Dahik et al., 2020). The focus lies on enabling employees to seamlessly move between Remote Work and the physical space. As a result, it is said that the physical office is in a transition period and needs to be rethought and redesigned, both in shape and in size (Ancillo, Núñez & Gavrila, 2020; Dahik et al., 2020).

In a Remote Work setting, it is assumed that organizations need to be more intentional with their physical space and pay closer attention to its purpose (Ancillo et al., 2020). The office is supposed to reflect employees' needs rather than being designed based on basic functions, such as cubicles and desks. Ancillo et al. (2020) argue that the office must support the activities and processes that employees will conduct there, and not remotely. Therefore, Ancillo et al., (2020) states that it is important for organizations to have a complete vision of what Remote Work means for them, so that the office space can be designed accordingly.

According to Ancillo et al. (2020), when rethinking the physical office space, organizations also need to consider its overall purpose of their office(s) for their organizational culture. A re-shape and re-size of the office in a Remote Working model can impact the physical interactions between employees, which furthermore can have an effect on the corporate culture. In addition, as a hybrid working model can result in downsizing the physical office space to e.g. save real-estate costs, an identified challenge is to establish and organize an efficient and functioning schedule, accounting for the limited work space for all employees (Ferreira et al., 2020; Hilberath et al., 2020). If this is not managed efficiently, a potential risk is that everyone comes to the office at the same time, which can result in an over-crowded office where employees have no adequate place to conduct their work. In this regard, a potential solution for organizations can be seen in engaging and investing in smart workplaces where individuals can book the space they need for a certain time period, which is in line with the activity they need to perform (Hilberath et al., 2020; Mudditt, 2020).

2.2.3 Technology

Next to operational decisions, an important component of Remote Work seems to be technology (Popovici & Popovici, 2020). Even though Remote Work has been around for a long time, it would not be possible to apply it at today's scale without the availability of modern technologies (Ferreira et al., 2020). After combining different attributes of technology from literature as shown in Table 2 on p.21, the following section presents the combined attribute Equipment & Collaboration Tools.

Equipment & Collaboration Tools

Technologies are at the heart of Remote Working as they support and create suitable conditions for which Remote Work is possible (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Peters et al., 2016). Integrating sufficient technological solutions is vital to ensure that all employees, whether working from the office or elsewhere, are able to create the same value, perform their daily tasks and seamlessly work together (Ferreira et al., 2020).

A fundamental enabler of remote working is to equip employees with technical appliances and information and communication technology, e.g. laptops, mobile phones, and internet connection in order to be able to access the digital workplace from anywhere (Ferreira et al., 2020; Matli, 2020). Not only must employees have access to digital tools in order to carry out their own daily tasks, but they must also be enabled with collaboration software to work together with their teams and colleagues (Boell et al., 2016; Dahik et al., 2020; Hilberath et al., 2020; Williams & Schubert, 2018). This collaboration software provides employees with platforms and tools that support the exchange of knowledge and information, promote communication and collaboration, and facilitate the

coordination and management of work, business processes and projects (Ferreira et al, 2020; Williams & Schubert, 2018). Rose (2019) mentions 'Slack', 'Zoom', 'Trello' or 'Monday' as examples for these tools, which seem to make collaboration in a remote setting more attractive to employees and enable more efficiency.

As the digital workplace serves as a virtual replication of the physical office, it needs to create the sense of a workplace in a similar way (Dahik et al., 2020). Learning and social interactions seem to be important aspects of the physical workplace, whereby organizations must also deploy digital social and learning solutions in order to reinforce culture and promote routines for socializing and the creation of informal ties (Ferreira et al., 2020).

2.2.4 Interpersonal Processes

According to Allen et al. (2015), next to technology, interpersonal processes and relationships within an organization are of paramount importance. As a result of working remotely, employees are physically distant from co-workers, which leads to an adjustment of these interpersonal processes. As a result of the established categories in Table 2 on p.21, the following section addresses the important processes of Communication, Collaboration and Leadership.

Communication

One aspect that is greatly influenced by Remote Working is the communication between co-workers and leaders (Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Rose, 2019; Wang et al., 2021). In order to closely replicate the traditional face-to-face interaction, communication tools, such as e-mail, video tools or instant messaging are implemented in a Remote Work setting (Allen et al., 2015). According to Donnelly and Johns (2021), the advancements in technology enable employees to communicate virtually, while they also constrain workers to have effective communication. Miscommunication and ambiguity are problems that are more likely to occur in a virtual setting (Rose, 2019; Wang et al., 2021). While e.g. gestures and emotions are missing via email communication, a lack of eye contact constitute a common issue in video conference calls (Allen et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2021). Thus, people are restricted to observe facial expressions and might miss or misunderstand reactions (Wang et al., 2021). Furthermore employees are more likely to feel lonely as virtual communication lacks the feeling of intimacy and togetherness (Wang et al., 2021). Allen et al. (2015) and Wang et al. (2021) hence conclude that face-to-face conversations often remain the main and most effective way of interactions for interpersonal relations.

Collaboration

Similar to communication, the collaboration within an organization can also be negatively affected by employees working remotely (Dahik et al., 2020; Boell et al., 2016). The authors mention the difficulty to create trust within teams, having fewer meetings and a missing connectedness as impediments to work and make decisions collectively (Boell et al., 2016). Furthermore, missing physical collaborative activities, such as brainstorming and whiteboarding impede collaboration and innovation. Thereby, employees need to be equipped with appropriate tools and information to successfully collaborate and be creative even when working remotely (Ferreira et al., 2020).

Moreover, it can be expected that the knowledge exchange between co-workers and leaders is also impacted by working remotely (Allen et al., 2015; Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). According to Donnelly and Johns (2021) such knowledge can be explicit, i.e. relatively easy to share digitally, or tacit knowledge. Gertler (2003) defines the latter as skills, know-how or experience that require more than words to be conveyed. The author states that this type of knowledge is crucial for innovation and value creation and is best to be shared by demonstration in practice. In the context of Remote Work however, this exchange seems to be limited and difficult (Donnelly & Johns, 2021).

Furthermore, having fewer face-to-face interactions reduces the spontaneous encounters, which can affect the informal social networks of an organization (Alexander et al., 2020). According to Alexander et al., (2020), it is therefore inevitable to change traditional ways of collaborating and knowledge transfer in order to enhance teamwork and support innovative ideas. Dahik et al. (2020) and Ferreira et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of socializing and executing collaborative tasks. The authors suggest implementing virtual meetings to compensate for the 'water cooler moments', i.e. unscheduled social interactions. Furthermore, casual calls can be implemented for a private exchange as compensation for lunch breaks in the canteen and digital social activities can be planned with the goal to encourage virtual collaboration (Dahik et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2020). According to Ferreira et al. (2020) *"these routines are an ideal chance to build empathy and engagement [and] promote creativity"* (p.25).

Leadership

Employees' relationships to managers and leaders are defined as highly important as they *"(a) create physical, cognitive, social, and psychological resources; (b) nurture reciprocity; and (c) help satisfy the basic need to belong"* (Allen et al., 2015; p.52). Thereby, it is argued that employees are in need of leaders and managers, who facilitate a unified organizational culture between office and remote workers (Alexander et al., 2020; Popovici &

Popovici, 2020), and hence create a sense of belonging (Alexander et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2020). This culture has to support and accept the Remote Working routines of the respective employees by treating them equally and including them in social interactions in order to avoid an in-office culture (Alexander et al., 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). Based on the most mentioned concepts from reviewed literature, shown in Table 2 on p.21, the two subcategories Monitoring & Trust and Supportive Leadership are created and discussed in the following.

Monitoring & Trust

When employees work virtually, they are physically distant from their leaders. Thereby, it can be challenging for leaders to monitor employees' productivity (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Ferreira et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2016). As managers cannot assess the employees' productivity and hours of work, but only measure the outcome, the focus moves from monitoring employees' input to assessing their output (Ferreira et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2016). Therefore, it is of crucial importance for leaders to clearly communicate their expectations (Alexander et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 2020).

Leaders should furthermore facilitate a culture that gives employees the possibility to work autonomously (Alexander et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2015: Boell et al., 2016; Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Ferreira et al., 2020; Gajendran, Harrison & Delaney-Klinger, 2015; Matli, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). For this, trust is a crucial aspect (Ferreira et al., 2020). Remote employees who are not given the freedom and trust from superiors while completing tasks outside of the office and out of sight from managers, might be micromanaged by their leaders (Donnelly & Johns, 2021). Despite these challenges, monitoring is stated to be important to ensure that employees are not overworked (Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Matli, 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). From the employees' perspective, monitoring can also support them to manage their workload and focus on tasks (Wang et al., 2021).

Supportive Leadership

Next to monitoring and trusting employees, leaders are responsible to support and coach remote workers professionally and personally, while paying attention to potential health risks (Dahik et al., 2020; Muddit, 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). Furthermore, leaders should regularly give feedback and attention to and receive feedback from both, in-office and remote workers, equally (Ferreira et al., 2020; Kaufman et al., 2020). Furthermore, leaders should offer the same engaging training and development opportunities to all employees (Ferreira et al., 2020). Related to these activities is the performance assessment, which leaders need to adapt to the remote setting to make sure that the way employees are rewarded for their work is comparable, regardless of working remotely or in the office (Kaufman et al., 2020).

2.2.5 Impact on Employee

Next to modified interpersonal processes, Popovici and Popovici (2020) argue that working remotely also changes the traditional way of working. This can evoke several challenges and opportunities for the respective employees. The most frequently mentioned impacts from reviewed literature are collected and grouped together into five categories (Table 2 on p.21). These are Flexibility & Autonomy, Work-Life Balance, Workload, Health & Well-Being and Personal & Professional Isolation, which are described in the following.

Flexibility & Autonomy

Remote Work arrangements encompass a more flexible and autonomous way of working (Alexander et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2015: Boell et al., 2016; Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Gajendran et al., 2015; Matli, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). In fact, employees are increasingly demanding flexibility and the ability to work remotely when considering a job (Rose, 2019). Job autonomy refers to the freedom and time-spatial flexibility of employees to choose the place, time and way of accomplishing work tasks (Allen et al., 2015; Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Peters et al., 2016; Wang, 2021). Employees' perception of having job autonomy is essential for individual performance, because it increases motivation by satisfying the intrinsic need for self-determination and providing employees with greater control over their work (Gajendran et al., 2015; Peters et al., 2016). Furthermore, it allows employees to choose their favorable way and pace of conducting work, while balancing their private and work life (Boell et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2021). Employees who are given flexible and autonomous work routines perceive their employer as more caring, which contributes to a better corporate brand image (Boell et al., 2016).

Work-Life Balance

Based on the reviewed literature, it is expected that Remote Work and the related increase of job autonomy has an effect on the employee's work-life balance, both in positive and negative ways (Popovici & Popovici, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). On the one hand, Remote Work can be seen as an enabler for employees to individually adjust work with their private life with better coordination and less interference (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Popovici & Popvichi, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). On the other hand, the work-home interference can also negatively impact employees (Allen et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2021; Peters et al., 2016; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). According to Allen et al. (2015) and Wang et al. (2021), a big challenge can be seen in the work-home interference, meaning that work can interfere with the personal life at the same time as the personal life can disrupt work life. Being distracted by childcare or home activities for example can lead to less concentration and decreasing productivity when working from home (Allen et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2021). Allen et al. (2015) add the constant connection and availability through technological tools as a factor through which work and private life become harder to

distinguish and separate from each other. While some employees desire separation between work and private life, others want an integration of these (Allen et al., 2015; Basile & Beauregard, 2016).

Workload

Employees' workload refers to employees' number of work hours that can increase when working outside of the office (Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). Rose (2019) adds that *"remote workers are more productive for the hours they work, but they also work more hours"* (p.24). In order to demonstrate productivity and proof efficient work from home, employees might overwork themselves by working harder and longer hours (Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Matli, 2020) and might have difficulties to accomplish the workload (Ferreira et al., 2020). Having a high workload also increases the difficulty of keeping the aforementioned balance between work and leisure time and separating family and work roles (Allen et al., 2015; Matli, 2020; Peter et al., 2016; Popovici & Popovici, 2020; Rose, 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Furthermore, as a result of flexible and autonomous work routines, employees seem to be available and connected to co-workers at all times, which can result in a larger amount and more stressful work (Boell et al., 2016; Matli, 2020.

Health & Well-Being

Furthermore, Remote Working conditions are expected to have an impact on the employee's health and well-being (Peters et al., 2016; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). On the one hand, working outside of the office seems to have a positive effect on stress and mental exhaustion, due to fewer interruptions and distractions by co-workers (Allen et al, 2015). On the other hand, anxiety, fatigue, headaches and eyestrain (Popovici & Popovici, 2020), as well as stress and burnout (Peters et al., 2016) are mentioned as possible results from working remotely and excessively using information and communication technologies (Popovici & Popovici, 2020).

Another health consideration for employees working outside of the office is the ergonomics of the workstation (Allen et al., 2015; Dahik et al., 2020; Mudditt, 2020). According to Allen et al. (2015), the office is typically set up with ergonomically designed chairs with lumbar support, adjustable desks and lightning control to minimize the risk for injuries. The authors state that organizations are typically not taking the same safety precautions when employees are working from home, which can lead to musculoskeletal disorders.

Personal & Professional Isolation

Relationships with co-workers and managers are seen as an important part of the employment relation, which are highly impacted as soon as employees work remotely (Allen et al., 2015). Due to being physically apart from co-

workers in the office and changing to digital communication, relationships between colleagues and leaders can be impacted and might result in remote employees feeling personally and socially isolated or excluded (Boell et al., 2016; Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). In addition, the lack of social interactions can also result in a diminished personal perception of belonging to and being actively involved in the organization (Boell et al., 2016; Donnelly & Johns, 2021). Employees who work remotely often miss out on spontaneous opportunities and chances where social ties are created and strengthened between co-workers, e.g. lunch or spontaneous coffee breaks (Alexander et al., 2020). By having fewer interactions with colleagues and an autonomous work routine, loneliness can arise (Lund et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). In this regard it is emphasized that the social support of managers and leaders is particularly important in order to counteract challenges such as the feeling of isolation and exclusion as well as maintaining a commitment to the company (Wang et al., 2021; Allen et al., 2015).

Employees who are working away from the office can also develop the feeling of being professionally isolated and excluded (Allen et al., 2015). This perception can arise when employees feel they are missing out on work opportunities or on-site (Allen et al., 2015), or if they develop the feeling of losing responsibility and inclusion within the organization (Allen et al., 2015; Peters et al., 2016). Such missed activities can be training opportunities (Popovici & Popovici, 2020), limits in building relationships through networking (Allen et al., 2015), or other social activities, creating the fear of having less chances to get promoted (Allen et al., 2015; Donnelly & Johns, 2021). Another drawback is the difficulty of communication and the missing opportunity to create relationships with co-workers and managers within the organization and thus to have an identity in order to be noticed (Matli, 2020). Moreover, Hilberath et al. (2020) argue that while remote workers are able to digitally participate in meeting or other team events, they continue to *"[miss] out on side conversations and the dynamics of the meeting in the conference room"* (p.2), which can make remote workers feel excluded (Hilberath et al., 2020).

2.3 Remote Employee Experience

The purpose of this section of the literature review is to combine the topics of EX and Remote Work in order to create a framework for a combined REX. The section is divided into three main parts. First, the concept of EX is reviewed from the perspective of Remote Working in order to identify expectations and reconsiderations of EX in a Remote Working context, which will inform the framework. Secondly, new attributes and themes of the new REX framework that were not originally found in the EX literature are justified. Lastly, the initial REX Framework is presented.

2.3.1 Employee Experience From a Remote Work Perspective

In this part, EX is reviewed from the perspective of Remote Work. This is achieved by reviewing and comparing each attribute that has been identified in the EX literature with the concepts from the Remote Work literature. To ensure a systematic approach, the structure of this section follows the same as section 2.1. The aim is to explore what constitutes Employee Experience in a Remote Work context, which is shown in the initial theoretical framework at the end of this chapter. Also, the aim is to understand how each attribute from EX is expected to be reconsidered in a Remote Work context. These expectations and reconsiderations will inform and justify the initial created framework for REX and are highlighted in blue boxes after each attribute.

2.3.1.1 Cultural Environment

Leadership

As mentioned on p.12 about EX, leaders play a crucial role in creating a positive EX and oftentimes employees resign, not because of their job, but because of an insufficient leadership style (Morgan, 2017). Furthermore, Leadership appears to be present in almost every part of EX, as employees are constantly influenced by their leaders (Green, 2017). Literature about Remote Work (p.27) also stresses the importance that leaders need to create and maintain a unified culture for employees working in the office with those working from elsewhere (Alexander et al., 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). Remote Work literature emphasizes on p.28 that leaders have to offer equal opportunities and create the same conditions to all employees, regardless of where they work (Ferreira et al., 2020; Kaufman et al., 2020). Additionally, as leaders in a Remote Work setting are physically distant from the employees, they cannot evaluate the input of employees but have to measure the result instead, whereby they must give them autonomy and develop a more trusting leadership (Ferreira et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2016).

REX Framework

Based on these findings, we expect that leadership with its basic functions continues to be a crucial attribute of REX. Furthermore, we expect that it is reconsidered in the way that it a) employees have a more positive REX if they are assessed on their outcome instead of their input and that employees are in need of related trust and equal treatment of leaders, regardless of where they work. As leaders seem to highly impact employees and their ability to work, '*Leadership*' becomes a single attribute in the REX Framework and part of the new theme '*Ways of Working*'. However, we expect that leadership will also impact and be visible in several of the other attributes that influence REX.

Sense of Belonging & Purpose

Sense of Belonging

As literature about EX states on p.13, employees who feel that they have a sense of belonging to their organization, colleagues and leaders appear to be more likely to have a positive EX (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Maylett & Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017). Also, the importance of feeling as a part of a team in order to have a great EX is stressed (Johnson et al., 2021: Morgan, 2017) However, literature indicates that a sense of belonging can be harder to achieve in a Remote Work setting. It is stated on p.31 that employees who are physically apart from their co-workers and leaders, can miss out on social interactions and opportunities and thus might feel less connected (Boell et al., 2016; Donnelly & Johns, 2021).

Sense of Purpose

Reviewed literature on EX (p.13) indicates that most employees are in need of feeling that they contribute to the company's success (Maylett & Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017) and that their work is meaningful and has a purpose (Green, 2017). In order to feel this sense of purpose, employees are in need of clear communication and information exchange, which can give employees the feeling of being part of the bigger picture (Green, 2017). However, in a Remote Work context (p.26), articles indicate that the communication between leaders and employees, meetings and knowledge sharing happens less regularly (Alexander et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2015; Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Wang et al., 2021)

<div style="text-align: right; color: blue;">REX Framework</div>

> Based on these findings, we expect that the attribute *'Sense of belonging & Purpose'*, which comprises both Sense of Belonging and Sense of Purpose, is important for a REX. We expect the attribute to be reconsidered in the way that it is a) more difficult to achieve a sense of belonging due to being physically apart from each other, and that feeling the b) sense of purpose is more difficult due to less regular communication. In the framework, the attribute 'Sense of Belonging & Purpose', is a part of the theme 'Personal and Professional Needs'.

Feeling Valued

Feeling Appreciated and Recognized

According to the reviewed literature on EX (p.14), employees who are acknowledged from co-workers and leaders, as well as recognized for their performance can have a higher EX (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016).

In a Remote Work setting, however, it is argued (p.28) that the monitoring of employee's performance and a related recognition for accomplishments appears to be more difficult, as leaders can be less aware of employee's productivity and effort when working outside the office and being less visible to leaders (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Ferreira et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2016).

Employees' Voices are Heard

Reviewed literature on EX has shown (p.14) that the EX can be positively influenced when employees perceive that their voice is being heard (Morgan, 2017). Thus, getting opportunities for sharing ideas (Yildiz et al., 2020), expressing needs through feedback and having the feeling that leaders react to the feedback accordingly, can positively influence the EX (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Yildiz et al., 2020). However, in reviewed Remote Work literature on p.27, it is stated that the serendipitous encounters are less frequent in a Remote Work setting where employees and leaders often share ideas and knowledge with each other. Lastly, the reviewed literature about Remote Work (p.26) emphasizes the fact that virtual communication between employees and co-workers and leaders in a remote setting poses the constant risk of miscommunication (Rose, 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

Being Treated Fairly

As described in the EX literature (p.15), the need for being treated fairly refers to the wish of employees to be treated equally (Morgan, 2017). Employees are more likely to have a positive EX when leaders approach them in an honest and respectful way without any prejudices (Johnson et al., 2021; Morgan, 2017). The topic of fair treatment of employees is also mentioned in the Remote Work literature (p.28). However, it expands from the feeling of being treated respectfully to the feeling of being treated equally, regardless of whether the employee works in or outside of the office. This includes being offered the same opportunities in terms of training and development (Ferreira et al., 2020) and getting comparable compensation and rewards (Kaufman et al., 2020).

REX Framework

Based on these findings, we expect that the attribute *'Feeling Valued'*, which comprises the three above aspects, is important for a REX. We expect it to be reconsidered in the way that a) in order to feel appreciated and recognized, employees must not feel that their work goes unseen because they are physically distant from leaders, b) employees perception of having their voice heard can be more difficult as remote employees can miss opportunities to raise their voice, and c) employees working remotely must feel that they are being equally treated compared to co-workers who work in the office. The attribute *'Feeling Valued'*, is in the framework a part of the theme '*Personal and Professional Needs*'.

Ability to Develop and Advance

Employee Learning

Based on the reviewed literature on EX (p.15), it can be seen that having access to learning, training and development initiatives within the workplace positively influences EX. Providing such opportunities and programs indicates that the employer is willing to invest in the employees' self-development, and hence, actively addresses their desire to grow (Maylett & Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017; Pine, 2020; Yildiz et al., 2020). However, in the context of Remote Work on p.31, it is argued that employees working away from the office can miss training and development opportunities and can thereby feel professionally isolated (Popovici & Popovici, 2020). In addition, on p.28, reviewed literature states that leaders in a Remote Work setting must ensure that the same engaging training and development opportunities are provided to all employees (Ferreira et al., 2020). In addition, it is stated on p.26 that organizations should focus on digital learning solutions to ensure the continuous learning and development for everyone (Ferreira et al., 2020).

Progress in Career

On p.16 it is stated that EX is positively influenced when employees perceive that they have opportunities to advance and are able to move forward in their career at their current employer (Green, 2017; Morgan, 2017). However, research about Remote Work on p.31 shows that employees who are working away from the office can develop a fear of having less chances to get promoted (Allen et al., 2015; Donnelly & Johns, 2021). This fear can emerge from employees missing out on learning opportunities as well as a diminished identity in the organization as a result of missed social opportunities where informal and social ties are strengthened.

<div style="text-align: right; color: blue;">REX Framework</div>

> Based on these findings, we expect that the attribute *'Ability to Develop & Advance'*, which comprises Employee Learning and Progress in Career, is important for a REX. As the Remote Work literature emphasizes the risk of remote employees feeling that they miss out on training and learning initiatives, as well as the fear of not getting noticed, we expect it to be reconsidered in the way that a) employees must be offered and have access to learning and training opportunities digitally and b) employees must feel that their chances of advancing are independent from whether or not they are physically present in the office and have more face-time with managers. In the framework, the attribute *'Ability to Develop & Advance' is* a part of the theme *'Personal & Professional Needs'*.

Flexibility

Flexible Options to Work

As the reviewed EX literature (p.16) indicates, providing employees with time-spatial flexible work options is of high importance for ensuring a positive EX (Green, 2017). Remote Work, being defined as a 'flexible work arrangement' (p.20), emphasizes the importance of offering flexibility when working remotely. While employees increasingly demand flexibility (Rose, 2019) organizations should focus on ensuring an efficient design of a flexible and hybrid workplace (Alexander et al., 2020). Furthermore remotely working companies have to define and implement policies on which tasks are suitable to conduct in- and outside the office, by taking task-specific characteristics, potential dependencies on special equipment and employees' individual preferences into account (Alexander et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2020).

Work-Life Balance

Reviewed literature on EX (p.16) shows that EX is positively impacted by a sufficient balance between work and private life (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Johnson et al., 2021) and that employees demand time-spatial flexibility at work (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Morgan, 2020; Yildiz et al., 2020). The reviewed literature on Remote Work (p.29), however, indicates ambiguous and contradictory assumptions about the effect of a remote work setting on the employees' work-life balance. While being able to better coordinate work and private life, having fewer distraction (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Popovici & Popvichi, 2020; Wang et al., 2021) and more time for family or partners (Wang et al., 2021), work-life balance in a Remote Work setting can also lead to a decrease in concentration and productivity (Allen et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2021) and a higher workload (Peters et al., 2016; Popovici & Popovici, 2020; Rose, 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Furthermore, literature points out that it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish work and private life from each other (Allen et al., 2015).

Job Autonomy

As reviewed literature about EX in (p.17) shows, the freedom to independently conduct work is stated to be another important aspect that has a positive impact on the EX, as it promotes empowerment, self-determination (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Yildiz et al, 2020). Furthermore, in the reviewed literature, the feeling of control is also mentioned as a factor that positively influences EX (Yildiz et al., 2020). However, literature about Remote Work (p. 28) emphasizes that in order to work autonomously in a remote setting, employees are in need of freedom and trust from their leaders, as they conduct their work out of their sight (Ferreira et al., 2020).

Based on these findings, we expect Flexible Work Options, Work-Life Balance and Autonomy to be important aspects of the REX Framework. However, as Remote Work literature emphasizes the impact organizational models for Remote Work have on employees' flexibility, the contradictions of Work-Life Balance and the importance of trust when working autonomously out of sight of the leaders, we expect the attribute '*Flexibility*' to be reconsidered in a Remote Work context.

For the framework, the attribute '*Flexibility*' is renamed to '*Flexibility & Autonomy*', which includes the combined aspects '*Flexible Options to Work'* and *'Job Autonomy'*. The attribute '*Work-Life Balance'* is abstracted from the attribute and creates a single attribute that belongs to the theme '*Personal & Professional Needs'* to reflect its importance for REX. **'*Flexibility & Autonomy*'** is now part of the theme '*Way of Working'*.

We expect the attribute '*Flexibility & Autonomy'* to be an important part of REX and that it is reconsidered in the way that a) employees are affected by the Remote Work policies implemented, and b) that employees are in need of feeling trusted by their leaders when working autonomously and self-managed. We also expect the attribute '*Work-Life Balance*' to be important for REX and that it is reconsidered in the way that a) the lines between work and life increasingly get blurry.

Health

As stated in the reviewed literature about EX (p.17), EX can be impacted by the employee's state of mental and physical health (Morgan, 2017). Companies increasingly support employees with health initiatives (Morgan, 2017; Dash, 2020) and supportive offices that include ergonomics (Green, 2017) to improve employee health. In the Remote Work literature (p.30), it is stated that a Remote Work setting can indirectly improve the employee's health status as it is likely to reduce mental exhaustion (Allen et al, 2015). On the other hand, it is argued that working remotely is associated with an excessive use of communication technologies, which are likely to negatively affect employees' health in terms of e.g. fatigue, headaches and eyestrain (Popovici & Popovici, 2020). Also, employees who work remotely can develop a feeling of professional and personal isolation and loneliness, which also negatively impacts health (Boell et al., 2016; Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). In a Remote Working context it also seems to be more important for managers to pay attention to indications of sickness of employees, when not regularly seeing each other (Dahik et al., 2020; Muddit, 2020; Popovici & Popvici, 2020). Lastly, Allen et al. (2015) state that organization often fail to provide employees with the same

ergonomically safe workstations at home as they do in the office, although employers are responsible for their employees' health while working remotely.

Based on these findings, we expect that '*Health*' is an important attribute of REX. We expect that attribute is reconsidered in the way that a) health issues regarding personal isolation and loneliness get emphasized; tiredness from excessive use of technologies gets more common; and ergonomic issues get emphasized due to employees not having an ergonomically sound workstation at home. Furthermore, we expect that the attribute is reconsidered in the way that b) it is more difficult for employees to have their health issues recognized. In the framework, '*Health*' is part of the theme *'Personal and Professional Needs'*

Communication

According to reviewed literature on EX (p.17), transparent and effective communication seems to positively impact the EX, as it ensures that employees are informed sufficiently (Tetzlaff and McLeod, 2016). This leads to employees trusting in leadership, which can also indirectly have a positive effect on the EX (Tetzlaff and McLeod, 2016). However, reviewed Remote Work literature (p.26) stresses the difficulty of communicating virtually when employees work remotely (Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Rose, 2019; Wang et al., 2021). With most communication shifting from face-to-face interactions to virtual communication tools (Allen et al., 2015), inefficiency and miscommunication appear as common challenges (Rose, 2019; Wang et al., 2021) since employees are hindered to see facial expressions and might misunderstand non-verbal reactions (Wang et al., 2021).

Based on these findings, we expect that *'Communication'* remains an important attribute of REX. We expect that the attribute is reconsidered in the way that a) transparent communication from leadership is crucial and that b) virtual communication with the help of technology is inevitable in a Remote Working setting but that it leads to problems like inefficiency, and miscommunication. This attribute constitutes the REX Framework as part of the theme '*Ways of Working*'.

Table 3: Expectations for the Cultural Environment

Old Theme	Attribute from EX	Expected Patterns	Attribute in REX	New Theme in REX
Cultural Environment	Leadership	Important for REX but it is reconsidered in the way that: a) Employees' work is assessed based on output instead of input, and employees are in need of trust and equal treatment of leaders, regardless of where they work Leadership is visible in all attributes of REX	Leadership	Ways of working
	Sense of Belonging & Purpose	Important for REX, but reconsidered in the way that: a) Sense of belonging is more difficult to achieve due to being physically apart b) Sense of purpose is more difficult due to less regular communication	Sense of Belonging & Purpose	Personal & Professional Needs
	Feeling Valued	Important for REX, but reconsidered by: a) Employees must not feel as if their work goes unseen because they are working away from the office b) Employees' perception of having their voice heard is more difficult due to missed opportunities to raise their voice c) Employees must feel they are equally treated compared to those who are more present in the office	Feeling Valued	Personal & Professional Needs
	Ability to Develop & Advance	Important for REX, but reconsidered in the way that: a) Employees need to be offered and have access to learning and training opportunities digitally b) Employees must feel their chances of advancing are not affected by working away from the office	Ability to Develop & Advance	Personal & Professional Needs
	Flexibility	Important for REX, but reconsidered in the way that: a) Employees are affected by the Remote Work policies implemented b) Employees are in need of feeling trusted by their leaders when working autonomously and self-managed	Flexibility & Autonomy	Ways of Working
		Important for REX, but reconsidered in the way that: a) Contradictory if remote working improves the balance, as lines between work and personal life gets more blurred	Work-Life Balance	Personal & Professional Needs
	Health	Important for REX, but reconsidered in the way that: a) Isolation and loneliness, tiredness from excessive use of technologies, and ergonomic issues gets emphasized b) It is more difficult for employees to have their health issues recognized	Health	Personal & Professional Needs
	Communication	Important for REX, but reconsidered in the way that: a) Employees are in need of transparent communication from leadership b) It is inevitable to replicate communication digitally and that it can lead to issues such as inefficiency and miscommunication	Communication	Ways of Working

2.3.1.2 Technological Environment

Equipped with Technology

According to the EX literature (p.18), it can be argued that EX is positively influenced when employees are equipped with sufficient technology and digital tools based on their needs, so that they feel enabled and empowered to work efficiently (Itam & Gosh, 2020; Morgan, 2017). Similarly, on p.25 in the reviewed Remote Working literature, several authors stretch the importance of digital collaboration tools and platforms in a Remote Work setting (Boell et al., 2016; Dahik et al., 2020; Hilberath et al., 2020; Williams & Schubert, 2018). These technologies are perceived as supporting and enabling knowledge and information sharing, communication and collaboration, and the coordination and management of work, business processes and projects (Ferreira et al, 2020; Williams & Schubert, 2018). On p.25 it is emphasized that digital tools are at the heart of Remote Working as they support and create the conditions to enable Remote Working (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Peters et al., 2016). Next to digital tools, reviewed Remote Working literature also states that employees need to be equipped with technical equipment such as laptops, mobiles and internet connection to be able to access the digital workplace anywhere (Ferreira et al., 2020; Matli, 2020).

REX Framework

Based on these findings, we expect that '*Equipped with Technology*' continues to be an important aspect of REX. However, we expect that it is reconsidered in the way that next to tools, a) employees are in need of also being sufficiently equipped with technical devices in order to be able to work anywhere. In addition, we also expect that the attribute is reconsidered in the way that b) the emphasis lies on collaboration tools. Therefore, the attribute in the REX Framework is renamed from '*Equipped with Technology*' to '*Provided with Digital Tools & Equipment*' to reflect both the physical and technical devices as well as the digital tools that enable Remote Working. In the framework, the attribute '*Provided with Digital Tools & Equipment*' is part of the theme '*Physical and Digital Workplace*'.

User Experience

Furthermore, as stated on p.18, EX seems to be positively influenced when the technologies at work have a well-designed user interface, which creates consumer-like experiences for the employees (Gosh & Itam, 2020; Morgan, 2017; Raia, 2017). In Remote Work literature, the term user experience is not discussed though. Nevertheless,

reviewed literature on p.25 that employees working away from the office will almost exclusively interact with technologies when conducting their work (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016).

Based on these findings, we expect that a) a well-designed user experience will positively influence REX. Therefore, *'User Experience'* is an attribute of the REX Framework as part of the theme *'Physical & Digital Workplace'*.

Table 4: Expectations for the Technological Environment

Old Theme	Attribute from EX	Expectations	Attributes in REX	New Theme in REX
Technological	Equipped with Technology	Important for REX, but reconsidered in the way that: a) Employees need technical devices for Remote Working b) Emphasis on the collaboration tools	Provided with Digital Tools & Equipment	Physical & Digital Workplace
	User Experience	A well-designed user experience is important in REX	User Experience	Physical & Digital Workplace

2.3.1.3 Physical Environment

Social Opportunities

In the reviewed EX literature (p.19), it is stated that the physical environment is important for EX, implying that it provides employees with opportunities for social interactions with colleagues (Green, 2017; Morgan, 2017; Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016). However, in the reviewed Remote Work literature (p.24), it is argued that an organization with a Remote Working model is less centered around the office and that employees might rarely be physically present (Dahik et al., 2020; Ancillo et al., 2020). Therefore, it is mentioned on p.26 that organizations need to create routines and opportunities for social interactions through the use of technology in a Remote Work setting (Ferreira et al., 2020). In addition, it is stated on p.31, that employees who work remotely and away from the office face a greater risk of feeling socially isolated due to being physically parted from colleagues in the office.

Based on these findings, we expect that '*Social Opportunities'* stay important for a positive REX. We expect that the attribute is reconsidered in the way that a) employees need to be provided with social opportunities both, in the physical and the digital workplace, in order to counteract the risk of employees to feel socially isolated.

Organizational Values are Reflected

With respect to the EX literature (p.19), the office is said to have a symbolic value, that indirectly represents the company. Consequently, EX is expected to be positively reinforced, when employees perceive that the organizational values are reflected in the design and characteristics of the physical environment (Morgan, 2017). However, as stated on p.20 in the reviewed Remote Work literature, some employees might not be present in the physical office that regularly (Rose, 2019).

Based on these findings, we expect that remote employees are less likely to perceive that the organizational values are reflected in the office design, as they might rarely be in the office. Therefore, we expect that the organizational values need to be reflected in other touchpoints than the physical office. Therefore, the REX Framework does not incorporate the individual attribute *'Organizational Values are Reflected'* in relation to a physical office. Instead, the framework includes *'Organizational Culture'* as its own dimension, which surrounds the whole REX. This is, to reflect our expectation that in a Remote Work context the organizational values must be reflected and showcased, to a larger extent, in other touchpoints an employee has with its employer as the employee is less present in the office to experience the culture.

Supportive Office

The reviewed EX literature (p.19) implies that EX seems to be positively influenced when employees perceive that the office provides them with multiple workspace options that support their respective activity (Green, 2017; Morgan, 2017). In the Remote Work literature (p.24) the office is similarly discussed, by considering how the office can support the activities that employees will perform on-site, and not remotely (Ancillo et al., 2020). In addition, Ancillo et al. (2020) propose that offices need to be reimagined in terms of shape and size in order to

support certain tasks that need to be executed in the office. Hilberath et al. (2020) and Mudditt (2020) argue on p.25 that one solution to manage and intentionally use the office space is to invest in smart workplaces, by adopting intelligent tools that enable employees to book their physical workstation in advance and hence, avoid the occurrence of overcrowded spaces.

Based on these findings, we expect that the attribute *'Supportive Office'* remains important for REX. We expect that the attribute is reconsidered by a) providing employees with multiple workplace options to support them with tasks that to a larger extent are expected to take place in the office. Therefore, we also expect that b) REX is influenced by the organization's ability to efficiently manage and organize work- and time schedules, referred to as a smart workplace. Accordingly, the attribute *'Supportive Office'* is renamed to *'Supportive & Smart Office'* and is part of the theme *'Physical & Digital Workplace'* in the REX Framework.

Table 5: Expectations for the Physical Environment

Old Theme	Attribute from EX	Expected Patterns	Attributes in REX	New Theme
Physical	Social Opportunities	Important for REX, but reconsidered in the way that: a) Employees need to be provided with social opportunities both in the physical and the digital workplace b) Replicated digitally in order to counteract the risk of employees feeling socially isolated c) Social Opportunities do not only depend on the physical space	Social Opportunities	Physical & Digital Environment
	Organizational Values are Reflected		Part of the theme 'Organizational Culture'	
	Supportive Office	Important for REX, but reconsidered in the way that: a) Employees need workplace options for tasks that are hard to execute remotely b) Creative and collaborative activities will to a larger extent be performed on-site c) Employees are impacted by how organizations implement and manage a smart workplace	Supportive and Smart Office	Physical & Digital Environment

2.3.2 New Attribute and Themes

By reviewing EX from the perspective of Remote Working, 13 attributes have been identified and classified into four main themes of the constructed REX Framework. Regarding literature on Remote Work, however, we identified an additional attribute that is very likely to play an important role for REX, but was not explicitly mentioned in the reviewed studies on EX. This new attribute, '*Collaboration*', is presented in the following. Afterwards, the three new themes *'Physical & Digital Workplace', 'Ways of Working', 'Personal & Professional Needs* and the overall dimension, *'Organizational Culture',* are justified.

New Attribute - Collaboration

In the reviewed EX literature (p.13), collaboration is discussed as an important practice to create a sense of belonging, as collaborating and being part of a team seems to create psychological safety that can influence the EX positively (Johnson et al., 2021; Morgan, 2017, Maylett & Wride, 2017). Also Yildiz et al. (2020) mention that a collaborative work environment, with opportunities for knowledge sharing, is important for EX as it creates trust, belongingness and improves employees' work quality. Similarly, the reviewed Remote Work literature (p.27) indicates that collaboration and the social connections it creates appear to be important to fulfill employees' sense of belonging when working remotely (Allen et al., 2015). However, Remote Work literature (p.24) also implies that collaborative and creative tasks, and jobs with a high level of interdependencies, appear to be more difficult to conduct in a Remote Work setting, as these activities require more interactions and a higher degree of coordination (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016 Ferreira et al., 2020; Kaufman et al., 2020; Lund et al., 2020). In addition, it is stated on p.27 that knowledge sharing appears to be impacted by Remote Work (Allen et al., 2015; Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). Employees who are co-located seem to communicate and share knowledge more frequently and spontaneously (Alexander et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2015) and tacit knowledge appears to be harder to exchange virtually (Donnelly & Johns, 2021). According to Alexander et al. (2020), the changes Remote Work brings, regarding collaboration, makes it inevitable for organizations to change their traditional ways of collaborating and knowledge sharing, when shifting to a Remote Working model.

REX Framework

Based on these findings, we expect that the attribute '*Collaboration'* is an important aspect of REX. This attribute is not originally derived from the EX literature, but is identified as a crucial concept from reviewed Remote Work literature. In order to reflect this, the attribute '*Collaboration'* is added to the REX Framework to reflect this. We expect that a) collaborative and creative tasks are highly difficult to replicate digitally, which

impacts REX. Furthermore, we expect that b) REX is affected by implemented norms and practices for how collaboration occurs and that behaviors and practices need to be changed in order to positively influence REX. In the REX Framework, the attribute *'Collaboration'* is part of the theme *'Ways of Working'*.

New Theme - Physical & Digital Workplace

According to Morgan (2017) on p.19, the physical environment is "*the one in which employees actually work*" (p.59). However, as Remote Work literature showed (p.24), organizations with a Remote Working model are far less centered around the physical office (Anderson, 2020; Dahik et al., 2020). As described on p.24, the focus in a Remote Work setting is to enable employees to seamlessly move between the digital and the physical space (Dahik et al., 2020).

<div align="right">REX Framework</div>

Based on these findings, the physical and the technological environment are merged into a single theme called *'Physical & Digital Workplace'* in the REX Framework. This is to reflect that in a Remote Work context the physical and the technological environment are integrated, and employees seem to seamlessly move between them while working. Lastly, Remote Work literature mentions that some employees might rarely come into the office, whereby we believe REX should not only depend on the physical environment.

In the framework, the theme *'Physical & Digital Workplace'* is not an attribute that is reconsidered. Instead it is the overall theme that consists of the four already mentioned attributes *'Social Opportunities'*, *'Supportive & Smart Office'*, *'Provided with Digital Tools & Equipment'* and *'User Experience'*, for which we each created expectations and reconsiderations.

New Theme - Personal & Professional Needs

After reviewing EX and Remote Work literature, several concepts appeared around the needs of employees. We believe that it is of paramount importance for organizations to reconsider common ways of fulfilling both personal and professional needs of remote employees in order to create a positive REX. Thus, we created the new theme '*Personal & Professional Needs',* involving five attributes in the REX Framework.

Several attributes revolve around satisfying the needs of employees, including both personal needs, i.e. '*Work-Life Balance', 'Health' and 'Sense of Belonging & Purpose'* as well as professional needs, i.e. *Feeling Valued' and 'Ability to Develop & Advance'.* Thus, we grouped them together as part of the new theme *'Personal & Professional Needs*'. This theme is in itself is not an attribute that is reconsidered. Instead it is the overall theme that consists of the five attributes, which are each reconsidered in a Remote Work setting.

New Theme - Ways of Working

Based on the reviewed literature, we expect that it is crucial for organizations to adjust common ways of working, e.g. activities like collaborating and knowledge-sharing by implementing new norms and routines (p.44). Furthermore, we expect that new ways of communicating need to be implemented when working remotely (p.38). Leaders are expected to rearrange their priorities by emphasizing on quality and fair treatment of employees (p.32) and employees in a Remote Work setting are depended on the organization's choices in terms of how flexible and autonomous they are able to work (p.36).

Based on this, the four attributes *'Collaboration', 'Communication', 'Leadership'* and *'Flexibility & Autonomy',* are reconsidered by adopting new norms and undertaking new conscious practices. Originally, *'Communication'*, *'Leadership'* and *'Flexibility & Autonomy'* were part of Morgan's Cultural Environment, which in our framework is an overall dimension. As all these topics revolve around the work itself, we grouped them together into the new theme '*Ways of Working'*. In the framework, this theme in itself is not an attribute that is reconsidered.

New Dimension - Organizational Culture

As mentioned in literature on p.12, Morgan's (2017) EX Framework combines several aspects about e.g. how employees behave, feel, are treated, developed or recognized into one environment that he calls 'Cultural Environment'. We agree with this definition, but assume that the cultural environment plays a more dynamic role and affects every aspect of REX. As mentioned on p.12 when reviewing the EX literature, organizational culture comprises everything that an organization does (Morgan, 2017). Also in Remote Work literature (p.23) Ancillo et al. (2020) state that in order to create a Remote Work setting, the overall culture of a company has to be rethought, putting the term culture as an overarching term. To represent this special role, we introduce the topic of '*Organizational Culture'* as a surrounding dimension in our REX Framework.

REX Framework

This newly created dimension *'Organizational Culture'* surrounds all three defined themes of REX. This is to reflect our expectation that a) all three themes that constitute REX are embedded in the organizational culture. This also includes the expectation that although it seems more difficult, the organizational values in a Remote Working context must, to a larger extent, be reflected and showcased in touchpoints across the EX. In contrast to the new themes, this dimension is expected to be reconsidered and thus is matched with observations.

2.3.3 Initial Theoretical Framework of Remote Employee Experience

Based on the above defined attributes and themes that derived through reviewing the concept of EX from the Remote Work lens, the following initial theoretical framework is created. This framework demonstrates our expectations of what EX in a Remote Work context constitutes. This framework is revised after primary data collection and presented in the discussion in section 5.6.

Figure 3: The Initial Theoretical Framework of Remote Employee Experience
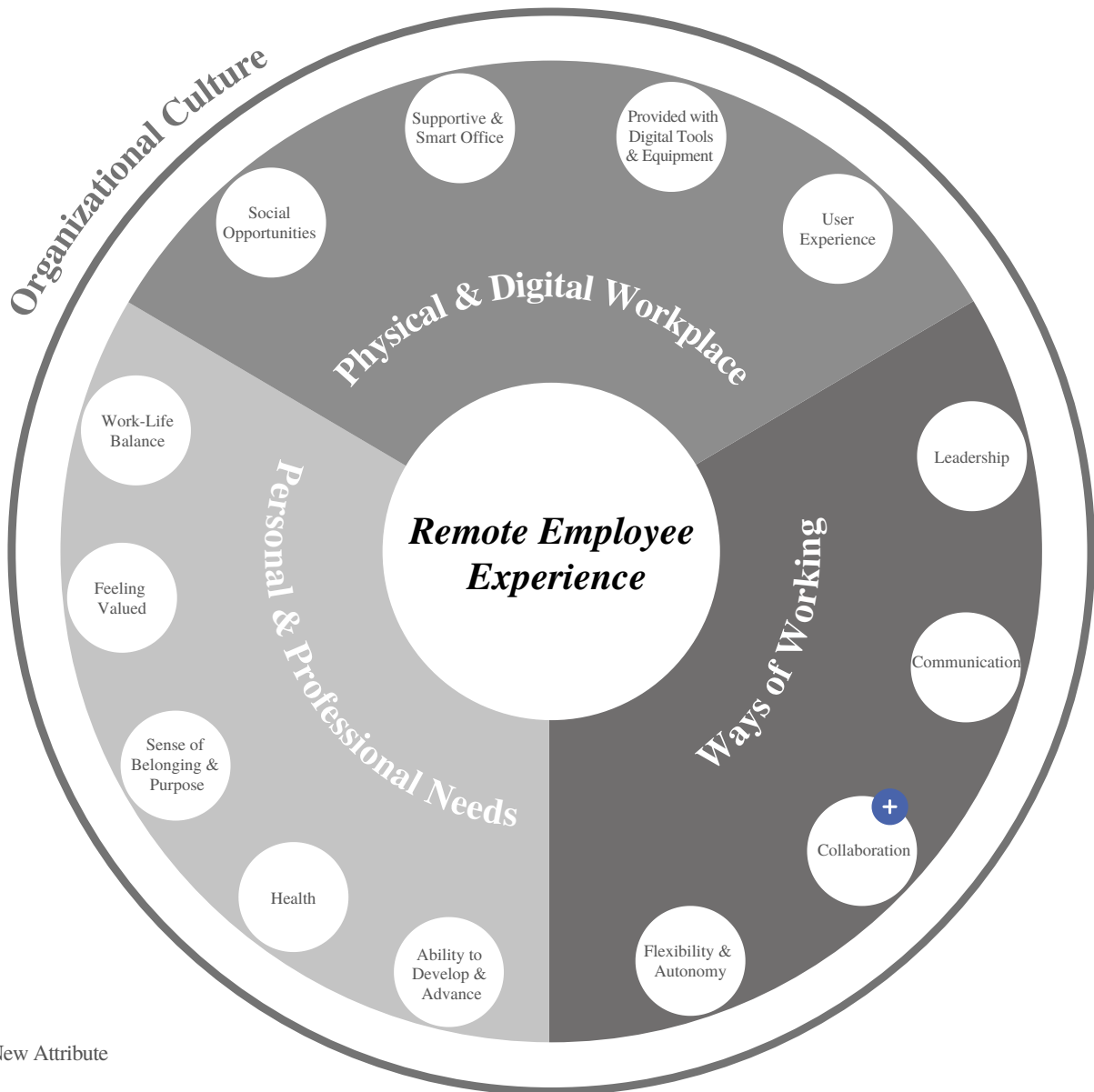
3 Methodology

In the following section the methodological choices are introduced and justified in order to answer the main questions (RQ1) "*What constitutes Employee Experience in a Remote Work context?*" and (RQ2) *"How are the aspects of Employee Experience reconsidered in a Remote Work context?"* Firstly, the research paradigm is described followed by presenting the research strategy, including approach to theory development, research purpose and method. Lastly, the research design is introduced by demonstrating the flexible pattern matching approach, data collection method and data analysis.

3.1 Research Paradigm

In the following, our beliefs and set of assumptions of the nature of knowledge are described that serve as a baseline for understanding and justifying the chosen research strategy and design. The assumptions we have about which type of knowledge can be considered acceptable, valid and legitimate, refer to 'epistemological assumptions' (Saunders et al., 2015).

According to Saunders et al. (2015) the main philosophies are 'positivism', 'critical realism', 'interpretivism', 'postmodernism' and 'pragmatism'. The former describes the assumption of revealing the truth and contributing with causal explanations (Saunders et al., 2015). Positivists believe that the "*world operates by laws of cause and effect*", which can be recognized with scientific research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.28). Critical realism, refers to the aim of researching towards a certain goal without the possibility to actually reach it. Thus, critical realists can be characterized by accepting the fact to not certainly understand the world and its dynamics (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Based on Saunders et al. (2015), interpretivism defines the assumption that humans cannot be studied in the same way as physical phenomena. Interpretivists do not believe that common laws can be generalized and their goal is to research and analyze the social world and its context. Postmodernists aim at contesting established and fixed ways of thinking by challenging existing concepts and theories. Lastly, pragmatists argue that practical outcomes are more relevant than abstract concepts and recognize different interpretations of the world (Kaushik et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2015).

Based on Kaushik et al. (2019) we are pragmatists. We believe that human behavior is interlinked with their respective experiences, worldviews and social beliefs and hence cannot be separated from such. Moreover, we argue that various actions are directly and indirectly linked to certain contexts, indicating that individual behavioral patterns are mutually dependent on social and physical environments. Thus, we assume that the action of creating

a positive EX at work is a flexible process that reacts to dynamic structural changes and hence adapts to new situations and contexts, i.e. the Remote Work setting. Even though the process of creating EX stays the same, the consequences are different, based on the new situation. We also argue that humans base their actions on potential consequences on these actions and incorporate the generated knowledge as a baseline for future decision-making processes. Thus, we expect HR experts to learn from the current situation of the extreme Remote Work setting and use this knowledge for the post-pandemic times. Lastly, we are of the opinion that knowledge is valuable as long as it is practically relevant. As a result of being forced to work remotely, we believe that the existing knowledge about creating EX is less practically relevant during this specific time as it does not consider the new context of Remote Working. These assumptions will guide our methodological choices of research strategy and research design, including the collection of data as well as the procedure of the data analysis. Thereby, each step and element of our research project is coherent.

3.2 Research Strategy

This section of the Methodology chapter describes the chosen research strategy for this Master Thesis. In the following, the choices regarding our abductive approach to theory development, exploratory research purpose as well as the qualitative research method are presented.

3.2.1 Approach to Theory Development

According to Saunders et al. (2015) one can distinguish between three different approaches to theory development, namely a deductive, inductive and abductive approach. A deductive approach refers to the practice of developing a new theory based on existing academic literature, which is subsequently assessed and tested, by using collected data. On the contrary, an inductive approach describes the practice of starting with collecting empirical data upon which new theory is generated. Lastly, as stated by Saunders et al. (2015), the abductive approach can be classified as a combination of the deductive and inductive approach and hence refers to an iterative process in which the approach of theory development and data collection are mutually dependent on each other. This research project adopts an abductive approach by combining elements of deductive and inductive logic through the use of a flexible pattern matching approach, which is explained in Section 3.3.1. That is because the goal of this research is not to falsify theory (deductive) or to generate new theory (inductive), but to modify existing theory (Saunders et al., 2015). Also, using both inductive and deductive reasoning is typically associated with the pragmatic assumptions (Kauschik & Walsh, 2019).

Consistent with a deductive approach, theoretical patterns are identified through combining existing literature about EX and Remote Working, which are conceptualized into a theoretical framework. The reason for starting deductively is that a body of research on the two topics already exists, but not in combination. However, a disadvantage of proceeding with a deductive approach is that it gives no room for new facts to emerge from the data, as the goal is to test and falsify theory. As the aim of this study is, however, not to falsify or test the deduced theoretical framework, but to explore the combined REX, the study is complemented with exploring the phenomenon inductively. This inductive approach allows seeking out and identifying new insights and patterns empirically in order to revise and inform the initial theoretical framework that was deductively derived from literature. A disadvantage of the inductive approach is the risk that no new patterns might emerge from the data (Saunders et al., 2015). However, by following the abductive approach, i.e. combining deductive and inductive logic, important patterns are already derived and identified from the existing literature. Therefore, answering the underlying research questions is not restricted or limited if the analysis of the collected empirical data does not reveal new distinctive patterns.

3.2.2 Research Purpose

According to Saunders et al. (2015), a study can be conducted with several purposes, i.e. with an explanatory, descriptive, evaluative or explorative purpose. While the former describes the aim to constitute causal relationships, a descriptive study has the goal to portray a certain situation or event. An evaluative study refers to the process of assessing and evaluating the value of certain actions, measures or implementations. Lastly, the explorative purpose is to investigate a topic for which not enough existing theory is available.

The main goal of this Master Thesis is to investigate the aspects of REX, which constitutes a current and new topic. In this regard, an explorative study is conducted, as such research purpose represents the most appropriate strategy when the knowledge about the studied phenomenon is limited (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). An advantage of an exploratory research purpose is that it is more flexible in nature and hence, allows to be more adaptable and receptive to new insights about the current topic that emerge from the collected and analyzed data (Saunders et al., 2015).

Explorative research questions usually start with 'What' or 'How' (Saunders et al., 2015) and are used to qualitatively explore a predefined context by interviewing experts, using focus group discussions or conducting a case study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). By having the research questions (RQ1) *"What constitutes Employee Experience in a Remote Work context?"* and (RQ2) *"How are the aspects of Employee Experience reconsidered*

in a Remote Work context?" and conducting semi-structured interviews, while asking open questions to Human Resource Management experts, our study thus coincides with the characteristics of an explorative study based on Saunders et al. (2015). Due to the special characteristics and data collection techniques that are associated with exploratory studies, the generated sample size is relatively small, compared to studies that follow e.g. explanatory research strategies. Consequently, the study results of exploratory research are often contested with limited generalizability, as the small sample of non-representative cases impairs to universalize the findings to the target population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In this regard, certain techniques and considerations were applied in order to address these concerns and to improve the generalizability of the findings, which are explained on p.53.

3.2.3 Research Method

According to Saunders et al. (2015), there are two methods that can be used in research, i.e. quantitative and qualitative research methods. The former describes the collection of numerical data that is used to test pre-defined theory and hypotheses by applying mathematical techniques or statistical regression analysis. Such quantitative data can be collected via different methods, e.g. surveys, questionnaires, experiments or structured interviews, and is mainly used for econometric analysis to assess correlations and causal effects of different variables.

In comparison, qualitative research methods are based on non-numerical data that usually appear in a narrative form and is collected by asking broad interview questions, using questionnaires or through observations. Thereby, Sekaran and Bougie (2016) argue that qualitative data is used to understand certain phenomena, concepts or nature of problems and to apprehend the participants' beliefs and attitudes. On this basis, the method of this Master Thesis is qualitative. In order to understand and explore the phenomena of REX, semi-structured interviews were conducted, which are further discussed on p.59. Using this single data collection technique makes our study a 'Mono Method Qualitative Study' (Saunders et al., 2015). The authors also state that such qualitative data collection is considered as non-standardized, indicating that the respective questions and overall approach can change and develop during the process.

Overall, the reliability and external validity of study results constitute major concerns in research procedures (Bryman, 2015; Saunders et al., 2015; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). However, it is argued that mainly quantitative research and analyzes face such limitations and issues (Bryman, 2015). In qualitative research, on the other hand, the quality and validity of a study is characterized by and critically depends on the 'trustworthiness' of the obtained outcomes. This includes concerns about the credibility, transferability (generalization), dependability (replication) and confirmability (subjectivity) of the study that need to be taken into account and adjusted for in the underlying

research design (Bryman, 2015). Moreover, the authors argue that the lack of transparency constitutes a main issue in qualitative research. Table 6 provides an overview on these identified concerns and the applied approaches to solve and adjust for the limitations.

Table 6: Issues of Qualitative Research

Concerns	Approaches for Solution
Credibility	- Having two Interviewers - Semi-structured interviews - Respondent validation (Interviewees approve the transcripts)
Transferability / Generalizability	- Focus on creative companies within Europe - Partly deductive approach and theoretical base
Dependability / Replication	- Transparent research process - Attached interview transcripts - Flexible pattern matching approach
Confirmability / Subjectivity	- Separately coding and analyzing the data
Lack of Transparency	- Flexible pattern matching approach

Firstly, based on Saunders et al. (2015), credibility describes that the collected data can be trusted, i.e. the gathered information from the conducted interviews reveal and elicit the true attitudes and beliefs of the respective respondents. This has been ensured by having two Interviewers to improve the quality of the research and by conducting semi-structured interviews. By following this technique, a high level of credibility can be achieved as the responses of the Interviewees are explored and assessed from different perspectives and points of view. Furthermore, the credibility of the collected qualitative data was reinforced, by sending the transcribed interviews to the participants in order for them to validate and approve the gathered information, i.e. 'respondent validation' (Bryman, 2015; Saunders et al., 2015).

Secondly, transferability defines the generalizability of a study and its findings, which constitutes a major concern in qualitative research that is based on a relatively small sample size (Bouncken et al., 2021a; Saunders et al., 2015; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). However, Bouncken et al. (2021a) argue that this issue can be avoided by creating a "*context that includes a range of related elements for adopting the theory*" (p.268). On this basis, this research is restricted to companies operating within the creative industries in European countries exclusively, in order to address and adjust for the concern of limited transferability and generalizability of the study results. In addition, by transparently presenting information about the research questions, research design, results and analysis, other researchers are able to judge the transferability of this study and apply it into another setting of their choice. Furthermore, the partially deductive approach of this study ensures that the obtained study results are based on an

existing and accepted theoretical basis. Thus, it can be argued that the research findings have a theoretical significance, which facilitated the generalizability of the study results.

Thirdly, in order to ensure dependability, which describes research results that are consistent with the raw data, reliable and replicable for others (Saunders et al., 2015), the research process, data collection and analysis is thoroughly described and presented. Furthermore, the transcribed interviews are attached in Appendix 8.4 to show the original data that was analyzed. This facilitates the comprehensibility and traceability of the applied research process and allows external researchers to access the underlying 'raw' data and to replicate the study. Lastly, adopting a flexible pattern matching (FPM) approach, which is explained in Section 3.3.1, creates a replication logic by comparing data from theory with data from empirical interview, which informs the attributes of the framework and thus increases the validity (R. B. Bouncken et al., 2021b).

Fourthly, according to Bryman (2015), limited confirmability describes the issue of including subjective perceptions when evaluating the data of interviews. This can lead to a subjective interpretation of the findings, causing biased study results. This issue is addressed by separately coding the data first and then comparing and combining each other's codes to objectively analyze the data and come to conclusions that are not based on personal viewpoints. An illustrative example of this step-wise procedure is shown in Appendix 8.4.

Lastly, the transparency issue is addressed by making the own mental models more explicit through the use of a FPM approach, explained in Section 3.3.1. Bouncken et al. (2021a) argue that *"the interplay between theories and observations in flexible pattern matching allows readers to follow the researcher's thought processes from the conceptualization stage to the data interpretation stage"* (p.257). As a result, the reader can more easily understand and evaluate the findings, which enhances the transparency.

3.3 Research Design

This section presents the research design that was constructed to best answer our research questions. In addition, the design is based on the characteristics associated with the qualitative and abductive research strategy as well as the explorative nature of the project. Firstly, the FPM Approach is described, which functions as a structure for the research design. Secondly, the data collection method is presented, including both secondary and primary data collection. Lastly, the data analysis method is described.

3.3.1 Flexible Pattern Matching Approach

According to Sinkovics (2018), the pattern matching method is *"the comparison of a predicted theoretical pattern with an observed empirical pattern"* (p.2). The method relies on the assumption that human beings are not able to be completely objective when observing and evaluating certain actions and contexts. In order to make sense of the world, individuals compare internal mental models with external observations. In this context, the logic of pattern matching is to make this process more structured and intentional by transforming the implicit mental models of the researcher(s) to explicit models (Sinkovics, 2018). Furthermore, Sinkovics (2018) argues that there are three distinct approaches to pattern matching, i.e. partial, full and flexible pattern matching, which are illustrated in Appendix 8.1. This study adopts a FPM approach as this is considered to be most appropriate for a qualitative research strategy and answering the explorative research question. With FPM theory development is derived by combining deductive and inductive logic, as described in section 3.2.1. Thereby, theory development occurs in the intersection between theoretical and observed patterns (Bouncken et al., 2021a).

The FPM process can be separated into a theoretical realm, an observational realm as well as the actual pattern matching between the two (Bouncken et al., 2021a). In the theoretical realm, the researcher(s) construct(s) one or various expected theoretical patterns, based on a theorizing process (Sinkovics, 2018). In order to generate theoretical patterns, this approach aims to first consult relevant literature before collecting data. This gradual procedure distinguishes the theoretical realm from other, more commonly adopted approaches, namely grounded theory and Gioia method (Bouncken, Qiu & García, 2021b). In this study, the initial theoretical ideas and patterns are deductively derived from synthesizing and comparing the literature on EX and Remote Working. This enables the conceptualization of the identified theoretical patterns into a detailed theoretical framework, based on existing literature. A detailed explanation of the approach for synthesizing the reviewed literature can be found in the section about Secondary Data on p.56.

In the observational realm, empirical data is collected to observe empirical patterns (Sinkovics, 2018). According to Bouncken et al. (2021a), the theoretical patterns serve as a basis for the exploration of the observed patterns. Therefore, the four main themes (patterns) that are identified by synthesizing the existing literature, serve as a guideline for the data collection process, consisting of semi-structured interviews. A detailed explanation on the primary data collection can be found in the Primary Data section on p.58.

Once the empirical data is collected in FPM, the data is analyzed through the structure of the theoretical patterns (Bouncken et al., 2021a). This enables the researcher(s) to compare the theoretical and observed patterns in order

to identify matches or mismatches between them, which is where the theory development is derived from. Therefore, the analysis of the empirical data and the articulation of the respective findings, are structured based on the initial theoretical framework (Bouncken et al., 2021a). In this way the concepts from the developed theoretical framework serve as priori codes that are used to identify and systemize keywords in the transcribed interviews. This approach enables a comparison of expected patterns from theory with observed patterns from the empirical data to identify conflicting and corroborating findings. Additionally, this method allows for new and unexpected patterns that emerge from the analysis and to inform and modify the initial framework, accordingly. This process is described in the Data Analysis on p.62.

Choosing a FPM approach comes with the difficulties of conveying clear patterns from collective perspectives in theory (Bouncken et al., 2021a). In order to address this concern, a comprehensive literature review is conducted and systematized by creating several tables and overviews to visualize all distinctive stages and undertaken steps of the process, i.e. listing topics mentioned in literature, combining aspects together to categories and clearly explaining the choice of wording and grouping. These steps are further discussed in the Secondary Data section on p.56. Furthermore, according to Bouncken et al. (2021a), conducting a FPM approach appears to be resource intensive, as creating suitable patterns can be time consuming and requires a lot of effort. On this basis, a detailed research plan was constructed to ensure an efficient allocation of time and effort for the individual tasks and processes. As mentioned before, another limitation of choosing this approach is the issue of generalizing the study. The actions to counteract this are defined on p.53.

3.3.2 Data Collection Method

In order to answer the main questions of this Master Thesis, both secondary as well as primary data has been collected, which is consistent with the FPM approach of this research. This part will firstly describe the secondary data collection through the use of a semi-systematic literature review, which was conducted to identify expected patterns based on literature. Lastly, the technique of primary data collection based on semi-structured interviews is described, which was used in order to identify observed patterns.

Secondary Data

For this study, the purpose of collecting secondary data was to create the foundation for the initial theoretical framework and to establish a guideline for the semi-structured interviews. The literature review is divided into two main parts, focusing on EX and Remote Work, respectively. The following describes the type of considered data,

data collection and data structuring strategies. Afterwards, the development of expected patterns based on this data is described, which led to the evolvement of the theoretical framework.

Collection of Data

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), secondary data defines data, which is obtained through existing and available sources and does not need to be empirically collected by the researcher(s). The secondary data that has been collected for this research is called 'Document Secondary Data' (Saunders et al., 2015). Such data describes the use of text material in books, e-mails, reports, academic articles or journals and magazines or newspapers, as well as non-text material in the form of recordings or pictures (Saunders et al., 2015). In the literature review, the focus lied on text material, i.e. academic books, journal articles and consultancy reports.

The data was collected with the help of recognized online databases, such as 'Business Source Complete', 'ScienceDirect' or 'EBSCO Host'. According to Saunders et al. (2015), data sources can be difficult to find and access might be costly, which has been mitigated by using the library access LibSearch through Copenhagen Business School. In addition, the reviewed literature was supplemented by published reports from renown consultancies or company websites. After inspecting the material, the main components 'EX' and 'Remote Work' emerged. Based on Saunders et al. (2015), three parameters have been defined for the following search, i.e. the language of publication, the subject area and the time of publication. Consequently, the focus was only on English material within a recent publication date (not older than 2015). Also, only studies and other relevant material was considered that was conducted within the relevant field of our research topic, including at least one of the two predefined components. To investigate these components, certain keywords such as 'EX', 'Remote Work' or 'Hybrid Work' have been used.

According to Saunders et al. (2015), this process of collecting secondary data has several disadvantages, e.g. if data sources have a different purpose, limited quality of data as well as ethical risks. Firstly, the purpose of the author might be different to the research purpose of this study, which is addressed by evaluating each data source based on its relevance, value and sufficiency to the research question (Saunders et al., 2015). For example, an article about EX design, solely focusing on the design thinking processes was not considered relevant to contribute to the study and thus was excluded from the literature review. Regarding the issue of limited quality of identified secondary data, it is argued that researcher(s) usually cannot directly control the quality of secondary data. Therefore, each data source was critically evaluated in terms of data credibility and applied methodological framework, before using the information. In particular, exclusion criteria for the reviewed sources were based on low quality of data and methodology, possible bias of the author(s) as well as uncertain level precision. Moreover,

the chosen articles have been evaluated regarding their sufficiency to *"satisfy the assessment criteria for [the] project report"* (Saunders et al., 2015; p. 105). Thirdly, Sekaran and Bougie (2016) mention the ethical risk of purposefully misinterpreting work from other authors as well as plagiarizing as potential disadvantages of collecting secondary data. Both risks were mitigated by reviewing each source and re-examining individually written parts with both researchers to ensure that information is not misinterpreted or copied by anyone.

Structuring the Data

By following the aforementioned data collection and evaluating process, a total of 41 studies have been identified as relevant for the analysis. On this basis the reviewed and collected literature was categorized with respect to the two main topics of interest, i.e. EX or Remote Working. Overall, 19 (46%) of the identified articles were classified as being related to the EX, while 22 (54%) revolve around the topic of Remote Work. In a subsequent step the articles were further systematized based on the identified concepts related to each topic that were mentioned by the authors. Table 1 (p.10) and Table 2 (p.21) provide illustrative examples of the methodical approach of grouping and systematizing the generated secondary data. For both EX and Remote Working, the grouped concepts that led to the development of attributes were used as a structure for the literature review.

Expected Patterns from Secondary Data

After collecting and structuring the secondary data, the concept of EX was viewed from the lens of Remote Working. This was done by comparing and synthesizing the identified attributes of EX with the concepts mentioned in literature about Remote Working. Based on this, theoretical patterns were deductively derived and expectations for each attribute were developed with regard to theory. The theoretical patterns were further conceptualized into the initial theoretical framework about REX, which is presented at the end of the literature review in Figure 3 on p.48.

Primary Data

As defined by Sekaran and Bougie (2016), primary data is directly collected by the researcher(s) through sources such as interviews, questionnaires or observations. Such data is gathered for a clear and specific purpose. For this study, a single data collection technique has been chosen by conducting interviews with HR experts who reflected on the past year of working remotely. According to Saunders et al. (2015), managers appear to be more likely to reflect on certain situations in an interview than to state their own perceptions and experiences on a certain topic in a self-administered questionnaire. Following this rationale, interviews have been chosen as a data collection

technique, as the goal is to obtain qualitative insights from HR experts. This is the case for current and relevant topics, in particular, which coincides with this research project.

Interviews

The conducted interviews were semi-structured, non-standardized and one-on-one interviews (Saunders et al., 2015). This type of primary data collection technique is common in exploratory and qualitative studies as it creates the freedom for the Interviewees to talk unrestricted. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews create the possibility to *"lead the discussion into areas that [were] not previously considered but which are significant for [ones] understanding,"* (Saunders et al., 2015, p.394). Thus, the implemented collection technique allows Interviewees to deviate from the predefined interview guide to a certain degree, by using follow-up questions and modifying the structure of the interview in accordance to the course of conversation. Thereby more detailed information and insights on the relevant topics can be gained, which can improve the quality and reliability of the qualitative data. The length of the interviews varied between 30 and 60 minutes, based on the availability of the Interviewees and extent of their responses. Furthermore, all conversations, except for one, have been video recorded in compliance with the Interviewees. These recordings enabled the creation of non-verbal transcripts, so-called 'clean' transcripts, concentrating on the essential content of the conversation, by excluding unnecessary filler words. While the generated transcripts are not conformable to the original conversation, word for word, they reproduce the detailed conversation without leaving out essential parts (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). For the exception, notes were taken instead. All transcripts are attached in the Appendix 8.4.

Saunders et al., (2015) present the most common data quality issues associated with interviews, namely reliability, bias, cultural differences, transferability, and credibility. As the concerns on reliability, transferability and credibility have been discussed before on p.53, the following focuses on Interviewer, respondent and participation bias, as well as issues associated with cultural differences. Firstly, Interviewer bias occurs, when an Interviewer involves or is influenced by his/her subjective perception when asking questions in the interview, evaluating the collected data (Saunders et al., 2015) or when misinterpreting information (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This risk has been addressed by conducting the interviews with two Interviewers who were assigned with different roles during the course of conversation. While one interviewer actively conducted the interview, the second one took over the role of an observer, listening to the conversation and engaging whenever questions have been left unanswered. Moreover, applying this interview design enabled an interference in case of subjective notice of each other as well as listening attentively and clarifying obscurities, and hence, adjusting for potential Interviewer bias. Secondly, based on Saunders et al. (2015), Interviewee bias, also called response bias, describes Interviewees who might falsely answer questions during an interview in order to represent themselves or the company they work for in a positive light. To address this concern, every respondent was provided with the possibility to be kept

anonymous. Interviewee bias can also occur when respondents misunderstand the questions of the interview. To minimize the risk, important information that seemed unclear has been clarified and questions that appeared difficult to answer have been rephrased. Lastly, participation bias defines e.g. feeling uncomfortable in the chosen interview location and related dishonest and unfrank responses. In order to address this bias, each participant was enabled to choose a suitable location for the interview.

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent restriction to travel and meet in person, all interviews have been conducted via the video call platforms Microsoft Teams and Google Meet. According to Bryman (2015), conducting interviews via a video call platform can come with several limitations, such as potential lack of technological equipment and expertise of the Interviewer or Respondent. Also, having a poor internet connection or operating malfunctions of the consulted program can impair the flow of conversation during the interview. However, due to the intensified experience with online platforms and video calls, it was expected that the participants of this study are well equipped, prepared and familiar with having video calls, which partly eliminates this limitation. The advantages of conducting the interviews digitally were saving time and money and being more flexible in terms of changing the date or time of the interview. Also, it can be expected that Interviewees are more likely to accept the request as it seemed more convenient for them (Bryman, 2015).

Interview Guide

In reference to the FPM approach, the literature review in chapter 2 serves as a foundation for the design of the interview guide. As the goal of this study is not to test or verify the developed framework but to inform and revise it instead, the interview questions are not directly referring to the attributes of the framework. Instead, the main themes that have been established in the theoretical framework, have been used to guide and design the semi-structured interviews. For each of the themes '*Personal & Professional Needs*', '*Physical & Digital Workplace*', '*Ways of Working*' and the overall dimension *'Organizational Culture',* several interview questions have been prepared. The order and importance of these questions varied based on the direction of conversation with the Interviewee. Furthermore, additional questions were added given the flow of the conversation. All questions have been phrased very broad to provide the Interviewees with the flexibility to talk about the topics that came to mind. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 8.2.

Selection of Participants

In order to effectively collect relevant information for answering the research questions, non-probability, purposive sampling has been applied. This sampling technique constitutes a useful technique for demonstrating key themes of a certain topic (Saunders et al., 2015). With this technique, interview participants were chosen and selected,

based on personal judgement. The disadvantage of using this sampling strategy is that participants are not randomly selected, indicating that not every single individual within the target population had the same probability of being chosen for the conducted interviews. Consequently, non-probability sampling is likely to induce sample selection bias and raises concerns about the representativeness to the overall target population (Saunders et al., 2015). However, in order to answer the research questions and fulfill the purpose of this study, specific people with certain job characteristics had to be interviewed. Thereby, randomized sampling did not seem as a suitable technique.

Another disadvantage of purposive sampling is the issue that the results are likely to be biased due to the researchers' internal and intrinsic selection processes and criteria (Saunders et al., 2015). To address this issue, the judgement in the selection process was based on defined criteria. Prior to approaching potential Interviewees, four criteria were identified that a potential Interviewee needed to fulfil in order to be selected. The reason for having these criteria was to eliminate researcher bias and to ensure that the Interviewee would be able to answer the questions. The considered and applied criteria were (1) being employed in a certain type of company, (2) within a specific location, (3) in a certain department and (4) having a particular job title.

Firstly, interview candidates working in companies within the creative industries, consisting of e.g. film, music, gaming, software or animation were searched for. Secondly, these companies had to be located in Europe (with a minimum of one office) in order to be able to compare the ways of working, as these might vary based on geographical areas and geo-political zones. In order to interview someone with knowledge about the employees and their demands, the third criteria was a present HR department. Fourthly, people with job titles such as 'EX Manager', 'HR Manager', 'People Manager' or 'Workplace Manager' were contacted both, over LinkedIn as well as directly via e-mail. Following this approach, 57 potential candidates were contacted, of which ten agreed for an interview, indicating an effective response rate of 17%. An overview of these Interviewees can be seen in Table 7. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), the guideline in qualitative research is to *"sample until you are not getting any new information or are no longer gaining new insights"* (p.266), which the authors call 'theoretical saturation'. After interviewing ten experts, it was concluded that such saturation was achieved, whereby the process of sampling was ended.

Table 7: Overview of Interviewees

INT	Role	Company	Employee Nr.	Industry	Country	Date	Length
1	HR Director	*Anon*	*90*	Music	Sweden	23.03.21	50 min.
2	Workplace Team Lead (EMEA[2])	*Anon*	240	Software	Netherlands	23.03.21	50 min.
3	People and Culture Manager	*Anon*	70	Film / Animation	Denmark	24.03.21	40 min.
4	EX Lead	SAP Barcelona	400	Software	Spain	25.03.21	55 min.
5	Head of Workplace Experience	Riot Games	140	Gaming	Ireland	26.03.21	55 min.
6	Vice President HR	*Anon*	2000	Tech	Sweden	29.03.21	40 min.
7	Director of HR & Communication	SVT	2400	TV / Broadcasting	Sweden	29.03.21	35 min.
8	HR	Elbdudler	70	Creative Agency	Germany	07.04.21	55 min.
9	Vice President People & Organisation Development	*Anon*	*4500*	Music	UK	09.04.21	50 min.
10	EMEA Workplace Manager	*Anon*	*450*	Software	Netherlands	19.04.21	30 min.

3.3.3 Data Analysis

According to Saunders et al. (2015), data that has been collected qualitatively through interviews is likely to be complex, large in volume and non-standardized. Therefore, a challenge for the researcher(s) is to confront and make sense out of the data in a structured way in order to be able to answer the research questions. As this research followed a FPM approach, the collected qualitative data was analyzed in a structured and systematic way, in accordance with the principles of the specific analytical approach.

With a FPM approach, qualitative data is collected in order to be able to identify observed patterns (Bouncken et al., 2021a). According to Bouncken et al. (2021a), these observed patterns emerge *"through continuous iteration and comparison between theoretical patterns and collected data"* (p. 256). Therefore, the aspects of the theoretical framework, that were deductively derived from the existing literature, served as an analytical lens and directed the analysis of the empirical data. This has the advantage of providing a rational and structured way of analyzing the collected primary data (Bouncken et al., 2021a). Consequently, the data analysis enabled a revision and exploration of the initial aspects of the theoretical framework and created room for new and unexpected patterns to emerge from the inductively gathered data, which is an additional advantage of this analytical approach.

According to Saunders et al. (2015), the process of coding the empirical material is an efficient tool to group, structure and categorize units of data with the same meaning. Considering the combination of deductive and

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[2] EMEA: Europe, Middle East and Africa (INT 2, 10)

inductive elements in this study, the sources of the codes that were used to structure and group the data were driven by both theory and data. Thus, the data analysis consists of both deductive and inductive analytical procedures. The 14 attributes plus the dimension of '*Organizational Culture*' in the initial theoretical framework served as theory driven codes to which units of the empirical data were attached. An overview of the codes is shown in Appendix 8.3. By linking units of the empirical data to the predefined codes, the data was grouped based on the theoretical patterns which enabled the process of matching and miss-matching the observed and theoretical patterns (Bouncken et al., 2021a). When analyzing the data and structuring it with codes, new patterns were sought and identified from the data set related to the research questions. When a new pattern was identified in a sentence, this was categorized into a new data driven code with a label, which described the unit of data (Saunders et al., 2015).

In order to eliminate researcher bias and to objectively analyze the data, five interviews were independently coded by each researcher whereupon these were exchanged to analyze each other's coded material. Thus, situations where different interpretation units of data occurred, were detected, which resulted in a thorough review of the coded units of data. When revising the codes in the data material, it became evident that both researchers e.g. detected the same new pattern in the interviews. One labeled the data driven code as 'Individual Preference' and the other 'Preference & Personal Situation'. When discussing the meaning of the code it has been agreed that 'Preference & Personal Situation' was the most suitable label for capturing the meaning of the data. Furthermore, an example of a different interpretation of a unit of data and the related code is the following:

> *People were afraid that the visibility of their work was going to be less because we still have this perception that by just being present in the office, people see you there, they see you working. That's how you're going to get a promotion.* (INT 2, 09:19)
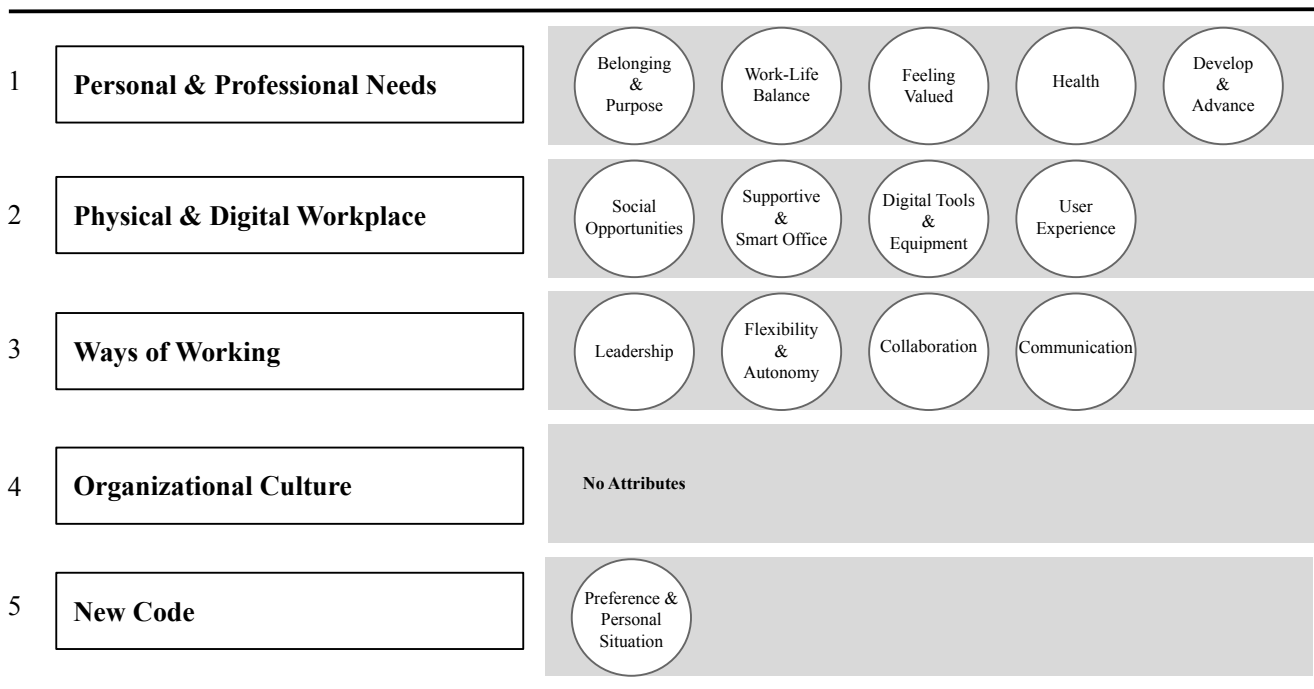
While one coded the whole unit of data as '*Feeling Valued*', the other correctly noted that the sense of not getting a promotion belongs to the code '*Ability to Develop & Advance*'. After discussing and agreeing, the first sentence was coded as '*Feeling Valued*' while the whole unit, including the promotion sentence, was coded as '*Ability to Develop & Advance*'.

The results from the data collection are presented on a code basis, meaning that each code together with the attached units of data from the ten interviews is presented. Later in the Discussion, the theoretical framework with the expected patterns are matched with the observed patterns from the codes. This is done to compare, identify consistencies and in-consistencies and thus revise the initial theoretical framework and the expectations for how the attributes are reconsidered.

4 Results

In this chapter, the findings from the ten semi-structured interviews from Table 7 on p.62 are presented. The findings are structured based on the four themes from our theoretical framework, with their respective attributes, which served as theory driven codes when analyzing the data. As a new pattern was identified in the data analysis, this will be presented at the end of the chapter.

Figure 4: Structure of the Results

1	**Personal & Professional Needs**	Belonging & Purpose · Work-Life Balance · Feeling Valued · Health · Develop & Advance
2	**Physical & Digital Workplace**	Social Opportunities · Supportive & Smart Office · Digital Tools & Equipment · User Experience
3	**Ways of Working**	Leadership · Flexibility & Autonomy · Collaboration · Communication
4	**Organizational Culture**	**No Attributes**
5	**New Code**	Preference & Personal Situation

4.1 Personal & Professional Needs

In this section, the results regarding the theme '*Personal & Professional Needs'* are presented. The findings of each of the six attributes are introduced.

4.1.1 Sense of Belonging & Purpose

Whereas all INTs mention the importance of the sense of belonging, they emphasize how difficult it is to achieve in a Remote Working context. As INT 10 points out, having a positive EX when working remotely is *"not only about being technically connected, you need to feel connected as well"* (Section 12). In order to create the sense

of connectedness, INTs give several examples of activities they created digitally, such as virtual coffee breaks (INT 3,8,9) or escape games (INT 3) in order to maintain the level of unification and connectivity among employees while working remotely. However, INT 4 and 8 state that they realized that the moments in between work and meetings matter the most, as employees build emotional connections and emphasize with each other. The fact that social interactions only take place in appointed meetings or at agreed times, instead of having spontaneous interactions in the office, has made the sense of belonging and identification with each other harder to achieve (INT 8).

A few INTs indicate that employees seem to still feel a sense of belonging to their immediate manager and teams in a Remote Work setting, but a smaller sense of belonging to the overall organization (INT 6, 9). INT 6 and 9 believe that the office helps to create the sense of connection to the organization. More precisely, employees are able to see the bigger picture and feel the sense of togetherness when interacting with people they do not frequently work with (INT 6, 9). INT 1 also points out that employees *"miss the feeling of being part of a bigger thing, which you don't feel when you're at home"* (12:23), which highlights the difficulties of feeling connected to the overall organization.

Furthermore, Interviewee 6 emphasizes the importance of having a sense of purpose to build and maintain a positive EX: *"If you don't have a purpose, you won't be invested into what you are doing. It will just be a job"* (07:37). INT 6 shares that they created virtual workshops during Remote Work to remind employees of 'why' they joined the organization in order to reconnect employees with the company's mission statement and values. Furthermore, INT 4 states that the employer needs to be more conscious and active with respect to internal communication and information sharing on company updates so that employees do not lose their overview.

> *Even if there is no change, you have to communicate that there is no change. Before […] everyone is in the same room feeling that nothing is changing. Now you have to constantly give updates, even if nothing has changed.* (INT 4, 39:30)

Communication is stated to be a vital channel through which a sense of belonging and purpose can be retained and strengthened within a remote work setting as it is important for employees to feel up to date and understand current organizational performances, progress and activities (INT 4). This becomes more difficult when working remotely, as it is not possible to get small and quick updates over the shoulder (INT 4). In addition, INT 3 points out that they increased the number of companywide meetings and weekly team meetings to give an overview on current happenings in order to prevent employees from feeling lost.

4.1.2 Work-Life Balance

With respect to the work-life balance in a Remote Work context, the results from the conducted interviews seem to be contradictory. INT 9 points out that *"sometimes it has been a positive impact on work life balance. Sometimes there's been a negative impact on work life balance"* (27:56). In addition, the INTs indicate that some employees appear to feel less distracted when working from home (INT 3, 8), while other employees feel more distracted at home (INT 2, 8).

Some employees seem to have benefited from working from home, as they have experienced more freedom and control with respect to time-management, allowing them to plan and schedule their professional and private lives more flexible (INT 1, 5, 6). INT 1 gives an example that employees with small kids have had a positive experience when working from home, as they do not feel guilty about leaving the office to pick up their children from daycare. At the same time, INT 4 points out that employees with small kids at home have often suffered from distractions and an overload of interactions while working.

While Remote Work entails some freedom in allocating the individual time, such freedom also requires that employees are able to structure their day themselves and to be disciplined and conscious with their time (INT 2, 6).

> *You can see that the ones that are successful [...] have found their rhythm and they are able to start to work, they are able to close their work, they are able to find a way of setting structure for themselves. And the ones that are struggling [...] haven't successfully done so yet. So they have a hard time starting the day, they never really turn off in the evening so they continue to do work in their free time. Then they are feeling exhausted.* (INT 6, 23:04)

An issue that several INTs share is that employees sometimes experience difficulties in keeping a normal work-day rhythm and in stopping the working day, as they feel that they are connected to their work all the time at home (INT 1, 6, 7). Oftentimes, working from home leads to an increase in working hours, as employees tend to start the day earlier and end it later (INT 2, 5, 7). In one of the interviewed companies, employees were asked not to schedule calls or meetings after 6 p.m. due to the difficulties for employees to distance themselves from work (INT 5). As employees do not leave the office, which otherwise marks the end of the work day for many (INT 8), putting up boundaries between work and personal life appears to be more difficult in a Remote Work setting (INT 2, 6, 8, 9). When working remotely, some employees close their laptop at the kitchen table and often stay in the same room, which makes it harder to rest their mind and distance themselves from work (INT 5, 8). As a result, work

and personal life gets more blended in a Remote Work (INT 2, 8).

The freedom in structuring the day requires employees to be disciplined and conscious with their time and breaks (INT 2). As not everyone is able to do that themselves, employers need to support employees with setting up structures in order to regulate their time at work (INT 6, 7). Lastly, INT 1 points out that it is often difficult for employees to be disciplined and work the appropriate amount of hours. *"People that usually don't do their office hours, they don't do it from the home office either. They do less hours from home. And people that really do their office hours, they are doing more office hours at home."* (INT 1, 09:18)

4.1.3 Feeling Valued

Employees' feeling of being valued constitutes another mentioned factor that influences the EX as several INTs raise the issue of employees perceiving that they are not seen or recognized in a Remote Work setting (INT 2, 7, 8, 9). INT 2 states that some employees have been afraid: *"I'm not going to be in the office. You're not going to see me working as hard as I do. The hard work that I put on is gone unseen"* (09:19). This highlights that some employees fear that they are not acknowledged or recognized for their performance. In addition, INT 7 argues that it is harder to acknowledge employees' good work in the digital workplace: *"That is not the best place to do that. I think celebrating things when you've done something really good, [...] it's so much better to celebrate in real life"* (INT 7, 11:32).

Another issue raised by INT 2 is creating equal conditions for employees working in and out of the office. By stating that *"the biggest question is how we democratize the EX"* (42:43), INT 2 highlights the problematic situation of creating equal EX for all employees, regardless their working location. Furthermore, INT 2 several important questions they need to addressed in order to have a 'democratic' approach to EX:

> *How do you translate that to the remote environment?[...] How do we make sure that [remote workers] get the sense that they're not missing out on things?[...] How do we make sure that they feel that they belong, that their sense of belonging is not a lot less because they don't belong in an office?* (INT 2, 42:43)

While concerns are raised about creating equal EXs (INT 2), INT 6 and 7 state that people who were working remotely already before the pandemic feel more included now that everyone in the organization is working remotely. Especially since everyone is digitally present in the meetings.

[As a remote worker] you're the one who always dials into the meeting, but everyone else is sitting in a conference room. It's always difficult to contribute on the same terms. You want to say something, you lean in and you […] interrupt the flow of the meeting. Then you start to be quiet instead because you don't want to interrupt the others. So then you're just listening and then you're disconnecting and disengaging because you are not participating in the same way. Now everyone is dialing in and everyone is contributing in the same way. Everyone has the same opportunities. (INT 6, 12:04)

The realization that everyone is working on equal terms, i.e. everyone is working from home, helps when planning for post-pandemic times (INT 6, 7, 9). The agenda forward is to harmonize the hybrid meetings and teams, so that everyone is able to contribute in the same way and feel as if they have a voice (INT 6, 7). When meetings consist of both on and off-site employees, the team dynamic is more challenging to facilitate and manage (INT 9).

When everybody is in the room together - fine. When everybody is virtual - fine. But when it is a mix, it is really hard to make sure everyone has an equal voice, that you've got a nice team dynamic, that there's some great discussion. It's more clumsy and not as smooth because people are in different places and we […] need to figure out how we're going to manage that. (INT 9, 27:56)

The harm on the team dynamics and team discussions is not only impacting the employees working away from the office, but the whole team and their individual EX (INT 9). As a solution, INT 6 mentions the idea that *"everyone should dial in if someone is digitally present"* (14:19), as this might reduce friction and make hybrid meetings more equal. However, INT 9 states that some people are not as comfortable expressing themselves on a video call. In addition, it can be even *"harder to speak up in a video when you're a quieter person"* (INT 8, 19:13). INT 7 also states to be *"more concerned about the people who kind of disappear because they are not the ones who are taking space in the big discussions"* (INT 7, 19:08). This highlights that a Remote Work setting can have a negative impact on the employees' active participation in meetings, especially for introverted workers (Interviewee 7, 8, 9).

4.1.4 Health

Regarding employee health in a Remote Work setting, the INTs almost exclusively mention negative impacts on health. The only positive impact that is raised in an interview is that employees seem to go out for walks on their breaks more often, when working from home (INT 1).

Several INTs mention that the suffering from feeling lonely or isolated constitutes a major health issue in a Remote Work context. (INT 1, 2, 4, 6). To address this concern, INTs state that their companies tried to replicate the social life digitally (INT 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8). Furthermore, INT 1 believes that the Remote Working situation has negatively impacted employees' general health, as they have identified an increased number in sick-leaves the past year of working from home (INT 1). However, INT 6 states that these mental health issues might be the effect of the strain on mental health that is elicited by the current Covid-19 pandemic, rather than of employees working from home. Nevertheless, employers provide employees with extra coaching (INT 2), counselling (INT 9), yoga sessions (INT 3, 5), wellness programs (INT 2, 9), online therapy, and psychological support (INT 1, 8) in order to address and prevent potential mental health issues while working away from the office.

Another health issue mentioned in relation to the Remote Work context is the feeling of being overloaded by the digital interactions (INT 5, 7, 9). INT 9 states that sitting in front of a screen the whole day without moving is exhausting and makes people exhausted. INT 5 points out that they have created a non-meeting day each month in order to remove employees' feeling of being overloaded by digital meetings and calls. INT 7 describes that when employees constantly have their eyes on the screen, it is more difficult for them to keep a clear head throughout the day (INT 7). Furthermore, INT 2 and 7 state that some employees are not taking enough breaks when working from home. Those small natural breaks in the office, when employees go for coffee or lunch with colleagues, do not occur when working from home (INT 2). Therefore, INT 2 states that employees are not only working longer days, but are also *"not spending enough time recharging and refreshing themselves"* (23.55).

Next to mental health, employees' physical health is also addressed in the interviews, as the general home office often does not provide employees with an ergonomically sound workstation, which is important for employees' physical health (INT 1, 2, 3 10).

> *If you're living in a small apartment, [...] you work from the dining table or from the couch or from your bed. It's nice for maybe an hour, but it's not nice for a year. So I have had a lot of back complaints and we have sent home all equipment to everybody so that they will have their normal equipment at home.* (INT 1, 12:23)

Overall, half of the respondents indicate that they provided their employees with appropriate and ergonometric equipment when working from home, e.g. standing desks, chairs ad laptop-stands, in order to prevent and counteract physical health issues (INT 2, 3, 4, 9 10). Sending home equipment serves as a directed effort in *"trying to make sure that employees have the same situation in their homes than what they had in the office"* (INT 3,

05:20). In addition, it is difficult for the employer to assess the employees' home work station in terms of potential risks for their health (INT 3, 7). However, Interviewee 3 and 7 share that they offered a video assessment, where an expert virtually evaluated employees' needs and could ensure that they have an appropriate work environment.

A general issue regarding health in a Remote Work setting is the fact that it is harder for managers to notice if someone is not feeling well (INT 1, 8), if someone is stressed, or has developed some sort of addiction (INT 6, 7). In a Remote Work setting, those signals are harder to identify through the digital communication tools (INT 1, 8). Therefore, in a Remote Work context, managers should increase check-ins (INT 1), be more sensitive to signals and intensify their communication efforts (INT 8).

4.1.5 Ability to Develop & Advance

To address employees' desire to learn and grow in the Remote Work setting, several INTs mention that they moved to virtual training and increased the use of digital learning tools over the last year (INT 1, 4, 6). This has been a directed effort to not hinder employees' professional development, which otherwise can impact the EX negatively (INT 6). However, there are concerns that some situations like development talks, salary reviews (INT 1) and some learning and teaching situations that require interpersonal interactions, are not suitable for a digital set up (INT 1, 4).

> *We've had to move away from implicit peer learning. So just to sit next to the person next to you and see what they are doing. Through talking, you figure some things out. That gets so much harder. So you have to be more proactive as an employee, but also as an employer and pushing for training and learning opportunities.* (INT 4, 18:40)

Learning and training in a Remote Work setting has been especially hard for young and junior employees, who normally get trained in the office by someone more experienced (INT 1, 4). This is referred to as 'peer learning' by INT 4. In addition, INT 6 mentions that employees, who are on an early stage of their career, can also suffer from a negative impact on their career when everyone is working from home.

> *Early in your career [...] you depend on networking and collaboration. That's a way for you to grow your career and to show your presence and show your impact. That's more difficult because all meetings are deliberate. While in an office they're not, they happen randomly.* (INT 6, 24:02)

Employees working away from the office can develop a fear that managers will not recognize and see their hard work when they are not physically present in the office (INT 2, 9). Also they fear that their chances of getting a promotion is reduced as a result of being less visible for their managers *"compared to colleagues who spend more time in the office"* (INT 9, 33:28). Thus, employees can feel that their chances of advancing is reduced if their face-to-face time with managers is less (INT 2, 9)

> *People were afraid that the visibility of their work was going to be less because we still have this perception that by just being present in the office, people see you there, they see you working. That's how you're going to get a promotion.* (INT 2, 09:19)

In addition, INT 4 raises another concern regarding career opportunities in the Remote Work setting. When working from home, there is an imbalance between those who work even more and those who cannot because they might be distracted by small kids at home (INT 4). INT 4 mentions that employees who work more hours should not be entitled to a bigger bonus or more development opportunities compared to the other group. According to INT 4, this could be especially discriminating towards the female population as they are in general more involved with childcare at home and might thereby not be able to work the same amount of hours. Therefore, in a Remote Work setting, managers *"really have to consider the environment apart from the job when it comes to career decisions and these kinds of things for their employees"* (INT 4, 18:40).

4.2 Physical & Digital Workplace

The following section summarizes the data about the theme '*Physical & Digital Workplace*'. The respective findings for each of the five attributes are presented separately.

4.2.1 Social Opportunities

Social interactions and emotional connections between people is, according to INT 2, 4, 5 8 and 10 the most challenging aspect when it comes to creating a positive EX in a Remote Work setting. INTs claim that building a social connection and relationship between colleagues is difficult when not physically being together, for new employees in particular (INT 2, 4, 10). Common social locations and encounters in the office, such as meeting at the coffee machine, taking lunch breaks together (INT 1, 2, 3, 7), having team-building activities or Friday bars are absent when working remotely (INT 2, 3, 5, 7). Consequently, unexpected conversations, personal chats and mingling are lacking (INT 2, 3, 4, 5, 10) and employees miss the human interaction with each other (INT 3, 5, 6, 8).

It becomes evident that it seems hard to replicate these social encounters in a Remote Work context, as they occur spontaneously and unplanned (INT 2) and are thus difficult to fit into a video call agenda (INT 2, 8). Accordingly, organizations create and organize continuous chat programs like 'Slack' (INT 1) or digital spaces such as 'Zoom' for employees to meet and connect (INT 2). In order to build a community and network, companies also try to randomly connect employees across different departments with each other (INT 3, 4, 6, 8) and support new employees by bringing them together with other new recruits (INT 3, 4).

Next to work related conversations, companies also try to support personal and non-work related interactions by including them as part of their meetings (INT 6) and by implementing virtual coffee breaks (INT 3,8,9). Furthermore, general social activities are replicated through video platforms in order to maintain a positive EX. Examples of these activities are music quizzes (INT 1), lunch roulettes (INT 8), movie nights, escape games (INT 3), creative workshops (INT 6) or happy hours, cooking classes (INT 2, 10). "*What we try to do is to create and curate the space where people can meet each other, where they can make connections and where they can thrive*" (INT 2, 20:13).

INTs refer to the physical office within a Remote Work setting as a 'Social Hub' (INT 2) that is used for people to come together, have meetings, collaborate (INT 2, 5, 9), network, learn, be creative (INT 10) and create a sense of community (INT 6). INT 1 and 7 furthermore claim that most of the employees are longing to come into the office. The physical space thus fulfils the need for social interaction (INT 7, 10) in order to have a positive EX.

4.2.2 Supportive & Smart Office

According to INT 2, EX seems to be positively influenced when employees are provided with a smart and diverse office that supports their health and encourages different ways of working by offering multiple types of spaces.

According to INT 1, 2, 3 and 5, different teams work in different ways. On the one hand, employees of certain departments and with certain activities benefit from having infrequent but extreme team-work sessions, while others benefit from having spontaneous but regular knowledge exchange when sitting next to each other in the office (INT 2). INT 3 mentions that during the extreme Remote Working situation as a result of Covid-19, it became evident that certain activities cannot be executed remotely, as they require special hardware or equipment and are thus tied to the physical office space (INT 1, 3, 5). These are for example activities related to music production, reception (INT 1), facility management (INT 5) or film production (INT 3, 7). All aspects need to be

accommodated by an office that provides a diversity of options for different work routines to create a positive EX with people working remotely and only using the office space for their respective tasks (INT 2).

In this context, the purpose of the office in a Remote Work Setting is to support collaborative activities, offer spaces to focus (INT 2), support networking and learning (INT 4), to have playful and fun elements (INT 3), provide space for companywide meetings or team events (INT 5) and to support creative activities (INT 9). REX is also positively influenced when conference rooms are equipped with technical devices (INT 1, 7), which enables seamless communication between people within and outside of the office *"so they feel like they are in the room"* together (INT 1, 46:31). According to INT 10, the office of the future will not be the same - *"it was a place you had to be in, now it's a place you should want to be at and come to"* (INT 10, Section 34). Also INT 5 and 9 state that the physical space is being rethought and reimagined when working remotely. Concepts, such as 'hot-desking', which describes the situation when multiple employees use the same workplace at different times, are considered in order to use the office intentionally and thereby create a positive EX in a Remote Work context (INT 9).

4.2.3 Provided with Digital Tools & Equipment

In order to be able to work together when being in a Remote Work setting and thus create a positive EX, companies need to implement the right digital tools and technical equipment (INT 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10). Firstly, technical equipment like laptops (INT 1, 5, 8, 10), audio systems (INT 1, 2) as well as monitors (INT 2, 7, 10), Internet boosters and web-cams (INT 5) are provided to the employees to enable employees to conduct their work. This is crucial because *"once you have the tools, you can actually [...] organize yourself and work as normally as possible"* (INT 2, 06:57).

Secondly, working independently and having access to the right digital collaboration and communication tools to share information with co-workers is also said to be important when creating a positive REX (INT 2). Thereby, meetings were moved to the video platforms 'Zoom' (INT 1, 2, 3, 10) or 'Google Meet' (INT 3, 8) and tools such as 'Slack' (INT 1, 2, 5, 9), 'Confluence', 'Jira' (INT 2), 'Notion', 'Figma' (INT 3), 'Monday' (INT 1), 'Mentimeter' (INT 9) or 'Mural' (INT 4,9) are used for collaborating with each other. Collaborative activities like brainstorming or sharing ideas are executed in virtual meetings (INT 3) or via instant messaging (INT 6), when working remotely.

However, it is also mentioned that such meetings are difficult and limited compared to meeting face-to-face (INT 3). Furthermore, it seems inconvenient for employees if the employer has not clarified which digital tools to use and in which situations they should be used (INT 6).

> *We all have to harmonize our standards for what tools to use and when. Because that will allow people to own their own time to a larger extent. [...] Standardizing, harmonizing, killing your darlings, having few tools and clarifying when to use them and how to use them. I think that's going to help in the organization. It makes it less stressful, and it is going to remove a lot of friction.* (INT 6, 15:34)

As employees have individual preferences regarding digital tools, colleagues might constantly send each other invitations to different programs (INT 6). Thus, employees repeatedly have to learn how to use the tools and programs, download them to their devices, and will perhaps also make mistakes while using them (INT 6). According to INT 6, this is a time consuming process for employees and can cause frictions and irritation, and hence, is likely to have a negative effect on REX.

4.2.4 User Experience

During the interviews, none of the INTs talked about the attribute 'User Experience'. The interview questions did not address each attribute in specific, but were kept broad instead in order to effectively assess whether the identified theoretical attributes of Remote Employee Experience are reflected in practice and to give room for new and unexpected insights. Thus, when asking about the general theme *Physical & Digital Workplace*, no INT touched upon the topic of User Experience themselves. Consequently, no results can be presented here.

4.3 Ways of Working

The following section will present the results related to the theme '*Ways of Working*'. The four attributes will be separately discussed.

4.3.1 Leadership

In order to create a positive EX in a Remote Work setting, leaders seem to play an important role (INT 2, 4, 6, 8). When being physically apart and therefore not able to directly observe progress of employees, leaders assess the delivered results rather than the process and amount of working days or hours (INT 2, 6, 8). In order to do this, leaders need to trust their employees instead of implementing control mechanisms (INT 4, 7, 8). According to INT

6, leaders should *"trust [their employees] and set the direction for them and they will do great. But if you control them and if you delegate tasks, they will be disengaged and illoyal."* (06:18).

General leadership functions such as feedback (Interviewee 2, 9), clear and regular communication (INT 2, 4, 10) and coaching (INT 7, 8) have also been mentioned as equally important in order to create a positive EX in a Remote Work setting. In terms of e.g. communication, it has been stated that weekly updates (INT 2), clear goal setting, sharing the vision of the company (INT 7) and generally a more conscious and slightly exaggerated communication (INT 4) is important in a Remote Work context. Regarding coaching, INT 7, 8 and 9 state that keeping an eye on employees who are not in the office and paying attention to their psychological health, questioning employees who become quieter and disappear in virtual calls and checking on their general satisfaction becomes crucial.

The support function of leaders is said to also have a positive impact on EX in a Remote Work setting (INT 1, 4, 6, 9). For remote employees, who struggle with keeping a work-life balance, leaders should show support and understanding for individual conditions (INT 6, 7, 9) and help them to work smarter, as many employees at home work more hours than in the office, but ineffectively. *"So you have to be very much a coach as a manager and help them to work smarter, not harder."* (INT 4, 31:43). Furthermore, leaders are responsible to treat every employee equally in a Remote Work setting (INT 2, 6). Therefore, leaders have to make sure that every participant in the meeting has the same chances to contribute to the conversation (INT 3, 6, 9). Furthermore, remote employees should not miss out on benefits within the office regarding their well-being, whereby leaders need to adopt a democratic approach when offering opportunities for all employees (INT 2).

4.3.2 Flexibility & Autonomy

According to INT 1, 2, 6 and 10, employees can benefit from being free and flexible in how they conduct their work and balance this with their private life. When working remotely and collaborating with employees within different time zones, flexibility is an important aspect in order to create a positive EX (INT 2, 6).

> *We say that you are the most successful if you work where you are most comfortable. Is that at home, or in an office, or something in between? Is it in a different country or city? All that drives this conversation with the Employee Experience, which then drives an emphasis on the individual. [...] And if you as an employer can't provide for personalized Employee Experiences to people, then you will have a talent and attraction problem.* (INT 6, 27:18).

With flexibility, employees are able to work from any location, go for long walks in the lunch break and work longer in the evening instead (INT 1), schedule work around their hobbies (INT 9) or match it with their family life (INT 8). However, the INT 2 also states that this depends on the personal preferences of each employee, as it requires discipline as well. By independently choosing work routines, employees are able to be self-sufficient and self-managed (INT 2, 7). This gives them autonomy (INT 2), freedom and control of their life (INT 6), which has been mentioned as an important aspect when creating a positive REX (INT 2, 3, 6), because *"if you don't have autonomy, you won't have engagement."* (INT 6, 07:37)*.

However, other people can be dependent on being part of a team (INT 7) or in need of peer-learning (INT 4), whereby companies need to provide flexibility and autonomy on the one hand and ensure that coworkers are not negatively impacted by the Remote Work routines of someone on the other hand (INT 8). For this, organized preparation and well-defined rules are needed (INT 8) and companies need to *"find a structure for how we meet each other and how we collaborate. When should it be in real life? When should it be digitally?"* (INT 7, 28:39). According to INT 9, companies need to make logistical considerations and decisions about how many days employees are able to work remotely and decide on fixed days for the workforce to come to the office.

> *There is a danger that if we leave it down to everyone to decide themselves, lots of the questions are going to be when are you next in the office? And it's going to be lots of logistical considerations. […] I do think people will want to avoid having too many meetings where some people are in the office and some people are on a video call or dialing in*. (INT 9, 27:56)

Mentioned are e.g. working models where people might spend two or three days working remotely and two or three days working from the office (INT 9). Another example is INT 1 who states that a future working model could involve six to eight days per month, during which employees can work remotely. Others state that employees should work in the office a minimum of one day (INT 7) or four days a week (INT 4).

Choosing the right working model in terms of flexibility is also stated to be an important factor for the image of a company in the future (INT 9).

> *I do think that from a talent point of view, the working models that companies adopt will be a real differentiator in either attracting or retaining talent. So when you're recruiting people, people obviously ask about salary and flexibility and benefits and all of that. I think a big question going forward is that*

people will want to know what is your working model? How flexible is your working model? And that will be a key decision maker as to who people decide to work for. (INT 9, 38:12)

Moreover, INT 8 emphasizes that employees should be involved in the decision making process when defining and implementing such rules and regulations. Following such an inclusive approach *"makes it easier because if you involve people in the decisions, I believe it will develop a better result. And they are also happier because the acceptance is also simply higher because they have made the decision"* (INT 8, 43:51).

4.3.3 Collaboration

According to INT 2, 3 and 5, one of the hardest aspects to transfer from the office into the digital sphere are collaborative activities, which are crucial for an employee to have a positive experience when working remotely. Creative people in particular are more likely to thrive when being together in one room with their co-workers during activities like brain-storming, discussions (INT 1, 3, 9) or peer-learning and peer-reviewing (INT 5).

INTs acknowledge that collaboration in the virtual office does not work in the same way than in the physical office (INT 4, 6, 8). Regarding this topic, INT 6 states that *"the most common trap that organizations fall into, [or] the most common pitfall is that you try to translate the office setup to a virtual setting"* (18:31). Such an approach is likely to fail as the usual interactions and situations for collaboration that take place in the office do not happen in the same way in the digital workplace (INT 6). INT 4 argues that *"you have to change your behavior a little [in the digital workplace], otherwise you miss out"* (INT 4, 23:44). Mentioned examples of what employees miss out on when working away from the office, are knowledge sharing (INT 7, 9), peer-learning (INT 2, 4, 5, 7), unexpected conversations and encounters (INT 2, 3, 4, 10), and related spontaneous agreements (INT 4, 8). Also, a certain level of creativity seems harder to achieve when working virtually (INT 1, 6, 8, 9), and innovation (INT 6) and development can get disrupted when not having small and spontaneous interactions between employees (INT 6, 7). Additionally, it is mentioned that it becomes more difficult for employees to sense emotions and see the body language of co-workers and for example notice if they are mad or stressed (INT 1, 3, 5). Lastly, digital meetings also lack different means of working together.

[In a meeting room] you'd have whiteboards and Post-It notes [...] and everyone's generating lots of ideas and you have a great energy in the room and everyone's bouncing off each other and building upon ideas that others are talking about. (INT 9, 19:38)

As the virtual office differs substantially from the physical workplace, new routines and expectations need to be implemented when collaborating remotely (INT 7). Examples of work aspects that are in need of reconsideration with new routines are virtual meeting structures (INT 6, 7) tools for collaboration (INT 2) and work behaviors (INT 6). Companies have started to implement e.g. more department meetings with small-talk breaks to encourage interactivity within the team and thus counteract the loss of the sense of belonging (INT 4). Furthermore, several collaboration tools, such as Mural, Mind Mapping (INT 9), Notion, Figma (INT 3) or Monday (INT 1) are used to enable remote employees to collaborate with each other and thus create a positive REX. However, INT 8 states that it is not enough to provide employees with these collaboration tools and then believe everyone can or will continue to work as usual. Also INT 6 claims that remote employees need to *"learn to work more asynchronously. [They] can't depend on instant interaction or instant meetings. [They] have to collaborate differently"* (20:59) and suggests e.g. that the way of executing and documenting meetings has to change and adapt to a Remote Work setting.

> *You need to be better at documenting the outcomes of the meeting so people can follow up. Once you start to have more time zones, you also need to understand that you may not even be able to have a meeting. People won't be awake at the same time. They don't have the same working hours and they're not overlapping. So you need to document your decisions.* (INT 6, 14:19)

Such aspects have to be reconsidered and adjusted to the remote work context when *"stabilizing this way of working in the future"* (INT 7, 15:21) to ensure that employees can collaborate just as efficiently and smoothly in a remote setting.

4.3.4 Communication

Interviewee 1 and 2 state that communication constitutes an important driver for creating and maintaining a positive REX. However, in a remote work setting, it appears to be more difficult to achieve and ensure an efficient flow of communication between co-workers within the organization. Miscommunication, misunderstandings and a related 'blame-game' are problems that seem to appear more often with employees working remotely (INT 1). Another issue is the lack of body language when meeting virtually (INT 5,7).

> *When you're presenting [...] to a group in front of you, [...] you can see their immediate reactions. And suddenly you're looking at photographs on a Zoom screen and everyone is on mute because they're being respectful and they want to let you talk.* (INT 5, 00:47)

Furthermore, it is mentioned that communication with remote employees needs to be planned and cannot happen spontaneously, which leads to a lack of impromptu meetings and a lack of unplanned one-on-one conversations (INT 2). Instead, colleagues have to schedule meetings with each other via communication platforms (INT 2). Consequently, communication within a Remote Work setting has to be sustained by e.g. the frequent use of communication channels (INT 3,5,8), or by implementing daily standup meetings (INT 5). *"You learn how to communicate better because you need that or you need to be able to communicate faster and quicker, more efficiently, whether that be by writing or picking up the phone and giving a call"* (INT 3, 29:48).

Having a transparent and effective communication from leaders to employees can also positively impact REX (INT 2, 5, 7, 10), which can involve e.g. weekly updates in the form of messages or videos (INT 2). With employees working remotely, every change should be communicated, even if no change has happened so everyone feels updated (INT 4). Also, regularly communicating the values of a company, can help to maintain the organizational culture and a resulting feeling of belongingness to the company (INT 2).

4.4 Organizational Culture

According to INT 4, the organizational culture "*is what makes the EX*" (41:59) and also INT 2, defines the organizational culture as a *"connective tissue"* (33:23) of a company. While INT 6 does not believe that the organizational culture is influenced when working remotely, others say that the organizational culture is impacted negatively in a Remote Work context (INT 1, 5, 8, 9, 10).

INT 8 worries that employees might lose their identification with the organizational culture when working remotely. In order to counteract such a loss of connection to the company, INT 6 argues that implementing virtual culture workshops shows a potential *"for people to reconnect to who we are and why they chose to come here"* (09:13). In addition, INT 8 raises that the culture of the organization is showcased in how they value and take care of their employees' health.

INT 5 mentions that they e.g. implement 3D tours through the office for remote workers or new recruits in order for them to virtually see what working in the company is like (INT 5). INT 9 states that the physical office essentially represents the company's culture and thereby elicits an experience that remotely working employees miss out on. INT 10 also emphasizes the importance of the physical office to internalize and live the organizational culture in terms of social connections when being onboarded, which is more difficult in a Remote Work context. INTs furthermore mention efforts to showcase their organizational culture digitally. INT 9 shares the example of

introducing employee groups organizing spotlight sessions for different purposes with the goal to share the organizational value of diversity and inclusion.

Furthermore, new ways of collaborating virtually are said to impact the culture of the company negatively to a certain extent (INT 8). Also INT 1 states that employees tend to behave differently and not according to the company's values when working digitally in a remote setting compared to how they interact with coworkers in person. Furthermore, INT 10 points out that communication is an important instrument to express and share the company's culture, which however is more difficult in a Remote Work setting. Lastly, when establishing a Remote Work setting, the organizational culture has to embrace the values of trust and transparency, as these are crucial aspects that need to be internalized by leaders to ensure a positive REX (INT 4).

4.5 New Code - Preference & Personal Situation

During the interviews it became evident that the EX is both positively and negatively impacted by working remotely, depending on the individual's preference and situation (INT 1, 2, 3, 4, 8), which thus became a new code for this analysis. While some employees prefer working remotely, others detest it and everything in between (INT 1). *"The biggest learning is that EX is also a very personal topic. And in the end, you have to accept that your employees are predominantly human"* (INT 4, 49:09).

On the one hand, parents with young children highly benefit from working remotely, as they are able to adjust their work schedule to their private lives, e.g. taking breaks from work for taking care of their children and continuing working afterwards (INT 1, 8). On the other hand, individuals with no family and a small personal network can be in need of social connection in the office (INT 1, 4, 6). Furthermore, employees living in small apartments are more likely to be negatively impacted by working remotely, due to space limitations, while employees with a large and private office at home might welcome the opportunity (INT 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10). A difference in living situation also includes the place of residence of commuters, who need to travel to get to work and thus might be positively impacted by working remotely as they save travel time and costs (INT 8).

Another distinction has been made regarding age differences (INT 1, 4, 6, 10). While younger people without families are longing for social interactions in the office (INT 1, 2, 4, 6), older employees with a more established social environment do not necessarily have that need (INT 2, 4). INT 7 furthermore states that older people who live alone can be negatively impacted when working remotely as they miss out on social contact in the office. The impact on REX thus also depends on the generation, as the "*Generation Baby Boomers for example, do not bother*

to come to the office. [They] want to work at home, [and] have [a] balance. The generation Z and millennials, [they are] all dying to come back" (INT 10, Section 30).

The need for socialization also differs from individual to individual, as some want to work in the office for the social and collaborative aspect, while others, e.g. more introverted individuals (INT 2), enjoy spending time by themselves to focus (INT 2, 5, 10). New hires, in particular, are in need of connecting with their co-workers (INT 6, 10), building their career and professional network (INT 6) and getting to know the culture of the company (INT 10).Other personal preferences can also be based on a difference in profession, as different activities have different routines and are more or less suitable to be executed remotely (INT 7). *"Work is individual, and [...] it isn't meant to be in the same shape for everyone. Maybe that's something we need to be able to adjust to, in order to be an attractive company in the future"* (INT 1, 44:10).

5 Discussion

The following chapter discusses the from interviews derived data and compares them with theory in order to explore (*RQ:1*) what constitutes EX in a Remote Work context and (*RQ:2*) how the attributes are reconsidered. In the following, each attribute from the initially created REX Framework is discussed separately, as well as '*Organizational Culture*' and the newly founded attribute. In line with the FPM approach, each before justified expectations and reconsiderations (expected patterns) are matched with the data derived from interviews (observed patterns).

Figure 5: Structure of the Discussion
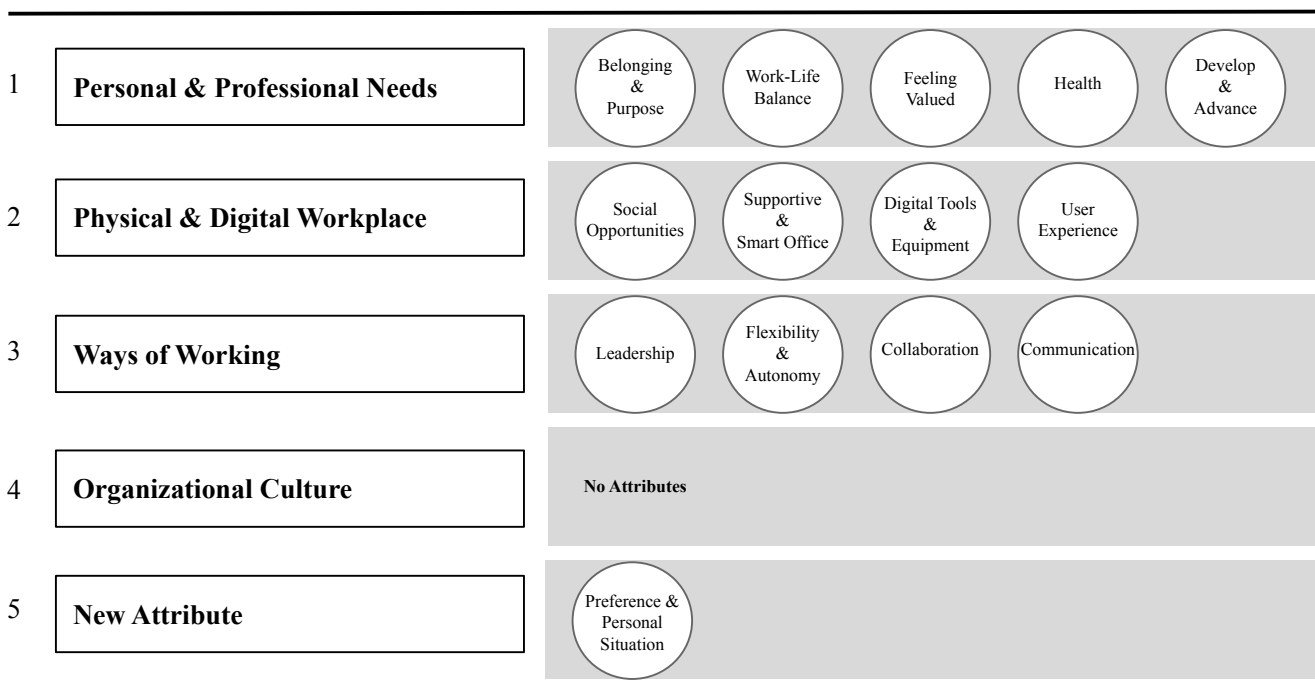
5.1 Personal & Professional Needs

In this section, the results from the six attributes of '*Personal & Professional Needs*' are discussed. The purpose is to discuss the findings in order to understand if our expected patterns derived from theory are consistent and match the observed patterns from the interviews. After the five attributes have been discussed, a final section of the theme will show how the (mis)matches inform and revise our initial framework for REX.

5.1.1 Sense of Belonging & Purpose

Based on theory, we expected that *'Sense of Belonging & Purpose'* stays an important aspect of REX. Furthermore, we expected both a) that employees' sense of belonging can be more difficult to achieve due to being physically parted from colleagues, and b) that employees' sense of purpose can be more difficult to achieve due to less regular communication.

The results of this study support that employees' sense of belonging is important in order to create a positive REX. All ten INTs raised that the sense of belonging and connectedness is difficult to create when employees are physically apart from each other. This coincides with Alexander et al. (2020), who state that social ties created in the office are important for the feeling of belonging. The fact that all INTs mentioned several ways to maintain the feeling of unification by creating social events digitally, shows how important social ties and the feeling of belongingness seem to be for the EX. At the same time, the results suggest that the digital events are not enough for recreating such feeling, as these social interactions are always planned (INT 4, 8). Therefore, the results clarify that the spontaneous, unplanned meetings and interactions that take place in the office are really important for the sense of belonging and connectedness. This finding is supported by Alexander et al. (2020), who argue that spontaneous coffee breaks, lunches and impulsive encounters are the situations, in which social ties are created the most. As these interactions seem not to be possible to recreate digitally, it can hurt employees' sense of belonging as they are not able to connect with each other in the same way. Thereby, our expected pattern matches the observed pattern (Figure 6).

One unanticipated finding regarding employees' sense of belonging is that employees' connectedness to their immediate team seems to have stayed better than the feeling of connectedness to the overall organization when working away from the office (INT 1, 6, 9). As mentioned in literature, less social interactions can result in a missed feeling of belongingness to the organization as well as to colleagues (Boell et al, 2016; Donnelly & Johns, 2021). However, the authors do not state that the sense of belonging to the organization gets more lost when working remotely compared to the immediate team. The fact that virtual workshops were created in order to reconnect employees with the mission and vision of the company (INT 6), and that employees *"miss the feeling of being part of a bigger thing, which [they] don't feel when [they're] at home"* (INT 1, 12:23) shows the loss of connection to the overall organization, and a reduced sense of seeing oneself in the bigger picture when working away from the office. This highlights that the office, and the social encounters, play an important role in creating

and maintaining the connectedness to the overall organization. However, this unanticipated finding might be exaggerated due to the fact that the data for this thesis was collected during the Covid-19 pandemic, where most employees were forced to leave the office for more than a year. Therefore, the lost connection to the overall organization might be overemphasized in our results. However, as existing literature from pre-pandemic times states that fewer social interactions can lead to a reduced sense of belonging to the organization (Boell et al., 2016), we believe that we would have gotten similar results with or without a pandemic. The new insight informs how the aspect is reconsidered in a Remote Work context (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Pattern Matching a) of Sense of Belonging & Purpose
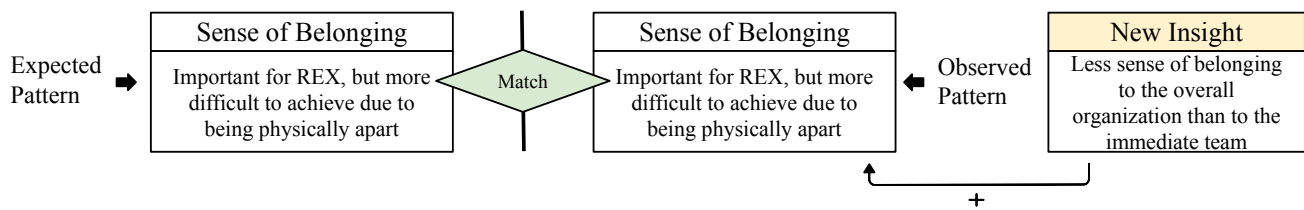
Regarding employees' sense of purpose, the results from this study support that this feeling is important for REX and that it is more difficult to achieve due to irregular communication. The results suggest that employees' sense of purpose and overview over the bigger picture of the company can be more difficult to maintain when employees work remotely, whereupon companies have been more conscious with their communication efforts (INT 4). An important finding is that during Remote Work, every little change needs to be communicated directly to the employee (INT 4). This indicates that employees usually get noticed about changes by being in the office where they get more spontaneous everyday updates from colleagues. From the results, it is clear that more companywide meetings have been created (INT 3) and more digital communication efforts with updates have been needed, in order to ensure that employees do not lose their overview and thereby sense of purpose (INT 3, 4). This coincides with theory that stresses the importance of sharing objectives in order to improve employees' sense of purpose (Green, 2017; Morgan, 2017). Also previous literature states that communication in a Remote Work setting usually happens less regularly (Alexander et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2015; Donnelly & Johns, 2021), whereby the interviewed organizations have had to counteract this loss by increasing their communication efforts to improve employees' sense of purpose. Because of the presented results above, it is clear that our expected patterns match the observed patterns identified from the interviews (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Pattern Matching b) of Sense of Belonging & Purpose
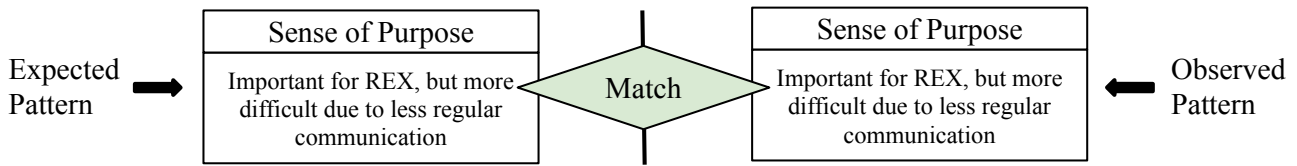
In conclusion, the above mentioned results confirm that the attribute *'Sense of Belonging & Purpose'* is an important attribute of REX. The observed patterns are consistent with our expected patterns that a sense of belonging is more difficult to achieve due to being physically apart from each other, and that sense of purpose is more difficult to achieve due to less regular and spontaneous communication updates in the office. The new finding, implying that a sense of belonging is harder to achieve in relation to the overall organization, furthermore informs the attribute.

5.1.2 Work-Life Balance

In our initial expected patterns, we expected that *'Work-Life Balance'* is an important aspect of REX. Based on theory, we expected the attribute to be reconsidered in the way that it is a) contradictory whether or not Remote Working improves the balance, as the lines between work and personal life get more blurred, which can be harder for employees to manage.

The results of this study confirm that work-life balance is contradictory in a Remote Work context. The results suggest that employees, who have been unsuccessful in maintaining boundaries between work and personal life while working from home, felt exhausted (INT 6), whereas employees who were successful in doing so experienced more freedom and control, which positively influences their EX (INT 1, 5, 6). Therefore, these results are in line with previous studies (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Popovici & Popovici, 2020), stating that work-life balance does not necessarily improve by being able to work from home.

The results also suggest that the deciding factor is how well employees create structures and regulate their time by themselves (6, 7). Also how successful employees are at distancing themselves from their work (INT 5). As not all employees are able to set up structures and boundaries for themselves, the results demonstrate that employees are in need of support with clear structures (INT 6, 7). This fact corroborates with previous literature stating that

monitoring remote employees is important to ensure that they do not overwork themselves (Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Matli, 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). Similarly, our results demonstrate that many employees working remotely also work more hours (INT 1, 6, 7). Existing literature explains that a higher workload among remote employees is often a result of them trying to prove that they are able to be productive and effective at home (Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Matli, 2020). This can serve as an explanation of the experienced increased workload, which furthermore contributes to the difficulties in keeping a balanced work-life. Regardless of the employees' success in putting up boundaries, the results confirm that the lines between work and personal life get more blurred, as both work and personal life happen in the same place.

In conclusion, these results confirm that *'Work-Life Balance'* is important for REX. The results also confirm our expectations that work-life balance is contradictory, and that lines between work and personal life get more blurred for employees in a Remote Work setting. Thus, the observed patterns from the interviews match our expected pattern derived from theory (Figure 8).

*Figure 8: Pattern Matching a) of Work-Life Balance*
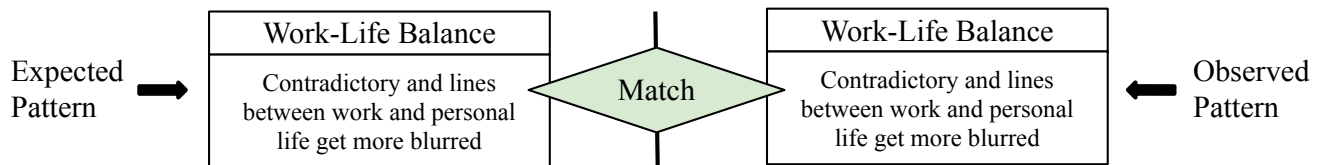
5.1.3 Feeling Valued

In our initial theoretical patterns, we expected that *'Feeling Valued'* is an important attribute of REX. We expected the attribute to be reconsidered in a Remote Work setting in the way that a) employees must not feel that their work goes unseen because they are working away from the office, b) employees' perception of having their voice heard can be more difficult as remote employees can miss opportunities to raise their voice and c) employees working remotely must feel that they are being equally treated compared to co-workers who work in the office.

Firstly, the expectation that employees must not feel as if their work goes unseen because they are not visible in the office to their managers, is confirmed with the results. As several INTs state that employees have developed a

fear when working away from the office, that their managers are not going to recognize and see the hard work they put into their job (INT 2, 7, 8, 9), our expected pattern matches the observed pattern (Figure 9). Thus, the result also coincides with prior studies (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Ferreira et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2016) stating that managers can be less aware of employees' efforts when they work remotely. Interestingly, the results indicate that it is also harder to show appreciation, as celebrating employees' success and good performance is more difficult in a digital set-up (INT 1). This shows both how important the feeling of appreciation and recognition is for employees and REX, but also that their experience is negatively impacted if they perceive that their work goes unseen simply because they are not physically visible. These informal recognitions are said to speak to employees from an emotional perspective and are very influential for the organizational culture (Green, 2017). Thereby, an environment without verbal recognition or everyday celebrations can hurt company culture.

Figure 9: Pattern Matching a) of Feeling Valued
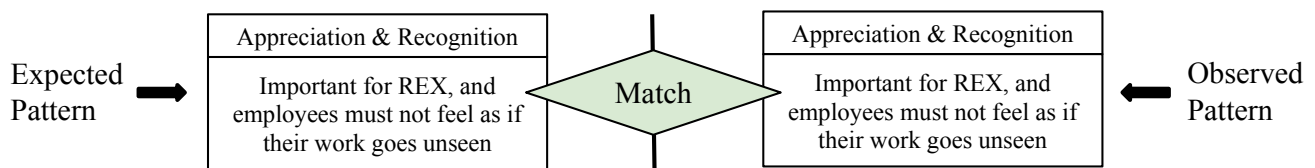
Secondly, we expected that employees' feeling of having their voice heard is reconsidered in the way that it is more difficult, as employees working remotely can miss opportunities where ideas and knowledge are shared between colleagues and managers. The results of this study support the expectation that it is important for employees to feel as if their voice is being heard, and that it can be difficult for remote employees to develop such feeling. However, the results were unable to demonstrate that this difficulty is a result of missed opportunities to share ideas and knowledge. Instead, the results suggest that employees' perception of not having their voice heard originates from a feeling of not being able to contribute in the same way as others in digital meetings (INT 6, 9). Prior studies in the literature review noted the issue of miscommunication in digital meetings (Rose, 2019; Wang et al., 2021) but did not acknowledge employees' perception of not being able to contribute or feel as if they cannot speak up in digital meetings. INT 9 states that "*it is really hard to make sure everyone has an equal voice*" (27:56) when it is a mix of people on-site and off-site. It seems like it is harder for employees who enter a meeting digitally to speak up as they often interrupt other people and the flow of the meeting. In turn, this creates a situation where some employees remain quiet and do not share their input. An important outcome if this, which is highlighted in the results, is that these employees increasingly disappear in the digital workplace as they do not take part in
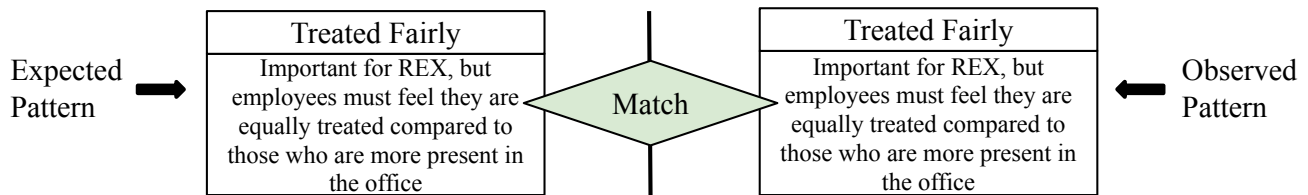
discussions (INT 7). This negatively influences their experience. This new insight, as well as the partial match is demonstrated in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Pattern Matching b) of Feeling Valued
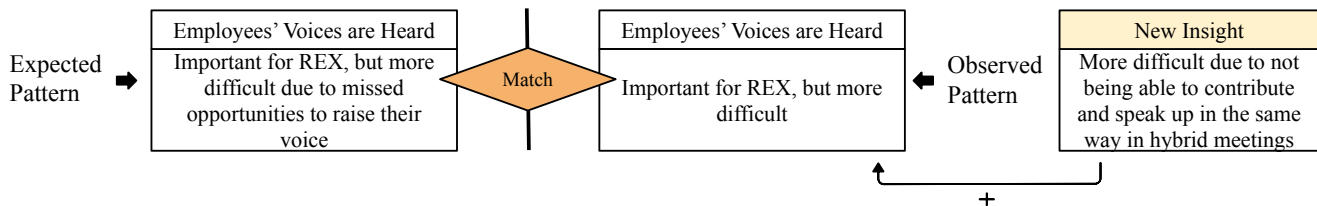
Thirdly, we expected that employees' feeling of being treated fairly is reconsidered in the way that employees working remotely need to feel that they are treated equally compared to those who work in the office more frequently. The results from this study support this expectation. The fact that employees who worked remotely before the Covid-19 pandemic feel happier, more included and more equal now that every colleague is working away from the office (INT 6, 7), shows that the feeling of not being equal compared to office-workers has been a problem for remote workers before. Also, that INTs say that this serves as one of the greatest learnings of everyone working remotely, shows the significance of this result (INT 6, 7). The agenda forward is to try to democratize the EX (INT 2) and create conditions where everyone feels equal to one another and are not missing out, regardless of their working routines (INT 2, 6). Also existing literature states that leaders must accept and treat employees equally regardless of their work routines (Alexander et al., 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). The fact that the results show that the past problems of disengagement among remote working employees have been solved during the Covid-19 pandemic, can thereby be a result of employees not perceiving that they are being treated differently by leaders. Also, since everyone has been digitally present the past year, side conversations are more visible for everyone, whereupon the feeling of exclusion might have decreased. Because of the above discussed results, it is a match between our expected and observed patterns (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Pattern Matching c) of Feeling Valued

| Expected Pattern → | **Treated Fairly** Important for REX, but employees must feel they are equally treated compared to those who are more present in the office | Match | **Treated Fairly** Important for REX, but employees must feel they are equally treated compared to those who are more present in the office | ← Observed Pattern |

In conclusion, the above discussed results make it clear that *'Feeling Valued'* is an important attribute of REX. The three expected patterns were confirmed by the observed patterns, with the exception of the reconsideration of employees' voices being heard which was partially matched. Thereby, our expected patterns derived from theory were mostly matched with the observed patterns and are informed by the new insight that it is more difficult to speak up in hybrid meetings.

5.1.4 Health

In our initial theoretical patterns, we expected *'Health'* to be an important attribute for REX. Based on previous theory, we expected the aspect to be reconsidered in the way that a) some health issues are emphasized in a Remote Work setting, namely personal isolation and loneliness, tiredness from excessive use of technologies and ergonomic issues. Furthermore, we expect that the attribute is reconsidered in the way that b) it is more difficult for employees to have their health issues recognized.

The results show that employees' feeling of loneliness and social isolation has increased while working away from the office (INT 1, 2, 4, 6). These results reflect previous research stating that employees working remotely can feel socially isolated (Boell et al., 2016; Donnelly & Johns, 2021; Popovici & Popovici, 2020) and that the emotion of loneliness can arise due to fewer social interactions with colleagues (Lund et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). Our results indicate that this feeling has foremost been for the employees who are living by themselves (INT 1, 2, 4, 6), implying that the social interactions they have with colleagues can be the most dominant one on an everyday basis. Although all ten INTs claim that they have tried to replicate social interactions digitally, it seems as if this is not enough for employees to feel the same level of satisfaction or energy they need in order to feel socially fulfilled. Thereby, the feeling of loneliness and isolation seems to emerge even though employees interact with colleagues digitally. However, this particular result must be interpreted with caution since the data was collected

during the Covid-19 pandemic, when all employees were socially limited in their private life. Therefore, the feeling of isolation and loneliness might rather be a result of the pandemic than the Remote Work setting.

As expected, INTs also raised the issue of employees feeling overloaded by digital interactions (INT 5, 7, 9). Working in front of a screen all day is not unusual for knowledge-workers, however the use of technologies seems to increase when working remotely. The reason for the tiredness and overload seems to be the fact that almost every interaction the employees' have with work is through digital devices. These results are consistent with Popovici & Popovici (2020), who similarly argue that headaches, eyestrain and fatigue among remote workers are more common. The results also highlight that many employees do not take the same amount of breaks when working from home (INT 2, 7). This means that they sit in front of their screen for longer time-periods. In the office, more natural breaks occur (INT 2) where employees thereby lift their eyes from the screen to interact with colleagues. As this does not happen when employees are working from home, the feeling of tiredness and exhaustion of technology seems to increase.

Finally, we expected that ergonomic issues are emphasized in regards to employees' health while working remotely. Indeed, the results show that employees, who work from home oftentimes sit around the kitchen table and sometimes work from the bed or the sofa, which is not ergonomically safe (INT 1). INT 1 has seen an increase in back complaints during Remote Working, which supports the emphasis of ergonomic issues. Allen et al. (2015) state that organizations oftentimes do not to the same extent provide employees with the same equipment in their homes. However, the results demonstrate that organizations have increased their efforts in ensuring that employees' physical work environment is sufficient at home (INT 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10). This indicates that they have realized the need to meet ergonomic needs of employees who are working away from the office in order to ensure a positive EX. Thus, the first expectation is matched with the results and is presented in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Pattern Matching a) of Health
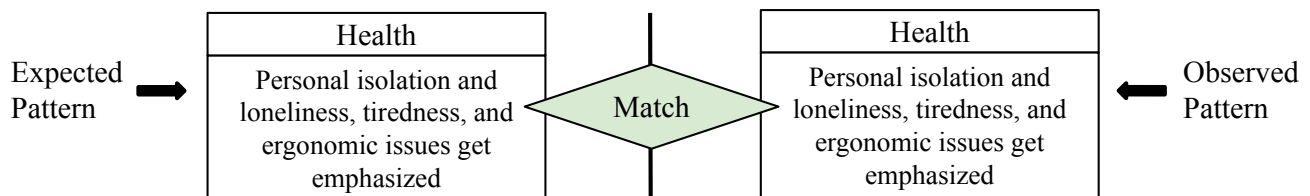
The importance of health in a Remote Work setting was also emphasized by the fact that it can be more difficult to notice signs of sickness and health issues of employees, when not physically seeing each other (INT 1, 6, 7, 8). This is consistent with literature, stating that leaders need to be more sensitive to health risks among employees working remotely (Dahik et al., 2020; Muddit, 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). Also it is argued that it is more difficult to understand emotions through digital communication tools (Allen et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2021). Our results corroborate with this statement by indicating that signals are hard to identify in a digital set up. Thus, the second expectation that it is more difficult for employees to have their health issues recognized, is matched by results and can be seen in Figure 13 underneath.

Figure 13: Pattern Matching b) of Health
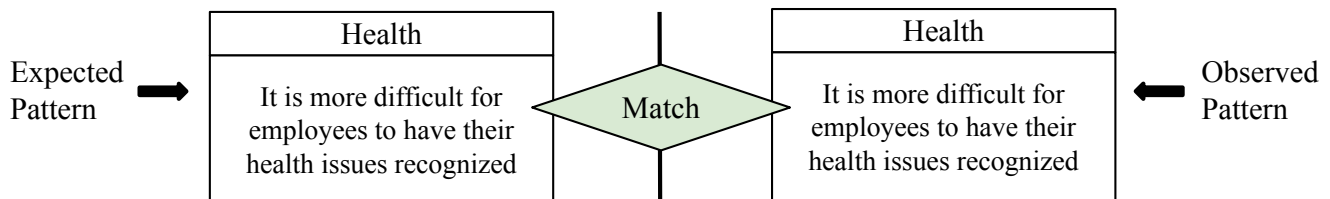
In conclusion, the above discussed findings confirm that *'Health'* is an important attribute for REX. The results confirm our expectations that loneliness and isolation, tiredness from excessive use of technologies, and ergonomic issues get emphasized in a Remote Working context. Furthermore, the findings coincide with the expectation that employees' health issues are harder to detect. Thus, both observed patterns from the interviews match our expected patterns derived from theory.

5.1.5 Ability to Develop & Advance

In our initial expected pattern, we expected that employees' *'Ability to Develop & Advance'* within their organization is an important attribute of REX. Based on theory, we expected that a) the aspect of employee learning in a Remote Work context is reconsidered in the way that employees must be given opportunities for training and learning digitally, so they do not miss out on opportunities to grow while working away from the office. In addition, we expected that b) employees' perception of progressing in their career in a Remote Work context is reconsidered in the way that employees must not feel as if their chances of advancement decrease when working away from the office.

As expected, the results indicate that organizations have increased their digital offers of training and learning activities in the Remote Work setting (INT 1, 4, 6), whereby our expected pattern matches the observed pattern (Figure 14). Although companies already had online training opportunities before, it seems to never have been used to the same extent as in the past year of Remote Working. Consistent with prior studies, which state that employees working away from the office can feel professionally isolated if not having digital opportunities for learning (Popovici & Popovici, 2020), the results suggest that the increase of digital learning offers has been a directed effort to prohibit employees from feeling as if their opportunities for growing is hindered (INT 6). Thereby, the importance of meeting employees' demand for development is evident.

An unanticipated finding is the difficulty of peer-learning in a Remote Work context. Although the INTs experienced that most learning and training opportunities worked well in a digital format, the results indicate that peer-learning has not been efficient (INT 1, 4). This seems to primarily affect junior employees and their EX, as they rely more on learning from their peers. The practice of sharing knowledge between employees and the difficulties in doing so when working remotely was stated as an issue for innovation and value creation (Donnelly & Johns, 2021), but not as an issue in terms of learning. The authors state that explicit knowledge is easier to transfer in a digital set up than tacit knowledge. A possible explanation for this new unanticipated finding can be that the consulted companies in this study operate within the creative industries. In this industry, a lot of tacit knowledge is exchanged where employees often need to practically demonstrate how to conduct certain tasks (INT 4). When they are not able to do so, while working physically apart from each other, employees' experience of learning and growing can get impaired. This new insight informs how the aspect is reconsidered (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Pattern Matching a) of Ability to Develop & Advance
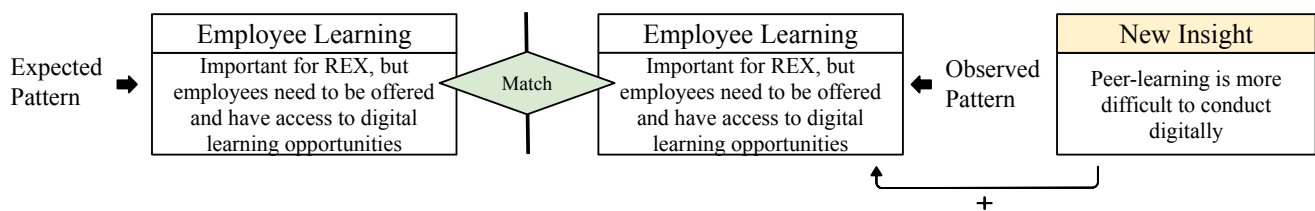
Next to employee learning, the results also suggest that employees' perception of progress in their career can be influenced by working remotely. As expected, employees who are working remotely can feel that their work goes unseen when being physically apart from managers and colleagues, which leads to a fear of a reduced chance in getting promoted (INT 2, 9). These results reflect those of Allen et al. (2015) and Donnelly and Johns (2021),

who also state that remote employees can develop a fear of missing chances of getting promoted. The results indicate that managers must increasingly consider the environment in which the employees work, when it comes to career decisions (INT 4). The implications of this is that if remote employees' fear of getting limited chances for advancement is confirmed and managers favor employees who are more physically visible for them, it will hurt EX. This highlights that managers must make career advancement decisions based on facts and actual performance, which should not be influenced by who has a stronger social identity and who they might meet more regularly in person. Otherwise, EX can be negatively impacted accordingly. Thereby, our initial expected pattern for the aspect progress in career matches the observed pattern from the interviews (Figure 15).

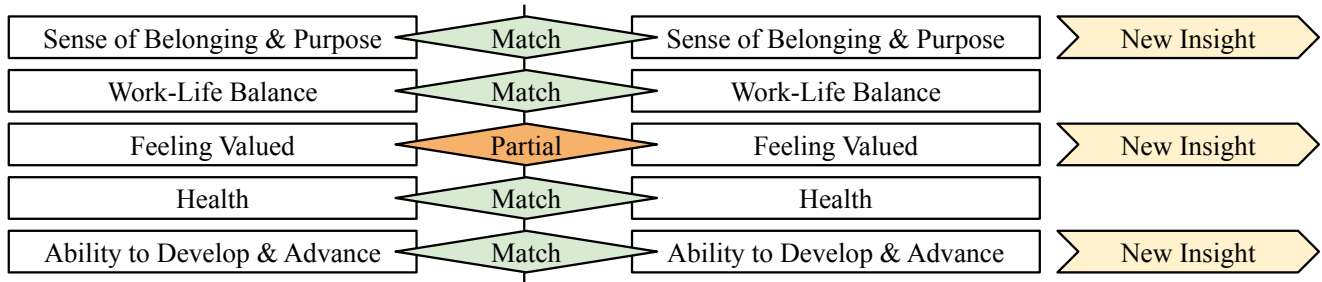*Figure 15: Pattern Matching b) of Ability to Develop & Advance*
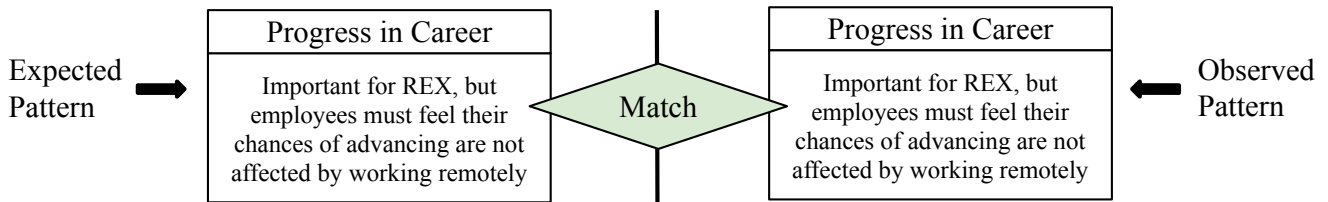
In conclusion, the above presented results confirm that *'Ability to Develop & Advance'* is an important attribute of REX. The results also confirm our initial expectations that employee learning needs to be offered digitally and that employees can develop a fear of having less chances of advancement when working away from the office. Thus, the observed patterns from the interviews match our expected pattern derived from theory. The new unexpected consideration of the aspect of employee learning informs how the attribute is reconsidered in a Remote Work context, which is shown in Figure 15 above.

5.1.6 Refined Attributes

Based on the above comparisons of the expected patterns with the observed patterns from the interviews, we have confirmed that all five attributes i.e. *'Sense of Belonging & Purpose'*, *'Work-Life Balance'*, *'Feeling Valued'*, *'Health'*, and *'Ability to Develop & Advance'* are important for creating REX. Thereby, they all remain attributes of the REX Framework. The matches can be seen in Figure 16 below. The new unexpected findings that emerged from the data will refine how some of the attributes are reconsidered in a Remote Work setting.

Figure 16: Overview of Pattern Matching for Personal & Professional Needs

Sense of Belonging & Purpose	Match	Sense of Belonging & Purpose	New Insight
Work-Life Balance	Match	Work-Life Balance	
Feeling Valued	Partial	Feeling Valued	New Insight
Health	Match	Health	
Ability to Develop & Advance	Match	Ability to Develop & Advance	New Insight

New Reconsiderations

Based on the above discussion the new insights regarding *'Sense of Belonging & Purpose', 'Feeling Valued'* and *'Ability to Develop & Advance'* that inform the overall attribute are shown underneath.

Sense of Belonging & Purpose	Feeling Valued	Ability to Develop & Advance
The attribute *'Sense of Belonging & Purpose'* is in a Remote Work context reconsidered in the way that it is a) more difficult to achieve a sense of belonging due to being physically apart from each other, b) sense of purpose is more difficult due to less regular communication, and c) employees can feel less of a belonging to the overall organization than to the immediate team.	The attribute *'Feeling Valued'* is in a Remote Work Context reconsidered in the way that a) employees must not feel as if their work goes unseen because they are less present in the office, b) employees' perception of having their voice heard can be more difficult, as remote employees can feel as if they cannot contribute in digital meetings, and c) employees working remotely must feel that they are equally treated compared to colleagues in the office.	The attribute *'Ability to Develop & Advance'* is in a Remote Work context reconsidered in the way that a) employees need to be offered and have access to digital learning and training opportunities, b) employees' chances of advancing must be independent from whether or not they are physically present in the office, and c) peer-learning is more difficult to conduct digitally.

5.2 Physical & Digital Workplace

This section discusses the results from the four attributes that are part of the theme '*Physical & Digital Workplace*', in order to identify whether our expected patterns that are derived from theory match the observed patterns from the interviews. After discussing each attribute individually, the section ends with an overview of the matches and mismatches and how these inform and revise the initial REX Framework.

5.2.1 Social Opportunities

Based on theory, we expected *'Social Opportunities'* to be an important attribute of REX. We expected that the opportunities to socially interact with colleagues are reconsidered in the way that a) employees do not only need them physically but also in the digital sphere in order to address the issue of the employees' feeling of isolation.

A promising finding was that social opportunities are indeed replicated by chat and video programs and that digital tools and activities are implemented for both, work related and non-work related interactions in order to enable relationship building (INT 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10). These results are in accordance with Morgan (2017), depicting social relations as important factors for EX. Likewise, Ferreira et al. (2020) state that companies in a Remote Work setting have to implement new virtual routines for social opportunities. As anticipated, the results suggest that it is challenging for employees to build a social connection and relationship with co-workers when not physically being together (INT 2, 4, 10), which is assumed to be especially hard for newly recruited employees. These findings also coincide with Boell et al. (2016), Donnelly and Johns (2021) and Popovici and Popovici (2020), who state that employees can develop a feeling of isolation when being apart from the office and their colleagues. Furthermore, the results indicate that social opportunities seem to be one of the most difficult aspects when creating a positive REX, due to employees being physically distant from each other (INT 2, 4, 5, 8, 10). Spontaneous encounters in particular, such as having coffee or lunch together (INT 1, 2, 3, 7), as well as social activities in the team (INT 2, 3, 5, 7) are said to be absent and challenging to fit into a video call agenda (INT 2, 8).

A connected unexpected finding is that the purpose of the office is expected primarily to be a place for socialization (INT 2, 5, 6, 9, 10), implying that social opportunities replicated digitally are not sufficient and do depend on the physical space after all. While literature emphasizes that the office in a Remote Work setting is less vital (Dahik et al., 2020), the majority of INTs refer to the office as a 'Social Hub', indicating that the office is perceived as a foremost social place with the purpose to come together, collaborate and mingle (INT 2, 5, 6, 9, 10). A possible

explanation for this unanticipated finding is the Covid-19 pandemic, which might bias the answers of the INTs. Because of the pandemic and the resulting guidelines and restrictions, social interactions are prohibited in general. Thus, individuals might be in need for human connection more than usual and are hence not able to compare having social opportunities in the office and digitally. Thus, they might exaggerate their longing for everything to take place in the office more than ever and their perception of the office's purpose might seem different in post-pandemic times. Nevertheless, this finding seems to be important to consider when aiming to satisfy the social needs of remote employees.

In conclusion, the findings support our expectation that the attribute '*Social Opportunities*' stays an important part of the REX Framework. The observed pattern is matching our expected pattern, indicating that social opportunities are replicated digitally to address the issue of isolation. Moreover, this expectation is informed by the new finding, that it is assumed that the office's future purpose is to provide employees with the opportunities to build social relationships, as shown in Figure 17.

*Figure 17: Pattern Matching a) of Social Opportunities*
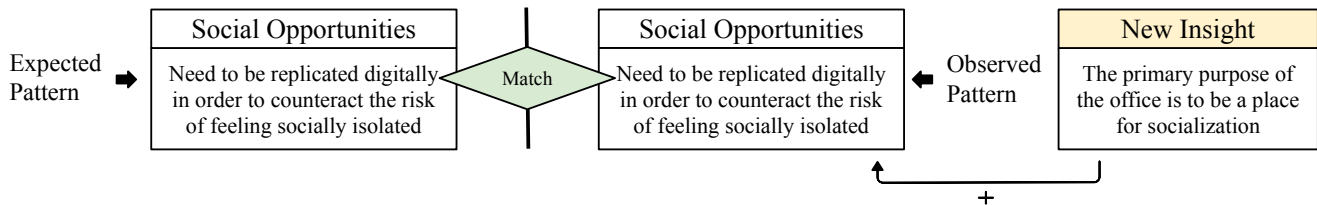
5.2.2 Supportive & Smart Office

With regard to theory, we expected the *'Supportive & Smart Office'* to stay an important attribute of the REX Framework. We expected that the attribute is reconsidered in the way that a) employees are in need of multiple workplace options that support them with activities that to a larger extent are expected to be performed in the office. Furthermore, we expected that b) REX is impacted by how organizations implement and manage a smart workplace.

Firstly, the results indicate that employees are indeed in need of an office with diverse workplace options that support and fulfill individual requirements of employees to execute tasks that need to take place in the office (INT

1, 2, 3, 5, 7). Results suggest that REX is impacted by an office that supports employees with e.g. technically equipped rooms that enable a seamless communication between employees in the office and employees working elsewhere (INT 1, 7). Such support seems particularly important for certain activities that require special equipment and are thus tied to the physical office space (INT 1, 3, 5).Mentioned examples for these are music production, receptionists (INT 1), facility managers (INT 5) or film production (INT 3, 7). These results are in line with Ancillo et al. (2020), who argue that the diverse activities and requirements of employees need to be supported by the physical office. Thereby, the findings match the first expectation that the office provides multiple work options for the employees with tasks that are expected to be foremost executed in the office (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Pattern Matching a) of Supportive & Smart Office
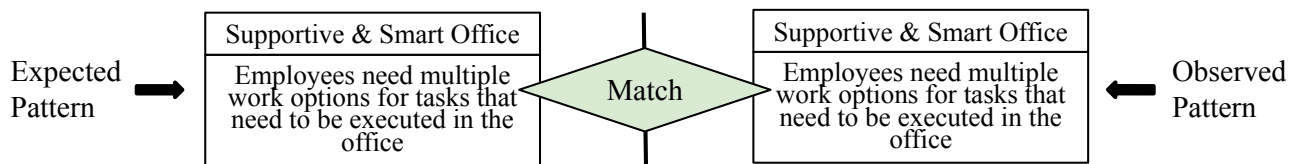
Secondly, our expectation that a positive REX depends on how smart the physical space is being managed also coincides with interview findings, as it is assumed that the physical office needs to be rethought in a Remote Work context (INT 5, 9) and that smart concepts, such as hot-desking should be considered (INT 9). This match is presented in Figure 19, below. The finding also conforms with Hilberath et al. (2020) and Mudditt (2020), suggesting to invest in smart workplaces. Thus, results indicate that the office's purpose needs to be reviewed in order to intentionally use the physical space. As several INTs stress the importance of guidelines and concepts regarding the rotation of employees in the physical space (INT 2, 5, 7, 8, 9), we furthermore created the new attribute '*Remote Working Model*', which is part of the revised framework and presented in section 5.3.2. That is to emphasize the importance of these models for the employees.

*Figure 19: Pattern Matching b) of Supportive & Smart Office*
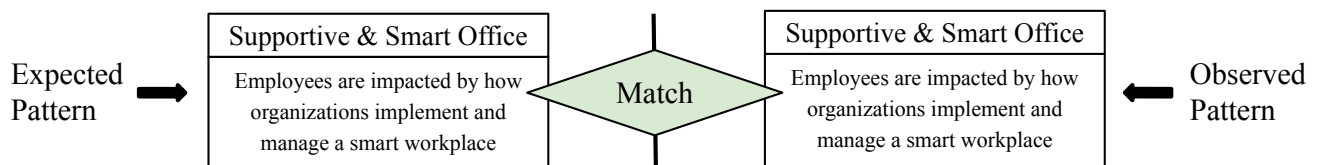
In conclusion, the results of this study show that a supportive and smart office is indeed important within a Remote Work context (INT 1, 2, 3, 5). Both of our expected patterns are matched with observational patterns. However, all results originated from INTs who at the time of the interview were forced to work from home, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, answers regarding the use of the office are foremost assumptions and expectations for the post-pandemic times, in which the Remote Working context will include the office again. Hence, these results need to be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the INTs' expectations match with our initial expectations and are thus considered to be decisive.

5.2.3 Provided with Digital Tools & Equipment

Supported by theory, we renamed the attribute '*Equipped with Technology*' and called it *'Provided with Digital Tools and Equipment'* in the framework instead. We expected that this attribute is important for REX and that it is reconsidered by a) sufficiently equipping employees not only with digital tools but also with technical equipment to enable them to conduct their work remotely. Furthermore, we expect that the attribute is reconsidered by b) emphasizing the collaboration tools that are expected to be crucial for employees to work remotely.

Firstly, the results are consistent with our first expectation as the findings indicate that the access to and provision of technical equipment, such as laptops, audio systems, monitors, Internet boosters and webcams, is indeed important to create a positive REX (INT 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10). This information coincides with Ferreira et al. (2020) and Matli (2020), arguing that technical devices are crucial to enable employees to work from anywhere. The match of the patterns is shown in the Figure 20.

Figure 20: Pattern Matching a) of Provided with Digital Tools & Equipment
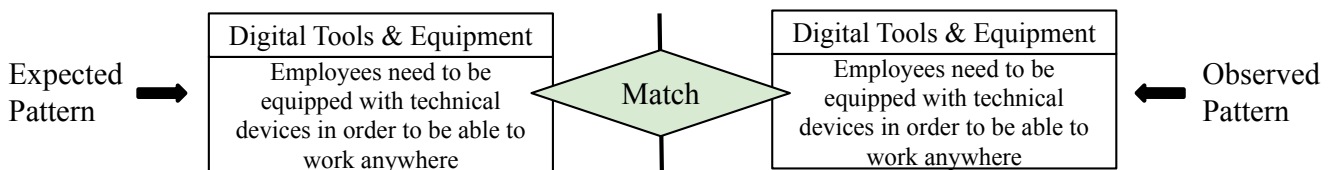

Secondly, the results match our second expectation by implying that collaboration tools are highly important in a Remote Work context, as meetings and teamwork is replicated digitally when working remotely (INT 1, 2, 3, 8, 10). These findings are consistent with theory saying that digital technologies are important in a Remote Work

setting (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Peters et al., 2016), as they enable employees to share knowledge, communicate, collaborate and coordinate with each other (Ferreira et al., 2020; Williams & Schubert, 2018). For this, tools like 'Zoom' (INT 1, 2, 3, 10), 'Slack' (INT 1, 2, 5, 9) and 'Mural' (INT 4, 9) are mentioned as examples. These platforms seem to enable employees to perform collaborative activities such as brainstorming or sharing knowledge and ideas (INT 3). This coincides with Williams and Schubert (2018) mentioning enterprise collaboration systems like 'Slack', 'Zoom' or 'Trello' as suitable tools when working digitally.

An unanticipated finding was that next to being provided with collaboration tools, it also seems important for employers to standardize the tools to ensure that every employee is aware of which tools to use. This is expected to otherwise lead to friction and irritation (INT 6). However, this finding does not match with literature. A possible reason for this is that studies about EX or Remote Work have not covered an extreme situation, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, during which almost every employee was forced to work with digital tools. Thus, the realization that tools need to be harmonized with everyone working remotely could be a new insight resulting from experiencing such an extreme Remote Working situation. In contrast to theory, it can be suggested that the standardization of tools needs to be considered nowadays.

Hence, the second expected pattern, suggesting that collaboration tools are crucial when working remotely, matches the observed pattern, and hence shows that means of collaboration are indeed replicated digitally. This expectation is at the same time informed by the new finding, implying that such tools are in need of standardization in order to create a positive REX (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Pattern Matching b) of Provided with Digital Tools & Equipment
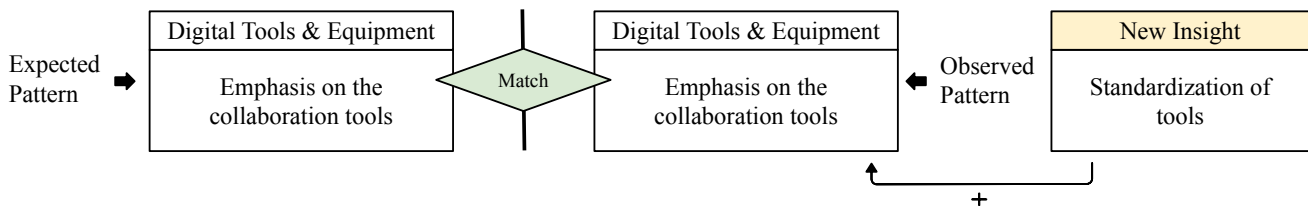
In conclusion, the results show that the attribute '*Provided with Digital Tools & Equipment*' indeed stays important in a Remote Work context. Both of our expected patterns regarding the need of technical equipment and the

importance of digital collaboration tools match with the observed patterns. The new unexpected finding furthermore informs the attribute by emphasizing the importance of standardizing the use of digital tools.

5.2.4 User Experience

With regard to theory, we expected that REX is positively impacted when a) implemented tools have a well-designed interface that creates a positive '*User Experience*'. In contrast to this expectation, however, no evidence of this was detected, leading to a mismatch between our theoretical and observed patterns (Figure 22).

This outcome contradicts Gosh and Itam (2020), who argue that technologies with a user-friendly interface lead to a more positive EX as well as Raia (2017) who states that EX is negatively impacted when the user experience in terms of usability and adaptability of technology is poorly designed. One reason for the mismatch could be that the user experience is perceived as a fundamental precondition for every digital tool that employees use in the workplace. Particularly, since all INTs mention the constant use of technologies, already before the pandemic, they might use well established programs and thus believe that user experience is crucial but so fundamental that they did not mention it. Lastly, the INTs work in the HR field and are usually not involved in decisions regarding digital technologies, whereby they might not have thought about including this topic in the conversation.

Figure 22: Pattern Matching of User Experience
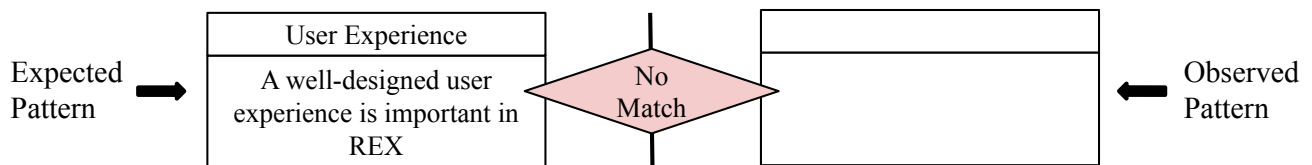
5.2.5 Refined Attributes

After comparing the expected patterns with the observed patterns from the interviews, we conclude that three out of four attributes were matched and thus remain important attributes for creating a REX i.e. *'Social Opportunities'*, *'Supportive & Smart Office'*, *'Provided with Digital Tools & Equipment'*. For these, new unexpected findings emerged from the data, that refine the reconsiderations of the respective attributes for REX. The attribute '*User Experience*' on the other hand, was not matched with findings from interviews (Figure 23). However, as the

attribute seems to be crucial for EX and also Remote Work literature refers to technology as 'the heart of Remote Work' (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Peters et al., 2016) we argue that it does play an important role in a Remote Work setting. Thus, the attribute is kept as part of the REX Framework despite the mismatch. In what way the new findings refine the attributes is discussed in the following.

Figure 23: Overview of Pattern Matching for Physical & Digital Workplace

Social Opportunities	Match	Social Opportunities	New Insight
Supportive & Smart Office	Match	Supportive & Smart Office	
Digital Tools & Equipment	Match	Digital Tools & Equipment	New Insight
User Experience	X		
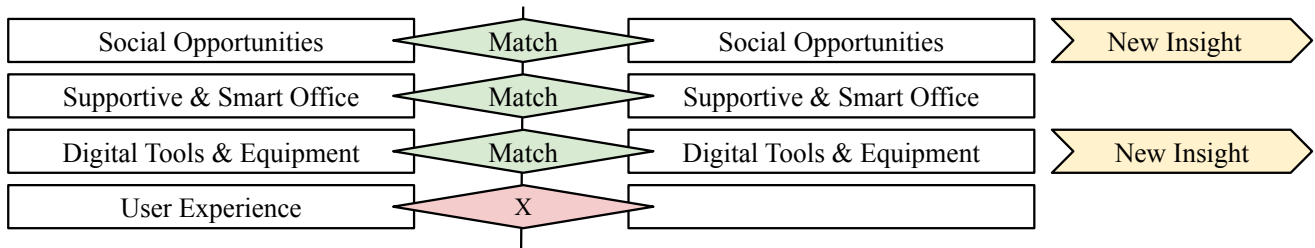
New Reconsiderations

To acknowledge the new findings that have been discussed regarding the attributes *'Social Opportunities'* and *'Digital Tools & Equipment'*, the reconsideration of these attributes are informed as shown in the following.

| Social Opportunities	Provided with Digital Tools & Equipment
The attribute is in a Remote Work context reconsidered in the way that a) employees need to be provided with social opportunities both in the physical and the digital workplace in order to counteract the risk of employees to feel socially isolated and b) the purpose of the office is to be a hub for socialization for employees.	The attribute is in a Remote Work Context reconsidered in the way that a) next to digital tools, employees are also in need of being sufficiently equipped with technical devices in order to be able to work from anywhere, b) the emphasis lies on collaboration tools, and that c) these tools need to be standardized.

5.3 Ways of Working

This section discusses the findings of the four attributes of '*Ways of Working*'. In the following, the expected and observed patterns of each attribute are compared to identify matches or mismatches. Subsequently, the last section shows how these inform and modify the framework for REX.

5.3.1 Leadership

Based on literature, we expected leadership to stay important and visible in the other attributes when creating positive REX. We expect the attribute to be reconsidered in the way that a) the experience of employees working remotely is affected by the assessment of leaders, which is assumed to be based on the results instead of the input. For this, REX is expected to be positively impacted when leaders show trust and treat all employees fairly and equal, regardless of where they work from.

Results clearly confirm with our expectation, by showing that when working remotely, employees need to be assessed based on the end result instead of having leaders who control and measure the amount of hours they have put into it (INT 2, 6, 8). These outcomes are also in accordance with Ferreira et al. (2020) and Peters et al. (2016) who argue that leaders should not evaluate work processes but need to assess the results instead. Important for that seems to be that employees have the feeling of being trusted by their leaders (INT 4, 7, 8). This is consistent with Ferreira et al. (2020) mentioning that trust of leaders appears to be important for employees that work remotely. Furthermore, findings emphasize the importance for employees to be treated equally when working remotely, so that no one misses out on benefits or chances in the office (INT 2, 3, 6, 9) and has the same chance to speak up in hybrid meetings (INT 3, 6, 9). Being equally treated has already been discussed more in detail in 5.1.3. The match or our expectation can be seen in Figure 24 underneath.

Figure 24: Pattern Matching a) of Leadership
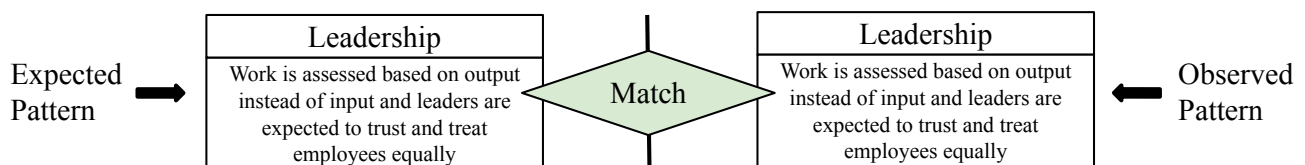
The results clearly show that the attribute *'Leadership'* is visible and influencing the majority of the other attributes of REX. For example, in '*Ability to Develop & Advance*', findings show that in a Remote Work setting it seems important for leaders to recognize employees' work even when their efforts are not visible (INT 2, 9). Also Kaufman et al. (2020) emphasize the importance that leaders need to adapt their performance assessment so that every employee is rewarded for their work, both when working in the office or elsewhere. Also in *'Health'*, results imply that in order to notice indications of mental sickness, managers are required to have more check-ins with their employees (INT 1, 8). This coincides with Remote Work literature, stating that it is important for leaders to observe potential health risks of employees (Dahik et al., 2020; Muddit, 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). Another example is the attribute '*Communication*', where INTs indicate that a clear and transparent communication from leaders is important to create a positive REX (INT 2, 5, 7, 10). Literature also states that it is crucial for leaders to communicate their expectations in a clear manner (Alexander et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2020; Popovici & Popovici, 2020). These three attributes are only a couple of examples that show the intertwined relationship with '*Leadership*', while it is also visible in '*Feeling Valued*' and the majority of the other attributes. Thus, in conclusion the results have shown that leadership with its general support functions as well as with the matched reconsiderations, is stated to be important for REX and visible in the majority of the other attributes.

5.3.2 Flexibility & Autonomy

With regard to theory, we expected '*Flexibility & Autonomy*' to stay important when creating EX in a Remote Work context. We furthermore expected the attribute to be reconsidered in the way that a) employees are affected by the implemented rules and regulations regarding Remote Working in terms of how much flexibility is given to each. Furthermore, the attribute is reconsidered in the way that b) job autonomy and related self-management is expected to be influenced by the extent of trust given by leaders.

The results match our first expectation by showing that REX is indeed impacted by how much flexibility employees are provided with (INT 1, 2, 6, 10). The findings emphasize the importance of rules about when and how employees should and could work in the office (INT 5, 7). The fact that INT 9 expresses that *"there is a danger"* (27:56) in leaving too much up to the individual employee to decide when to be in the office shows that it is important for organizations to create and communicate effective routines and guidelines for Remote Work in order to create a positive experience. These findings are consistent with Remote Work literature stating that hybrid working models need to be clear about the rotation dynamics and how much flexibility each employee has (Ferreira et al., 2020). INT 8 raises that those guidelines have to take interdependencies between co-workers into account

so that employees are not negatively impacted by the remote routines of others. Furthermore, results suggest that organizations should include employees in such decisions to understand their needs and wishes, plan accordingly and thus create a positive REX (INT 8). The choice of the Remote Working model is very likely to influence EX, as it might affect employees' daily routines, resulting in a different perception of the employer (INT 9). This is consistent with literature saying that organizational decisions for how flexible the workplace of an organization is (Alexander et al., 2020), affects the workforce that demand flexibility and perceive the company more positively if flexibility is provided (Boell et al., 2016).

Because of the above discussed result, it is evident that the majority of the INTs emphasize the impact guidelines and the choice of model have on REX and on new ways of working standards and routines of the overall organization, rather than individual flexible and autonomous ways of working. Based on these obtained findings and theory, we thus abstract the topic from the attribute '*Flexibility & Autonomy*' and create the new attribute '*Remote Work Model*' as part of the Framework. The match and new attribute can be seen in the following Figure 25.

Figure 25: Pattern Matching a) of Flexibility & Autonomy
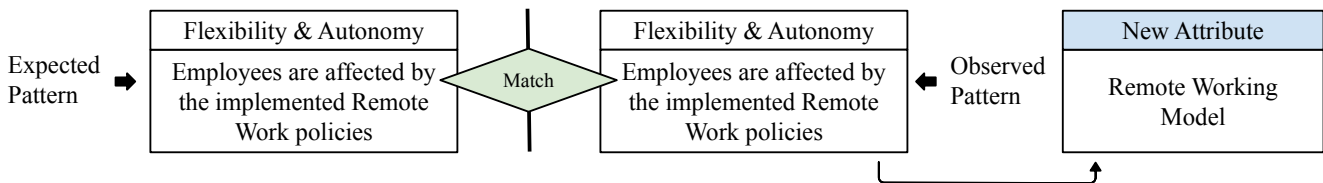
The second expectation that job autonomy is influenced by how much employees are being trusted also coincides with the results, stating that employees are indeed impacted by being trusted when working out of sight of their leaders (INT 4, 7, 8). This match can be seen in Figure 26. Ferreira et al. (2020) also mention that it is crucial for leaders to trust employees when working autonomously and unseen outside the office. It is said that if leaders are not able to convey this trust, employees might be micromanaged, which can have a negative impact on them (Donnelly & Johns, 2021).

Figure 26: Pattern Matching b) of Flexibility & Autonomy
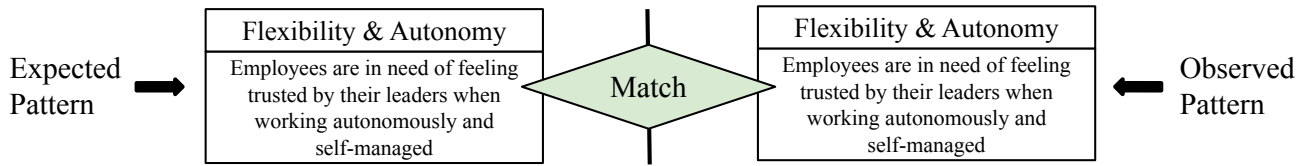
To conclude, the findings indicate that providing flexibility is in fact of high importance for REX, by generally mentioning that flexibility enables employees to schedule their work around their personal life (INT 1, 8, 9) and that it is an important aspect when it comes to collaborating with co-workers across different countries or time-zones (INT 2, 6). Also literature states that flexible work options impact the EX in a positive way (Green, 2017) and that it is particularly important when working remotely (Boell et al., 2016). Furthermore, the results from the interviews match the first expected pattern by suggesting that REX is indeed influenced by Remote Working policies. The observed patterns also match our second expectation, indicating that trust of leaders is important for employees to be autonomous. Additionally, the new attribute '*Remote Working Model*' is added.

5.3.3 Collaboration

Based on theory, we created '*Collaboration*' as a new attribute of the framework and expected it to be an important aspect of REX. We expected that a) collaborative and creative tasks are highly difficult to replicate digitally, which impacts REX. Furthermore, we expected that b) a positive REX depends on how well the company implements new rules and routines for collaboration in a Remote Work setting and how it changes behaviors and practices accordingly.

The results indicate that collaborative activities like knowledge-sharing, brainstorming, having discussions or peer-learning are indeed more difficult to transfer to a digital sphere (INT 2, 3, 5). Also creative employees seem to thrive more when collaborating face-to-face (INT 1, 3, 9) and it appears to be hard to achieve a certain level of creativity and innovation when working virtually (INT 1, 6, 8, 9). These findings are thus consistent with the first expectation (Figure 27). Allen et al. (2015), Boell et al. (2016), Ferreira et al. (2020) Kaufman et al. (2020) and Lund et al. (2020) support these by arguing that collaborative tasks and knowledge sharing in particular seem to be more challenging to execute in a Remote Work setting, as they require interaction and coordination between co-workers. Specified reasons for this are a lack of energy (INT 6, 9) a missing sense of emotion and missing body

language (INT 1, 3, 5), missing spontaneous encounters (INT 2, 3, 4, 10) and the absence of collaboration means, such as whiteboards (INT 9). This finding is supported by Allen et al. (2015) and Wang et al. (2021), who state that it is more difficult to understand emotions through digital communication tools and that it becomes harder for employees to observe facial and non-verbal expressions, when being apart from each other (Wang et al., 2021). As a result of these shortages, remote employees are said to be less creative (INT 1, 6, 8, 9), innovative (INT 6) and connected to their co-workers and teams (INT 2, 9).

Figure 27: Pattern Matching a) of Collaboration
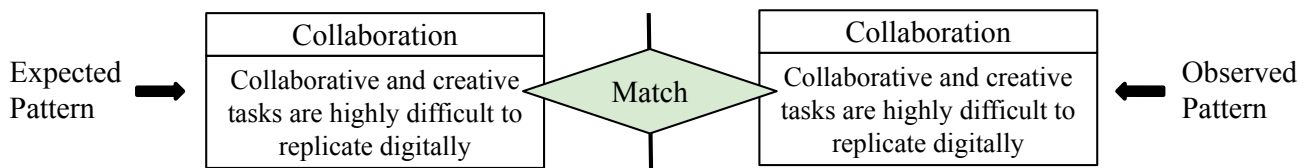
Results demonstrate that companies implement new routines, such as more meetings with social breaks (INT 4), and make use of new tools like Mural, Mind Mapping (INT 9) or Monday (INT 1) in order to compensate for these challenges. Furthermore, findings indicate the importance that employees need to change their behavior and that new ways of collaborating and documenting group work have to be implemented in order to create a positive REX (INT 6, 8). These results corroborate the findings of Alexander et al. (2020), indicating that it seems inevitable for organizations to keep traditional routines and processes of collaboration when working remotely. Also Dahik et al. (2020) and Ferreira et al. (2020) suggest virtually replicating unplanned encounters like the 'water cooler moment' by meetings or casual calls as *"these routines are an ideal chance to build empathy and engagement [and] promote creativity"* (Ferreira et al., 2020; p.25). Thus, the findings coincide with the second expectation (Figure 28).

*Figure 28: Pattern Matching b) of Collaboration*
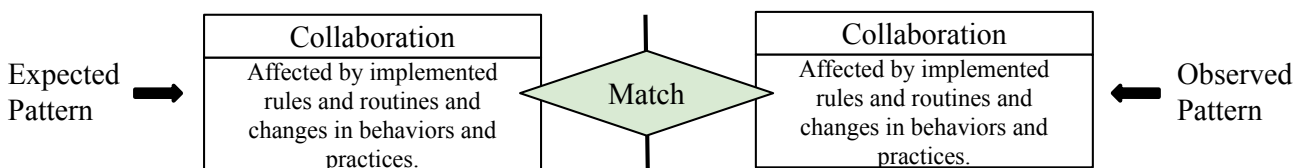
In conclusion, the results underline the importance of the attribute '*Collaboration*' in the Remote Work context, as both of our theory based expectations are consistent with our findings. This outcome supports and advocates our decision to make '*Collaboration*' its own new attribute of the REX Framework.

5.3.4 Communication

With regard to theory, our expectations for '*Communication*' were that the attribute stays important for creating a positive REX. We expected that the attribute is reconsidered in the way that a) transparent communication from leadership is crucial. Furthermore, we expect that b) it is inevitable to replicate communication digitally when working remotely and that it can lead to issues like inefficiency and miscommunication.

The results are consistent with our first expectation (Figure 29). Findings indicate that a clear and transparent communication from leaders seems to positively impact REX (INT 2, 5, 7, 10). This coincides with Yildiz et al. (2020), mentioning that in order to create a positive EX, clear and transparent communication is crucial. Also Tetzlaff and McLeod (2016) argue that employees are more likely to trust their leaders if important information that affects their work is shared openly. Without this trust, people in an organization might not listen or speak to each other, which can result in organizational silos with a lack of knowledge-sharing (Tetzlaff & McLeod, 2016), emphasizing the importance of transparent communication for REX.

Figure 29: Pattern Matching a) of Communication
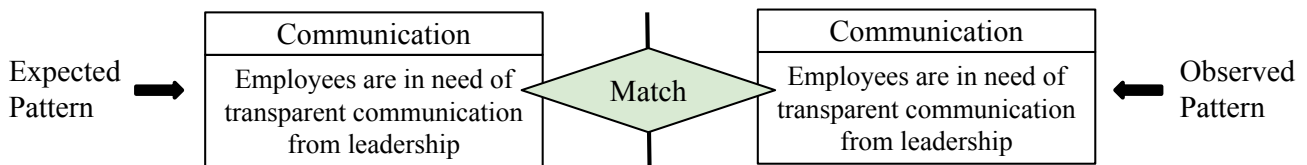
The findings also coincide with the second expectation, by showing that traditional means of communication indeed have shifted to scheduling virtual meetings (INT 2), using communications channels (INT 3,5,8) and having daily short meetings (INT 5). These findings accord with Allen et al. (2015), mentioning the importance and necessity to move communication to virtual tools when working remotely. However, findings prove that communication appears to be difficult to replicate digitally (INT 1, 2), which coincides with Donnelly & Johns (2021), arguing that virtual tools enable communication on one hand, while they hinder effective communication on the other hand. INT 2 claims that communication cannot happen as spontaneously, as coworkers have to plan

every communication effort by scheduling a meeting, which seems to hinder the flow of communication and knowledge exchange. This supports Allen et al. (2015) arguing that face-to-face conversations thus remain the most effective interaction. Other mentioned reasons for this challenge are miscommunication, misunderstandings, a related 'blame-game' (INT 1) and missing body language (INT 5, 7). These results support previous research indicating that virtual communication is more likely to lead to miscommunication (Rose, 2019; Wang et al., 2021) and misunderstandings of people's reaction (Wang et al., 2021). Tetzlaff & McLeod (2016) argue that these misunderstood messages can lead to a negative EX. The match of our second expectations with these findings is presented in Figure 30.

Figure 30: Pattern Matching b) of Communication
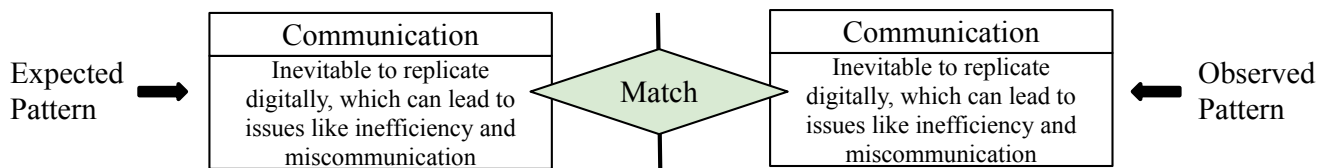
Concluding, the expectation that communication will remain an important aspect of REX, is consistent with these findings and both of our expected patterns match the observed patterns.

5.3.5 Refined Attributes

After the comparison of the expected patterns and the observed patterns from the interviews, we conclude that all four attributes i.e. *'Leadership'*, *'Flexibility & Autonomy'*, *'Collaboration'* and *'Communication'* remain important attributes for creating a REX (Figure 31). Investigating the attribute on *'Flexibility & Autonomy'* has led to the emergence and classification of a new attribute, i.e. *'Remote Working Model*, which is presented in the following (Figure 31).

Figure 31: Overview of Pattern Matching for Ways of Working

Leadership	Match	Leadership	
Flexibility & Autonomy	Match	Flexibility & Autonomy	New Attribute
Collaboration	Match	Collaboration	
Communication	Match	Communication	
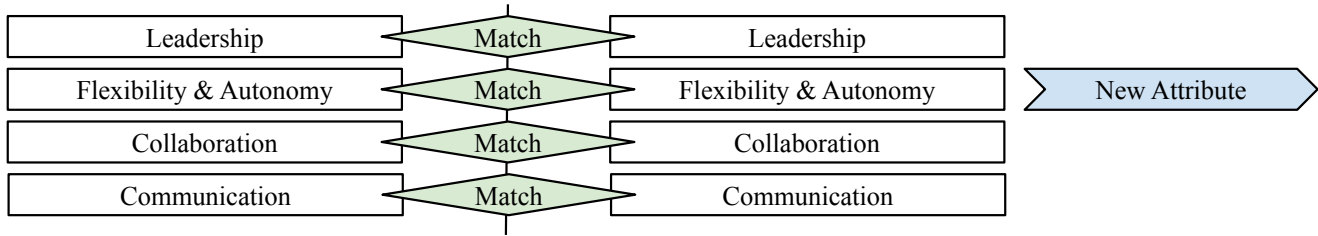
New Attribute

> **Remote Working Model**
>
> A majority of the INTs emphasize the importance of defining and implementing standards and guidelines for a Remote Work setting. Thereby, the active involvement and participation of employees in the decision making processes can create a positive effect on EX. Also, imposing such guidelines is very likely to directly influence the employees' working patterns and routines. In this regard, we abstracted this topic from the attribute *'Flexibility & Autonomy'* and incorporated it as a single attribute in the REX Framework.

5.4 Organizational Culture

Based on theory we expected that *'Organizational Culture'* is a dimension that surrounds all of the other themes in the REX Framework. The surrounding dimension also reflects the expectation that, although it appears to be more difficult in a Remote Work setting, the culture and values of a company need to be showcased and represented in multiple touchpoints of the REX.

The results of this study support our expectation that the organizational culture indeed can be seen as a contextual dimension, which influences the whole REX and the related themes and attributes. When asking INTs about the role of organizational culture for REX, INT 4 answered that *"organizational culture is what makes the EX"* (41:59). Similarly, INT 2 stated that organizational culture is the *"connective tissue"* (33:23), which holds everything together. These two statements support our expectation that organizational culture can be seen as a dimension, in which all attributes of REX are embedded. In addition, organizational culture was also mentioned in relation to the three other themes. For example, it was argued that the organizational culture is showcased in

how employees behave and work together remotely (INT 1), how the company values and takes care of the employees' health (INT 8) and in relation to how the physical office looks and the interactions that happen there (INT 9).

As expected, the results demonstrate that organizations have taken actions to ensure that the organizational culture is still present and perceived digitally, even without the physical interactions happening in the office. These results are consistent with Ancillo et al. (2020) stating that organizations need to consider what purpose their office has for their organizational culture, as a change into a less office-centered working model can impact physical interactions, which furthermore can influence the organizational culture. For example, virtual workshops (INT 6) or spotlight sessions (INT 9) have been initiated where employees can reconnect with the company's values and with each other. However, as expected, our results indicate that organizational culture can be more difficult to showcase without the physical office. Not necessarily because the values are reflected in how the design of the office looks like, as Morgan (2017) argues, but because the office is a place to experience the culture through interactions. INT 9 and 10 states that employees have not been able to live or feel the organizational culture without the office. Concerns are raised that employees can lose their identification with and connection to the organizational culture (INT 8) and also that it is more difficult to make sure that people internalize the organizational culture and behave accordingly (INT 1). Thereby our results indicate that organizational culture indeed can be more difficult to showcase in a Remote Work context, as employees are not able to interact and experience it and the values in the same way.

In conclusion, the above discussed results confirm that *'Organizational Culture'* is a dimension that surrounds REX and although it is more difficult, the values are showcased across the EX. Therefore, our expected pattern matches the observed pattern (Figure 32) and organizational culture stays as an overall dimension in the framework.

Figure 32: Pattern Matching of Organizational Culture
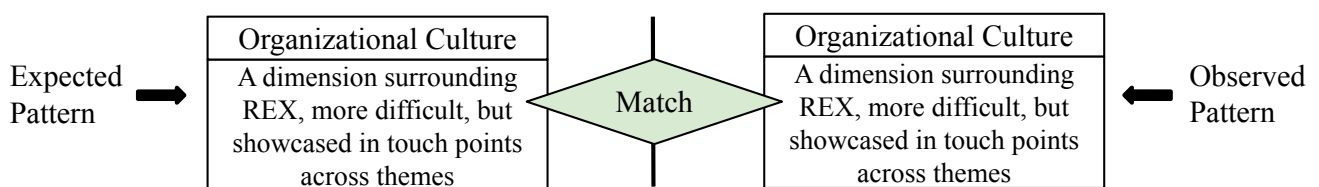
5.5 New Attribute - Preference & Personal Situation

The majority of the INTs emphasized the fact that REX seems to be a very subjective topic and each individual appears to have different personal preferences and life situations, which influence their experience. Thereby, a new unexpected pattern and attribute emerged when analyzing the data. This was coded and called *'Preference & Personal Situation'* and consists of three aspects, i.e. living situation, age and generation as well as the connected need for socialization, and the work situation.

Firstly, our results indicate that employees' experience of Remote Working is influenced by their own living situation (INT 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10). The results show that e.g. employees with small kids can have a more positive experience of Remote Working, as it increases flexibility (INT 1, 8). However, employees living with families in small apartments are likely to be more distracted, whereby their experience of Remote Working can be less positive (INT 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10). The living situation and the blurred boundaries between work and personal life is extensively debated in the Remote Work literature (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Popovici & Popvici, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). Secondly, our results show that the employees' age and generation (INT 1, 2, 4, 6, 10), as well as their personal need for socialization (INT 2, 5, 6, 10) also influences their REX. As younger employees may live by themselves and be in greater need of social interactions, they might experience working away from the office differently than those living together with families.

Lastly, our results suggest that the work activities (INT, 7) and the career stage of the employee (INT 4, 6, 10) can influence REX. Employees' daily tasks differ, whereupon working remotely can be experienced differently (INT 7). This aspect is consistent with prior literature, implying that tasks and activities, and their requirements regarding e.g. collaboration, interdependencies*,* equipment (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016; Ferreira et al., 2020; Kaufman et al., 2020; Lund et al., 2020) or supervision requirements (Kaufman et al., 2020), need to be taken into consideration when creating a Remote Working Model. Also, newly hired employees are more dependent on connecting, networking and learning from co-workers (INT 6, 10), which the physical office supports. This result coincides with previous theory, stating that building a network and finding mentoring relationships is more difficult in a Remote Work context (Allen et al., 2015).

To conclude, the results demonstrate that employees' experience of working remotely depends on their own needs and situation. Taking every employee's personal situation into consideration can, however, be overwhelming for managers. What the attribute instead aims to reflect is the importance of not considering Remote Working as a universal solution. As our results demonstrate, those solutions will negatively impact employees with different prerequisites for having a positive REX. Thereby, this unexpected pattern *'Preference & Personal Situation'* that is derived from our data is added to the REX Framework and incorporated into the theme *'Personal & Professional Needs'*.

5.6 Informed Theoretical Framework of Remote Employee Experience

Based on the matches and mismatches of our expected patterns with the initial patterns, as well as new insights and newly developed attributes, the following presents the Informed Theoretical Framework of REX. This is to visualize the outcomes of the Discussion.

Figure 33: The Informed Theoretical Framework of Remote Employee Experience
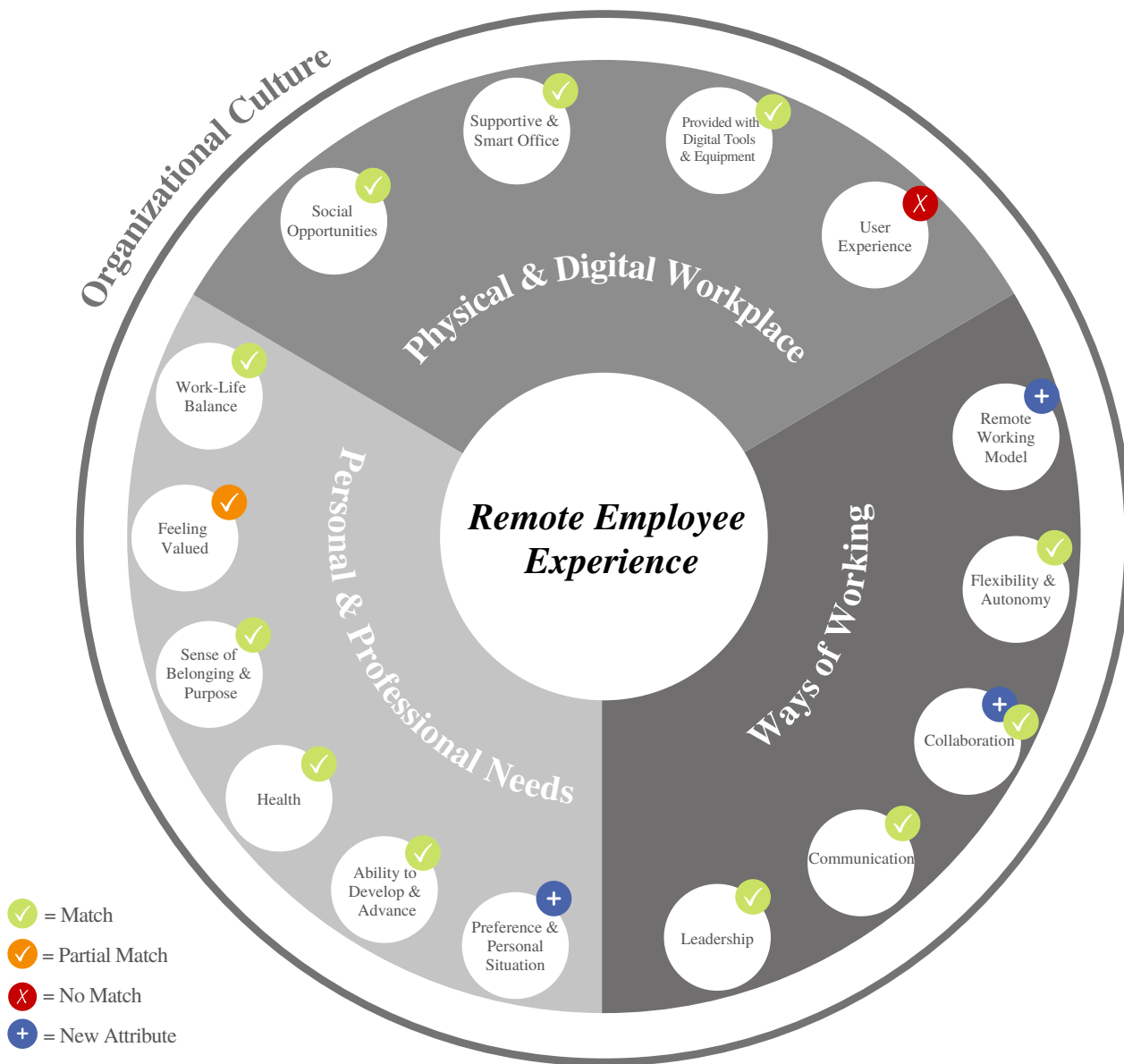
6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research questions of this study are answered followed by a section discussing potential limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are formulated. The chapter ends with a section of implications for theory and practice.

6.1 Answering the Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to combine the concept of EX with Remote Work in order to explore the combined REX as an entity. By comparing expected patterns derived from theory with observed patterns derived from empirical data, this study has been able to identify, refine and validate which attributes constitute EX in a Remote Work context as well as how the respective attributes of EX are reconsidered by the context. The research questions of this study are answered in the following.

6.1.1 RQ 1: What constitutes Employee Experience in a Remote Work Context?

In regards to the first research question, this study demonstrates that when the concept of EX is reconsidered in a Remote Work context, it constitutes four broad themes, with 15 attributes influencing REX. This study shows that the attributes that constitute REX are not very different from the ones mentioned in existing literature on EX. However, it has been successfully identified that three new attributes need to be taken into consideration to create a positive REX. These are *'Collaboration', 'Remote Working Model'* and *'Preference & Personal Situation'*. The final REX framework is presented in Figure 34 in the following.

Firstly, the study demonstrates that EX of working remotely is influenced by effective routines and behaviors for *'Collaboration'*, as the context of Remote Work impacts interdependencies and the way employees collaborate and interact with each other. Secondly, this study identifies that in order to enhance a positive REX, employees are in need of an effective and clear *'Remote Working Model'* that contributes with logistic considerations that do not hinder or impair the daily operations. Finally, this study identifies that employees' individual *'Preference & Personal Situation'* influences how Remote Work is perceived, as employees have different prerequisites for having a positive REX.

Figure 34: The Final Theoretical Framework of Remote Employee Experience
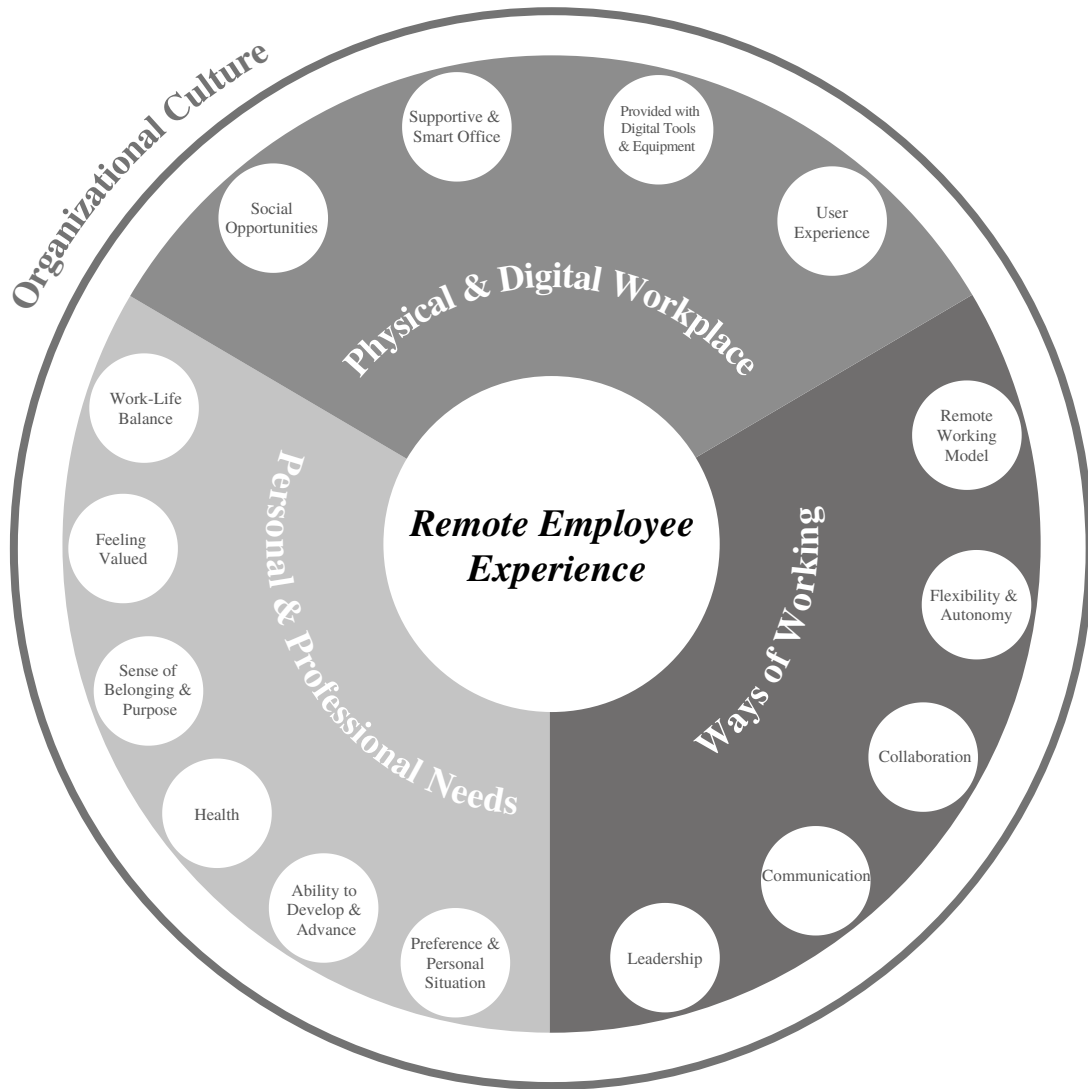
6.1.2 RQ 2: How are the aspects of Employee Experience reconsidered in a Remote Work Context?

In regards to the second research question, this study demonstrates that almost all attributes are reconsidered by looking through the lens of Remote Work. The exception is *'User Experience'* that was not expected to change within a Remote Work context.

On the level of '*Personal & Professional Needs'*, this study demonstrates that REX is firstly influenced by employees' *'Sense of Belonging & Purpose'*, where the sense of belonging can be more difficult to achieve to the overall organization in a Remote Work context. That is because employees are physically parted from colleagues, and serendipitous and social encounters in the office are missing. The study also shows that employees' sense of purpose can be more difficult to fulfil due to less regular communication. Secondly, the study shows that *'Work-Life Balance'* is contradictory in a Remote Work context and that boundaries between work and personal life get more blurred, leading to possible difficulties that can influence REX. Thirdly, this study identifies that REX is impacted by employees *'Feeling Valued'*, which in a Remote Work context is influenced by the feeling that their efforts are not overlooked, that they are able to contribute and speak up in hybrid meetings just like any other participant, and that they are treated equally compared to those who are physically present in the office. Fourthly, the study depicts that *'Health'*, and personal isolation and loneliness in particular, tiredness from excessive use of technologies and ergonomic health issues are emphasized when working remotely, which influences the EX Furthermore, results show that a Remote Work setting makes it more difficult for employees to have their health issues recognized. Fifthly, to ensure that employees' desire and *'Ability to Develop & Advance'* is fulfilled in a Remote Work context, this study shows that employees must feel that they are provided with digital learning opportunities. Also the fact that peer-learning is more difficult to do remotely can impact employees' development. Lastly, this study demonstrates that employees can feel that their chances of progressing in their career are impacted by working away from the office, which negatively influences their EX.

On the level of '*Physical & Digital Workplace*', this study demonstrates that REX is firstly influenced by '*Social Opportunities'*, which in a Remote Work context need to be replicated virtually in order to compensate for employees' feeling of isolation when working remotely. However, the study also shows that the primary purpose of the office is yet to provide employees with these social opportunities. Secondly, the study identifies that employees' feeling of having a '*Supportive & Smart Office'* depends on being provided with multiple work options for tasks that are hard to be executed off-site, as well as a smart management of the office space. Finally, this study depicts that employees in a Remote Work context must be provided with '*Digital Tools & Equipment'* with an emphasis on technical equipment and standardized collaboration tools in order to access the digital workplace from anywhere.

On the level of '*Ways of Working*', this study firstly demonstrates that *'Leadership'* influences REX by employees' feeling of being assessed based on output instead of input as well as being trusted and treated fairly by their leaders regardless of the working location. Secondly, this study shows that the *'Flexibility & Autonomy'* of an employee depends on the implemented Remote Working model of a company and that employees are in need of trust from leadership when working autonomously. Thirdly, the study depicts that *'Collaboration'* influences REX, that creative tasks, in particular, are hard to replicate digitally and that collaboration depends on new routines and behaviors. Lastly, the study discloses that employees in a Remote Work context are in need of *'Communication'* from leaders that is open and frequent and that communication is replicated virtually, which can however lead to issues such as miscommunication or inefficiency.

On the level of '*Organizational Culture*', this study has demonstrated that the organizational culture can be seen as an overall dimension whose impact occurs across the themes and attributes of REX. Although it is more difficult to showcase the organizational culture in a Remote Work context, as it can be less experienced together in the physical office, the cultural values need to be showcased in other touchpoints an employee has with the employer in a Remote Work context.

In summary, by answering these two research questions about what constitutes EX in a Remote Work setting as well as how the aspects are reconsidered by the change of context, this study has been able to successfully reach the research purpose to explore the combined REX as an entity.

6.2 Limitations & Future Research

This section presents the potential limitations of this study, discusses in what way they might impact the research and proposes future research possibilities in order to address these limitations.

The first potential limitation of this study is the result of deciding for an abductive approach and the consequent start of identifying theoretical patterns based on literature. Thereby, we automatically adopted the limitations, such as outdated data, or assumption based research of the studies we investigated. In fact, we noticed that the mismatches from the comparison of theoretical and observed patterns might result from this limitation. Despite only using accepted and scientific studies, it can be assumed that theory might have been biased. Therefore, adopting a different approach, e.g. by starting inductively, shows a potential for future research.

Secondly, choosing a qualitative research method with an explorative purpose is likely to result in a limited generalizability and representativeness of the results, which is explained on p.53. Although we noticed that data saturation was achieved after conducting ten interviews with HR experts within the creative industries, we recognize a small sample size as a potential limitation of this study, as these answers may not represent the overall creative industry. Collecting primary data of companies within Europe can also limit the possibility to generalize the outcomes due to different regional work conditions and regulations. As our INTs all reside in Northern and Western Europe, the results seem hard to generalize to areas in the rest of Europe. Therefore, generating and applying a larger sample size for the investigation of this topic, shows a great potential for future research to obtain more representative results. Furthermore, we suggest that future research can explore the topic within different industries to establish a more general outcome. As companies within the creative industries might depend more on creative and collaborative tasks than others, our study outcome might be biased and less generalizable to other industries. Another suitable approach to compensate for this limitation is to conduct a study with combined qualitative and quantitative methods.

A third limitation of the study is that primary data collection took place during the unusual and extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although this time, in which almost everyone worked from home, served as a perfect empirical context for us, parts of our findings might be exaggerated due to the special circumstances evoked by the pandemic. Employees were heavily restricted in their personal lives as well as how and when they were able to come to the office, which could have influenced their mental health and need for social interactions. Therefore, we suggest that future research should collect data after the pandemic in order to investigate and ensure that the findings are not biased by the pandemic and are still applicable during normal circumstances of working remotely.

Lastly, a potential limitation to our study is the approach of primary data collection as we collected data about EX by asking HR executives instead of interviewing employees themselves. Even though the HR experts provided us with valuable insights and answered our questions, we might have gotten more in depth and thorough answers from employees directly. Furthermore, the topic of EX is subjective and individual, whereby HR experts cannot reproduce these experiences. However, as the HR experts based their answers on their own conducted research and experiences, we still argue our results are valid. On this basis, further research on REX that is based on results

from interviews with employees shows a great potential in detecting additional or conflicting findings to further develop and revise the framework.

6.3 Implications for Theory & Practice

In regards to theoretical implications, this study contributes to the understanding of EX. By examining and integrating several studies about EX and critically evaluating them through the perspective of Remote Work, this study has in a novel way combined, presented and validated attributes, which are important for EX in a Remote Work context. By doing this, this study informs theory with a new broad overview of what attributes constitute the new concept REX. Consequently, this study informs previous theory about three new attributes that should be taken into consideration in order to create a positive REX, i.e. *'Collaboration'*, *'Remote Work Model'* and *'Preference & Personal Situation'*. The results demonstrate that it seems likely that attributes and themes are intertwined and mutually dependent on each other, which shows great potential for future research to analyze theme- or attribute specific characteristics. This would allow to critically assess and evaluate individual aspects of the identified attributes and themes of REX and to identify new characteristics and patterns within the framework. As research states that most companies are expected to continue with Remote Working to some extent in post-pandemic times, we believe that REX reflects a new and adjusted from of EX. However, research should continuously investigate the topic of REX to enhance the understanding.

Secondly, by showing that the attributes are subject to reconsideration when changing the context to Remote Work, this study shows that the understanding of how the attributes influence EX are contextually bound. This contributes to the understanding that EX is not only subjectively perceived and evaluated by the individual but also sensitive to the underlying context. As the world of work constantly evolves and changes, new disruptive times are most likely to occur in the future, which will impact employees' work-life and heir working methods and routines. Therefore, future research should explore the topic of EX in new work settings to enhance the understanding of how the concept evolves in symbiosis with its context.

In regards to practical implications, this study informs the related practice of HR, and any practitioner wanting to create considerate EX in a Remote Work context. The study and the related REX Framework are useful for practitioners to utilize as a broad lens through which they can understand the needs of employees' that should be

considered in order for them to have a positive REX. Thereby, this study provides organizations with a new view on how they can create, manage and maintain a positive EX in a Remote Work context.

In addition, when organizations are deciding for work arrangements regarding a hybrid remote working model, which can be more or less flexible in nature, our demonstration of how EX is reconsidered by the Remote Work context can inform practitioners in their decision making process. Since this study informs and raises awareness about what consequences the operationalization of Remote Work can have on the EX, practitioners are, with this information, in a better position of understanding the challenges Remote Work evokes when creating a positive EX. When practitioners are aware of the impacts and challenges associated with Remote Work, they can prevent, mitigate and counteract the risk of potential negative effects of a Remote Work setting on the experience of their employees.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Types of Pattern Matching Approaches in Qualitative Research

Figure 35: Pattern Matching Approach adapted from Sinkovics (2018)
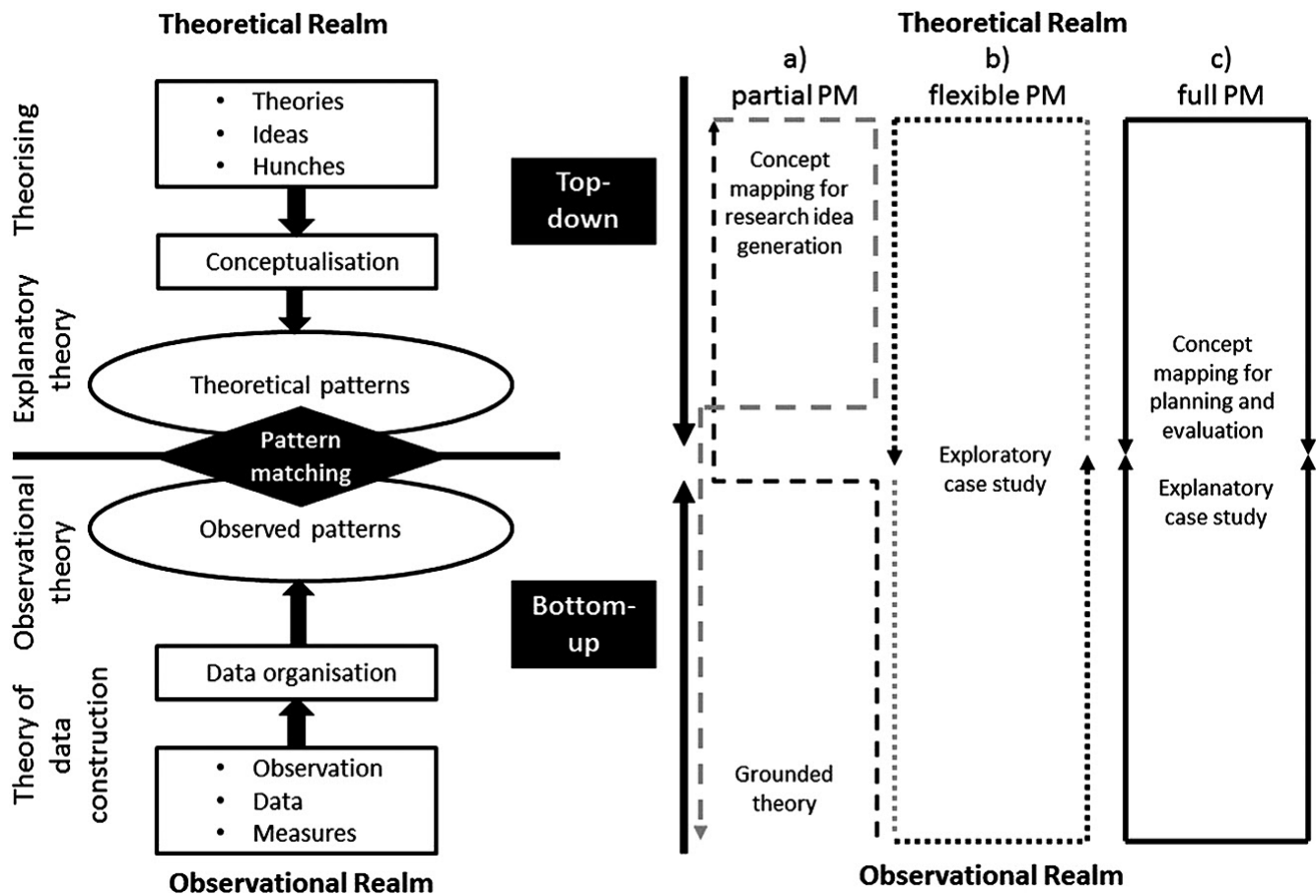
8.2 Interview Guide

Introduction
- Thanking the Interviewee
- Introducing the Interviewers
- Clarifying the definition of EX and Remote Work
- Asking for consent to video record
- Introducing the structure and process

Clarifying questions
- What is your role at ...?
- How many employees are working at ...?

1 Personal & Professional Needs
- How would you say that the Employee Experience has been impacted personally by working remotely?
  - Did you experience that employees had different personal needs when working remotely?
- How would you say that the Employee Experience has been impacted professionally by working remotely?
- Have you done anything differently this year to address these personal and professional needs?

2 Physical & Digital Workplace
Physical Workplace
- Since we are investigating the Remote Work context, how much have employees at … been able to be at the office in the past year? How remote did you work?
- How do you think that the Employee Experience has been impacted by not having a physical workplace?
- How have you made sure that the Employee Experience that used to be created in the physical workplace is now transferred into a digital workplace when working remotely?
  - What aspects of the physical workplace are hard to transfer into a Remote Work setting?
Digital Workplace
- What kind of digital tools and technologies are important for … to create a positive Employee Experience while working remotely?
  - What is the purpose of these technologies? Why did you implement them?
- Is there something you have not been able to replicate through technologies?

3 Ways of Working
- What kind of work activities have been difficult to perform for employees?
  - How has this influenced the Employee Experience?
- How much support and control has been needed when managing employees outside of the office, without being able to see each other?

- What kind of new work processes and routines have you implemented to enable Remote Working?
    - How has Remote Working impacted interpersonal processes?

4 Organizational Culture
- In what way would you say that your organizational culture has been impacted by working remotely?
    - How did that influence Employee Experience?
- How do you maintain an organizational culture while working remotely?
    - How is that affecting Employee Experience?
- How are the organizational values transferred when you don't see each other?
    - Would you say that it is harder to see or feel the culture when being apart from each other?
- What is the role of organizational culture for ensuring a positive Employee Experience while working remotely?

Extra Questions (if time allows)
- What has been the biggest challenge for maintaining a positive Employee Experience during this time?
- What has been the most frustrating thing for employees?
- Has the transition to a Remote Work setting been a positive or a negative experience for employees?
    - Depending on your answer: will you continue working remotely in the future?

Concluding Question
- Is there anything about Remote Working and Employee Experience that we have not covered in this interview that you would like to elaborate on?

Final Questions
- Clarifying whether to be kept anonymous
- Asking for consent of using quotes and agreeing on sending them for approval via email

8.3 Code Checklist

Table 8: Overview of Used Codes in Interviews

Theme	Attribute	INT 1	INT 2	INT 3	INT 4	INT 5	INT 6	INT 7	INT 8	INT 9	INT 10
Personal & Professional Needs	Sense of Belonging & Purpose	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Work-Life Balance	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	Feeling Valued		x			x	x	x	x	x	
	Health	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Ability to Develop & Advance	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	
Physical & Digital Workplace	Social Opportunities	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Supportive & Smart Office	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
	Provided with Digital Tools & Equipment	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x
	User Experience										
Ways of Working	Leadership	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x
	Flexibility & Autonomy	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Collaboration	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Communication	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Organizational Culture		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
New Code	Preference & Personal Situation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

8.4 Coding Example

Figure 36: Example of Coding

Figure 37: Example of Individual Coding Approach a)

Figure 38: Example of Individual Coding Approach b)

8.5 Interview Transcripts

Interview 1

00:00:02
Interviewee 1

It is confidential because XX on a global basis are really, really...

00:00:11
Kerstin Nystedt

Yes, of course. So we will have your company name anonymously. And also, would you prefer to have your name and your role, also completely confidential? Then I'm just going to start here, one second.

00:00:35
Interviewee 1

So now you are the technician? Yes, exactly. We never trust the technology so we always want to do it at several places. But just to introduce ourselves very shortly, as we did in the mail. We are studying at Copenhagen Business School. My name is Kerstin. I'm from Sweden. And Rena who is also here in the call, she's from Germany. We are studying a master's program called Management of Creative Business Process and now we're doing our master thesis which you are participating in. The purpose of our study is to investigate what aspects of employee experience are reconsidered in a remote work setting. People can have different views on what Employee experience is. But with employee experience, we mean employees emotions and perceptions of all interactions they have with their work and its environment. So it's a very broad concept you can say. With remote work we mean a flexible work arrangement in the location that can be outside the traditional place to work. But employees doesn't have to work outside the office every day to be considered a remote worker. So the questions that I'm going to ask you now in the interview, they will be about how you have experienced that employees' at XX in Sweden have been impacted by this year of remote working. And the questions are going to follow four themes. So the first one is going to be about professional and personal needs, and then it's going to be about the digital and the physical workplace and then ways of working and organizational culture. And the questions are also very broad, but that's our intention. So please feel free to talk about anything that comes up in your mind. I am going to be the one asking the questions and Rena is going to mostly listen and just flick in if she has anything to ask.

00:02:46
Kerstin Nystedt

Good. So just to clarify a little bit more now, in the beginning, how many employees are working at XX in Sweden?

00:02:59
Interviewee 1

Well, it really depends on how you count them, because we have a lot of people that are coming in and out and working on small or shorter projects or on specific artists and things like that. But I usually say that we are everything between eighty five, up to ninety five somewhere about that. So around that.

00:03:19
Kerstin Nystedt

OK, that's good. And during this year of Pandemic and Remote working, how much have employees actually been able to go to the office to work?

00:03:30
Interviewee 1

Well we haven't actually closed the office totally. We did it for a short time and then we said it was voluntary to come in if you want to. And we're still in that face, actually. And that was since March last year. We closed it totally and then we started it up again. And we kind of fully, more or less opened it up in August. Actually we divided people to A and B groups. So that it wasn't that many at the same time. And then we had that for a couple of weeks then we had to remove that one as well. So now it's volunteerely to come in. So I'm in the office today, for example,

and I'm usually in most of the time. So I would say there are about, depending on day and what's happening and if there are artists in and if they are going to have a photo shoot. Things like that draws more people to the office because the artist is coming in for something. So between 15 people are in office the everyday something like

00:04:38 Kerstin Nystedt	So it depends a little bit on what's going on. OK, good. So then let's start with the questions around the themes. So first of all, we're going to talk now about the personal and professional well-being. How would you say that employees well-being at XX has been impacted by working remotely this year and how has that affected their employee experience?
00:05:05 Interviewee 1	I think it's been in different kind of phases over the year, actually. I think first everyone was like "oh, that's cool. I could be home. I don't have to put on any makeup". You know, thinking this is kind of nice actually. I did a questionnaire to all of the employees after a couple of months to ask them how they feel about this and how would they like to do in the future when it comes to work? I got answers like "I will never, ever come back to work. This is the best thing that ever happened to me" And then you came to this kind of second wave. Not with the pandemic but more to the feeling and emotional about being at home. Then people started to get everything from physical obstacles to more emotional obstacles, I think. And what we have seen so far over the year is actually that the younger you are, and if you're living by yourself, the harder this has been for you. It has taken on your mental health a lot more. The ones that actually have adjusted the best to this and thought this was the best are the ones with small kids. Kids to be picked up from daycare centers and things like that. They don't they don't feel guilty that they have to leave the office because they just leave their home share and go and get the kids. And then you could go home and still continue to work. But if you're sitting all by yourself in a small apartment, well, it takes it turns, actually. So that's what we have noticed. Now I think we are more in the face of that everybody are longing for coming back to the office and sitting together, actually.
00:07:04 Kerstin Nystedt	So you would say that it's some kind of feeling of being isolated that's been hard for people living alone?
00:07:14 Interviewee 1	Yeah, I think they felt lonely. What we also noticed, and I think that is one of the questions that's coming up, is that the employees notice that the creativity is going down when working remotely because we have all the technical issues in the meetings. When you see each other in real life, you can easily get a feeling of " OK, she's happy. He's mad. She's stressed. He's sad". You get that feeling in the room so you can adjust to that person. Meeting over Zoom or teams or whatever, you can't really get that feeling. So you have a tendency to be more direct and just go over the agenda that you're going to have during that meeting and then you hang up. So the social part of the coffee drinking and the lunch out in the sun has not been there. I don't think it hasn't been good for a lot of people.
00:08:20 Kerstin Nystedt	Well, that's really interesting. So of course for creative people, it must be hard not to feel that you can get that creativity out from you. Since it is a big driving force.
00:08:31 Interviewee 1	Yes, since we're working with music, one of the biggest creativity things you can work with. People here are used to going to concerts, hanging out with friends at concerts, seeing artists every day, hearing loud music every day at the office. And those things you've kind of missed right now, I think. And it was nice in the beginning. Now I can tell people don't feel this way anymore. We're getting more sick leaves now.

00:09:11 Kerstin Nystedt	But do you think also that the employee experience has been impacted because employees professional needs have been harder to meet when working remotely?
00:09:18 Interviewee 1	Yeah, a lot. We can really tell it on the creativity side. We can also tell it on the, without being mean here, but people that usually don't do their office hours, they don't do it from the home office either. They do less hours from home, of course. And people that really do their office hours, they are doing more office hours at home. So they don't feel that they can quit working. They feel like they have their work with them all the time, because they see that their computer is up all the time at the dinner table, they can see it from the kitchen and so on.
00:10:16 Kerstin Nystedt	That's true. And what have you at XX been doing to try to address employees' well-being, both professionally and personally?
00:10:28 Interviewee 1	Sorry?
00:10:31 Kerstin Nystedt	Have you done anything differently this year to try to address these tougher things about their personal and professional well-being?
00:10:46 Interviewee 1	Yes, we have. Yes, we signed up an agreement with Mindler which is online therapy. Everybody can go there for free as much as they want to. We have a lot of different things. We have a thing where we share everything from cooking recipes to training advice, to good books. Everybody got a free prescription from Storytel for example. This is a very, very generous company. We have online training and things like that, running school for those who want to be outside. We have Monday meetings with everybody, start-up Monday, where we try to play all the new music as normal. We are sending home Swedish fika so that everybody can fika together from home and like that. So we have done a lot, I think on a regular basis.
00:11:58 Kerstin Nystedt	It sounds like that definitely. Great, so let's move on to digital and the physical workplace. You already mentioned that it's harder for you to be creative outside the office. How would you say that the employee experience has been impacted by not having a physical workplace? What are you missing the most about having a physical workplace?
00:12:23 Interviewee 1	When I ask the employees, they're saying they missed a chair. Because if you're living in a small apartment, you have to sit and you work from the dining table or from the couch or from your bed. It's nice for maybe an hour, but it's not nice for a year. So I have had a lot of back complaints and we have sent home all equipment to everybody so that they will have their normal equipment at home. For those who want it and also have a place for it. So they say they miss the Chair, and they say that they miss their mates. So they miss the feeling of being part of a bigger thing, which you don't feel when you're at home of course. If you look at it from the positive side you have people that say " yeah, but it's perfect now when I can do it at our country house and work from there. I can go for long walks in the middle because that suits me and my dogs. Then, I work longer in the evening So there are positive and negative things. But I think right now, the bad parts are actually a little bit heavier than the good.
00:13:55 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, it's interesting. I also feel like it depends on where you are in your life and also your personal preferences and maybe your social need as well. In order to try to transfer this physical workplace to the digital, what have you tried to do to create this feeling of being part of something bigger? Is it these activities that you talked about?

00:14:25 Interviewee 1	Yes, the activities that that I mentioned. We have tried a lot of things that other companies have said that "this worked for us". For example, we have an open Slack channel that is open 24/7. That's our fika channel, the Swedish fika. But we noticed that nobody's using it. But if we do, for example, a music quiz on Fridays, everybody's there. So we noticed that some things worked better for us and that some things haven't. So we use slack a lot, another smaller communication platform. We are also trying to do that those of us that are in the office can go around and, you know, take screenshots or video films from the office and then put it up on the Slack channel to say "hey, it looks the same, but nobody here!" "It's still an office!", so employees get a feeling that there is still an office there.
00:15:36 Kerstin Nystedt	That it exists
00:15:38 Interviewee 1	Yes, it exists. So that's a smaller thing that actually reminds people that they're part of the bigger plan. But it has been hard for them. I mean, we usually have big parties every year, you know, big kick offs, big Christmas parties, big summer parties. We are always part of the big festivals like Lollapalooza, things like that, also Way out West. So people are longing for those big things that we can't do right now. Of course, we have done them online like the Christmas party online and sent home kits to everybody so they could celebrate at home. But I mean, it's not the same, to be honest.
00:16:27 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, no, I agree. Yeah, it's hard because of course, we want to see something that's happening in the future that we can look forward to. But now everything is taken away.
00:16:36 Interviewee 1	Since most of the people that works here actually works here because they're interested in music. They are interested in going to concerts and they are normally used to go to a couple of concerts every week. So now it's like, " What's happening in my life?"
00:16:58 Kerstin Nystedt	Yes it has changed a lot...
00:16:59 Interviewee 1	Yes, but I mean, if you the technical aspect, everybody has what they need at home. Aset up etc, they have everything. They have computers, they have audio systems, everything at home. So. It should be OK for them to work from that perspective, at least.
00:17:23 Kerstin Nystedt	I lost you a little bit. You mentioned that slack has been really important for you. What other kinds of tools or technologies would you say have been really important for you in order to create a positive experience this year?
00:17:45 Interviewee 1	Slack is one of them. Then we're implementing Monday, but it's not up and running in that way. Good thing is that we have more time to implement those kind of support systems. But it's not there yet. So I can't say it has supported us that much yet. I would say that Zoom and Slack has been our major communication tool. Yes.
00:18:23 Kerstin Nystedt	Has it been challenging to get people to work with the technologies, or would you say that the implementation of this has been smooth?

00:18:35 Interviewee 1	Yeah, I think so. I mean, we we decided rather quickly to close down the office, and when we did that the same day, we informed everybody that we will put the IT department in one of our conference rooms and said " hey, they're here now and available for all of you who need to come down and have some kind of training before going home, then we'll help you set it all up. Try it, do it." Things like this. I think it's gone rather smooth, actually.
00:19:07 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah. Did you have flexible work arrangements before or was it new to you? *Interviewee shaking her head* You had it before? Yeah, ok great.
00:19:19 Kerstin Nystedt	OK, then let's move on to ways of working. Would you say that the employee experience has been impacted by new processes and routines or ways of working during the year?
00:19:33 Interviewee 1	One of the most obvious things is actually that the working day starting later. Suddenly, we are more on southern Europe time now. Usually the office hours are 8.30 to 17.00 and now it's more like 10 ish. If I try to arrange a meeting before 9.30 or 10.00, everybody's like "what that early?". So I think everything has a tendency to be more late actually.
00:20:26 Kerstin Nystedt	Do you think that some people are frustrated by that? That people have so different rhythms in their days?
00:20:38 Interviewee 1	Yeah, I think so. I think for us, it's it's been quite obvious in the past that if you work internationally with our international artists, you have to work during night time. They have other kind of hours. So people know that if you start to work with the international department, you know that you're going to work during night and then everybody's like " OK, that's the international department". Of course, then they should come in later to the office because they will work later. But now it's more like everybody more or less are starting later. And then you have those that are starting early that are frustrated and like " What's happening with the day?" So I think people have been a little bit frustrated about that. That the day has been pushed forward a little bit. What I hear at least, I don't know if it's true, is that people are out a little bit more and try to go out during lunchtime, take a quick walk or something. That would never happen if they were in office. Not in the same way. They would probably go out and buy lunch and then go back and have the lunch. But now when they're sitting at home, they go out for a walk and come back. So I think that is a good impact, actually. But otherwise, I noticed, that misunderstandings occur more. It's easier to misunderstand each other and also the blame game, as I call it. "He said, you said, they said, everybody said I didn't say anything". And I was like.
00:22:27 Kerstin Nystedt	Oh, really?
00:22:31 Interviewee 1	That has to do, I think with everything from the technology that they use, for example, Slack or email. So they, you know, answering each other in different kinds of threads. And then it's going around and they misunderstand each other. Normally, they would just go up from the chair and go into the next room and say "Hey, what did you actually mean? I didn't get that one" and "are we really going to release XX now?" then they would reply " No, no, no way. Where did you get that from?" Now it's the blame game. "Did you say that? You said that".
00:23:15 Kerstin Nystedt	Do you think that this has also impacted how employees have experienced this whole remote working year? That communication has been tough?

00:23:26 Interviewee 1	Yes, I know that they think like that.
00:23:31	What other work activities have been difficult to perform? You mentioned creativity and that it's been hard with the creative tasks?
00:23:41 Interviewee 1	Yeah, I think so. What has taken time for us to land in, in this way of working and moving forward from this, is for example training and education. We usually... Now you freezed for me, so maybe I freezed for you.
00:24:01 Rena Riekenberg	I can still hear you, I think it was just her.
00:24:05 Interviewee 1	Ok, Kerstin you are freezing every now and then. You always have a strange kind of face when you freeze like...
00:24:13 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, it's always in your most weird position...
00:24:17 Interviewee 1	But I think those normal things that you're actually supposed to do as an employer, like development talk, salary reviews, training and education, things that you normally do in real life and in meeting have been much harder to actually do. I have a feeling that the management has been like " well, maybe I could see them next month" and " then everybody has got their vaccination in the next month" and I will then be like "No, it's deadline now!" and all will be like "oh, OK" and then they try to figure out " OK, person A, he wants to see me in real life, person B wants to see me over Zoom, person C wants to see me out-doors, person D wants to..." You know. So I think it's been challenging for the management to adjust to this situation because the employees have so many different opinions about how it's going to be done. So that has taken some time for us to figure out how to do it in a good way. Now we know, but I mean, it nearly took us a year to figure this one out. Then goes for the training and education. We normally have some kind of inspiring talk every month, but those are inspiring because they are in real life and the person is in the room and actually has this kind of energy from a stage. It's like a concert. A concert is nice to listen to on Zoom, but it's something totally different when you are in the audience in real life. This is the same for inspiring talks. So it nearly took us a year to come to some kind of, you know, "OK, if we're going to continue to educate people, we have to do it over Zoom".
00:26:25 Kerstin Nystedt	So you have adjusted it to also do new kinds of routines for these kinds of activities?
00:26:31 Interviewee 1	Yeah.
00:26:35 Interviewee 1	We have been forced to actually. Because after six or eight months... his fall we actually realized that OK, this is not going to end. It's not going to go the way we hoped. So we need to adjust all of those normal yearly things that we're supposed to do. We have to adjust.

00:26:55 Kerstin Nystedt	yeah, It's been longer than we thought. Thinking about what you said, would you say that it's the activities and tasks that require interdependencies between people, that that has been the hard activities to do? For example, the creativity part if you are collaborating a lot. And that those routine's have been hard to do remotely which impacts employee experience?
00:27:28 Interviewee 1	Yeah. I mean, for example, we have an in-house agency here and they can't work remotely. They have been in the office all the time. And they have wanted to be here all the time because they can't have someone sitting at home because most of the equipment that they need when being creative is here. And it's way too much equipment to take home to your small apartment. And a lot of people needs it. So they have been here, for example, the whole time. But they need the creativity, of course, from other people as well that is not in the office. So that has been a hard thing, I think. And also, I think it's been hard for artists as well. Our artists are used to coming in, seeing us, playing new songs for us, being presented to new cover or having a photo shoot or whatever. And now some artists are not there. No, I don't want to come. And then it makes it even harder for us. How should we do it then? If you don't want to come here and we got to do something, how should we figure this one out? So it hase taken some time.
00:28:38 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, It's almost like a chain reaction. If this doesn't work, then this is not going to work etc. And what happens to the motivation then. And like everything.
00:28:46 Interviewee 1	Yeah, I mean, for us it took some time, for example, for the artists to figure out that all of the concerts were canceled. And then I think most of them thought that they would be up and running maybe in the summer. And then, "OK not summer, but then early fall?" Then no. "Ok, but at least Christmas concerts, please?" No. After that, everybody understood that we need to figure out how to do this in another way. So it's been a change for everyone, actually.
00:29:23 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah. What kind of routines have you implemented or done now? To ensure that remote working works?
00:29:37 Interviewee 1	Well we have those weekly meetings start on Mondays as new for us. We have. We have.. what more on a routine basis... What's actually happened is that they have moved. I mean, we had start up Monday physically before, now we have it on Zoom. We have the training and the speakers in real life but now we have it online. So we actually have just moved the platform more or less. What we have more of is that managers have more department meetings now.
00:30:26 Kerstin Nystedt	More department meetings ok, yeah.
00:30:28 Interviewee 1	They of course had it before as well in real life, but now I think they have more smaller ones, shorter ones. So they have to be closer. Since otherwise when sitting in the same room, the managers usually can pick up if somebody is feeling a little bit down or something is happening in the room. Now, they have to pick that up via Zoom instead. So they have to do theeck-ins more often than they would have to in real life.
00:30:58 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, to see those cues and if someone is stressed

00:31:02 Interviewee 1	Yeah, so I think that has been like a new routine. Otherwise, I think we've kind of tried to stick to the ones we had, but just moved the platform from real life to Zoom.
00:31:18 Kerstin Nystedt	Do you experience that the manager's role in making remotes working a good experience has been really important?
00:31:34 Interviewee 1	Oh yes. Yes, of course. I mean, of course it has taken different time for different managers to adjust to this one. For some it was like " OK, let's do it. We do like this" and for some it's like "What? Zoom?". But then after a while, they got used to it. But most of the managers have been in the office or are in the office every now and then.
00:32:08 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, ok, great. Then let's move on to the last theam which is organizational culture. How would you say that your organizational culture has been impacted by working away from the office the last year, and how does that affect employees and their experience?
00:32:30 Interviewee 1	Hmm. That was a good one
00:32:38 Kerstin Nystedt	Has it been hard to maintain the culture?
00:32:46 Interviewee 1	Both yes and no, I would say. I would say that the bad things about the culture have been more emphasized while working remotely because it's been more obvious. We have, for example, a lot of younger people that are doing their first job experience here. And I think they have had the hardest time to adjust to this kind of working situation. Because they are normally being trained by somebody that is older and more experienced. Now they have to be trained by somebody remotely and that is hard for them. We have had a tendency to have, I call it in Swedish the "Läktar beteende", and that is that you are actually putting yourself up above and looking down on stage and say "Hey, why is everybody doing like that? I'm not taking part of that. I'm not going to do that. No, that must be the management's responsibility". And that has been worse. I don't know why it has been like that, I don't have a good answer on why. But my experience is that that has been worse during this remote work. It's been easier for people to not take responsibility and not being accountable for the actions of what they're saying. It is like if they say it over Zoom or the different kind of evaluation systems it's like it's not me saying it. It's just like somebody else. Compared to if we do it in real life and have interviews or things like that. Then it's harder for them to actually hide behind something and pretend that they're not part of it. So I think from a cultural perspective, it's been worse actually working remote.
00:35:07 Interviewee 1	But I mean, some parts... I don't know what parts have been better, huh? I think it hasn't better from a company perspective. I think from a personal perspective, it could have been better. As I said in the beginning, some of the people that have small kids that need to be picked up from daycare centers and things like that, they think this situation is just great because they don't have to feel the pressure and they don't feel stressed over the situation. But from a culture perspective, it's like, I can't find any good about it.
00:35:57 Kerstin Nystedt	But organizational culture is a fluffy kind of s o sometimes it's hard to address it. But do you think that organizational culture is also. That it's hard to, like, showcase it or let it through? Because otherwise, as you say, you have a lot of inspirational talks in your office and that you

have a lot of creativity going on and artists are coming in, etc., and that it's harder to do those kind of things remotely or if it's been actually kind of OK.

00:36:33 Interviewee 1	I mean, we have adjusted to it over the time. Of course, it was harder in the beginning and I think in the beginning people were more like "OK, we're going to conquer this. We're going to make it. No trouble. We will win over this". You Then one day we realized, like, OK, we will not. This will take time. The added anything to our culture, I think. And I don't think it has evolved that much either, actually. What it has, is that has given us time to reflect a little bit more about, as I said, different kinds of systems and things like that. But I think we have lost a lot of time during the way. We have also lost some of the culture, the organizational culture. But I mean, is it really bad? No, it's not. I mean, are we still having a good year? Yes. Have we have any redundancies? No. So, I mean, in that kind of position, we are lucky. So we haven't had to be worried about people that has to lose their jobs and things like that. I mean, people still stream music.
00:38:05 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, for me personally, it's been like more important than ever to listen music and to to get that kind of nice experience.
00:38:17 Interviewee 1	And that's how it is. I can't see any specific... I think that the challenges that we have had within the organization or with the culture, I think we would have had them anyhow. Even though we weren't remote working. We had 'me too' experience, we had the Black Lives Matter experience. And they would have come even though we were remote working or not. They have nothing to do with it. I don't know if it's been easier to handle them remotely or not, but it is what it is.
00:39:15 Kerstin Nystedt	But now also, like a little extra final question. When you're assessing the past year, has the transition to this remote hybrid working solution been a positive or negative experience for employees? Mostly?
00:39:36 Interviewee 1	Hmm, that's a good one. I think every change is actually a positive experience. I mean, in the end, you have learned something about it and you have probably learned something about yourself as well. So I think when we are coming to the end of this kind of pandemic and remote working era, we probably have learned something and grown somehow. I would assume that some of our staff would say it has not been a positive experience at all because I know they're not feeling very well. And on the other side, people are saying this is the best thing that ever happened to me. And then you have all of the rest in the middle or in the between. I would say, as I said in the beginning, there was different during different times, depending on when we asked them. They were going from this "Yey." Everything is a little bit easier when it's sunny outside as well. So, I think overall, I think it's been good for us to actually be challenged in this way. We have to think in a different way. We have to look at ourself in another way. We have to look at all our routines and processes, and how should we keep creativity high without seeing each other? So that has been good for us. Would I like to do it again? No. To be honest.
00:41:18 Kerstin Nystedt	When we're moving past this pandemic, how much of this remote working will you continue to do or how much will you be away from the office, do you think?
00:41:30 Interviewee 1	Right now we are sketching around between six to eight days a month. Somewhere around that.

00:41:41 Kerstin Nystedt	And will that be for all employees? Or are you going to divide it based on roles somehow or tasks?
00:41:49 Interviewee 1	Yeah, I mean, if you're sitting in a reception, you can't do the reception remotely. So you have to be in the reception, for example. So there's just so few people. But the rest should be able to continue working remotely.
00:42:09 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, I think...
00:42:12 Interviewee 1	That is a change that I think you will see everywhere. All of a sudden all of the companies and all like the old fashioned management style of that you should be in the office 8.00 to 17.00, otherwise you don't work. And actually, that person sat there and browsed travel arrangements for the summer vacation the whole day. Maybe it should be better if they work from home and could do it during lunch time and then they work. I mean, whatever. So I think you will see that there'll be more people working remotely.
00:42:50 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, it's interesting. It's going to be interesting to see how everyone is doing this. All right. That was actually all our questions. So is there anything about remote work or employees doing this this year that we haven't covered yet that you would like to elaborate on?
00:43:21 Interviewee 1	No, I think I covered at all. I think the results will differ depending on, as I said many times, the personal situation. And how long you've been working, I mean, if you're doing this for the first time, if you have been working one year or 20 years or if you're sitting in this whole big house or in a small apartment. What kind of network you have on a social level. Things like that. Yes, it is dependent on that I think a lot.
00:44:04 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, it's a lot about your situation and your preference and what kind of needs you have.
00:44:10 Interviewee 1	Yeah. And as I said, some people, if they could choose, they would never meet a person again. They sit there and they are so happy about it. And then you have people saying they are so sick of this. " I'm going out to sit in a café, rather working here right now". So it is really an individual thing. Maybe that is actually the take away from this. That work is individual, and that it isn't meant to be in the same shape for everyone. Maybe that's something we need to be able to adjust to, in order to be an attractive company in the future.
00:44:55 Kerstin Nystedt	So it feels like, as we said before, that the leaders or managers have struggled a little bit with dealing with everyone's personal preference? That can be a question of how much flexibility are you actually going to give employees?
00:45:12 Interviewee 1	Yes. I understand them. I mean, if you have 10 people, and you want to have this department meeting and it's after the pandemic, so you will be able to sit together. Then eight of them say "yes, we are coming in" and two says "no, I don't". and then, the manager says that "OK, but I want everybody in the room". "No, I don't want to. I want to work from home today". So mean, how hard should that be? Where should you draw the line? Should it be like "But I want you to come. So you should be here. I pay you". Or should it be flexible? Like "Yeah, four could be there, one can be there".

00:46:01 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah exactly. And how does that work? To have meetings where some people are in the office and some are not.
00:46:10 Interviewee 1	I mean that we already know because we had a period of that. So I already know that people who are not in the room felt like they were not part of the meeting.
00:46:20 Kerstin Nystedt	Really? That's interesting. And how do you feel like you could change that? Is there any way that you can work so that they will feel a part of the meeting?
00:46:31 Interviewee 1	Yeah. I would assume that would be a challenge for us in the future because I think that's how we would see it. Now we're installing much more technical Zoom rooms, you know, conference rooms. So it will be a fully transparent experience where we will feel that the person are in the room and sitting on of the chairs in the room. So they feel like they are in the room. But still it will be a challenge because, as I said before, it has to do with what people are actually picking up as to "auora" in the room. Is that person in a good mood or in a bad mood? Is she smiling in a nice way or in a bad way? So it will still will be those small things that will be the challenge. So we could try to fix it on a technical basis, but we cannot really. I mean, the challenge would be on a personal basis.
00:47:32 Kerstin Nystedt	Really interesting. Nice. OK, good. So we already talked now about that we're going to keep everything confidential so the company name and everything. Also, there will be a situation where we want to maybe use a quote from you, and then we will need your consent to use your quote. So would it be OK with you if we then email you and ask if we can use it?
00:48:08 Interviewee 1	Yes, of course. Just give me a call or e-mail me. Or if there are any kind of follow up questions or something else unclear or something. No problem.
00:48:17 Kerstin Nystedt	That's super nice. And also if you're interested, we would also be happy to share our results with you.
00:48:25 Interviewee 1	Yes, of course. I want to see it
00:48:30 Kerstin Nystedt	A little summer reading in June.
00:48:33 Interviewee 1	Yeah. So if there's an executive summary somewhere, I promise I will.
00:48:43 Kerstin Nystedt	All right. Thank you again so much for participating. It's been super interesting to hear your input and reflections. And we got really interesting answers from you.
00:48:57 Rena Riekenberg	Thank you so much.
00:48:58	Well, thank you and good luck to both of you now. OK, thank you. Take care.

Interviewee 1

00:49:03   Have a good afternoon. Bye bye.
Kerstin Nystedt

Interview 2

00:00:02
Rena
Riekenberg

Maybe shortly to introduce us we are two students from Copenhagen Business School. My name is Rena and this is Kerstin and she's from Sweden, I'm from Germany. So right now we're together writing this Master thesis and currently interviewing the H.R. experts and experts with employee experience. So for this interview, I'm more doing the talking and asking you questions and Kerstin will be in the background listening and maybe jumping in if I'm missing a question. So, yes, I mean, I already told you in the email a little bit what this will be about. But to tell you again, the purpose of the study is to investigate how employee experience has been impacted by the remote work setting we are all in right now over the past year. And we came across in literature at least, that employee experience and remote work can be understood quite differently. So just to be on the same page, when we talk about employee experience, we mean all the emotions and all the perceptions of the interactions that an employee has with the workplace and with the environment. So it's actually very broad. When we talk about remote work, we talk about the flexible work arrangement in a location outside of the office. But we also know that an employee does not have to be one hundred percent out of the office in order to be considered remotely. These Definitions just so we're on the same page. So and now I'm going to ask you a few questions about how you have experienced that employees at XX have been impacted by the past year. And the questions I'm going to ask you are basically structured in four different aspects. So first, it's going to be about the theme, personal and professional well-being and then the physical and digital workplace, then the ways of working, and lastly, the organizational culture. And we have quite broad questions on intention because then it's nice for you to talk freely. So just tell us whatever comes into your mind.

00:02:12
Interviewee 2

Great, I will.

00:02:13
Rena
Riekenberg

Perfect. And so just maybe as a start, can you tell us how many people work at XX so that we have an idea?

00:02:20
Interviewee 2

So we are talking about 7000 employees. Here in the Netherlands w e have actually grown from two hundred and twenty, I think we were before the pandemic, to approximately 250, we're going to hit sometime soon. So we've been adding quite a few people even through the pandemic. But right now we're talking about Amsterdam 240 people or the Netherlands. If we're talking about a region, which is a region that I oversee, s o different offices, but also different people working remotely in other countries, we're talking about almost 700 people, including Europe and Turkey.

00:03:02
Rena
Riekenberg

Yeah, wow that is a lot. And during the past year now, to what extent did you work remotely? Was it since the lockdown started or were you able to come back to the office?

00:03:16
Interviewee 2

So the approach that XX had, and especially here in EMEA and in Europe is from the 12 of March, we requested everyone to stay put and stay at home with waiting for further instructions to see how this thing was going to develop. Later we know back then that we were actually going to stay on working from home indefinitely, which is the situation that we actually have

gone through. So we sent home people on the 12th of March, one year ago, and ever since, everyone has been working remotely from their homes.

00:03:53
Rena Riekenberg

Wow. That is very interesting So maybe we can start with the first theme, personal and professional wellbeing. So what would you say? How has the employee's personal wellbeing at XX been impacted by working remotely?

00:04:12
Interviewee 2

Well, it is really hard because obviously everyone's situation is very particular, very different. And when you look at the population, for instance, of our office in Amsterdam, we have a population that goes from newly grads recently moved to the Netherlands from somewhere else, to people who are well established, who have families who have a social mesh and environment outside of work. So obviously, the impact has been very different for one or the other. When you remove them from the office environment where they're normally working and you isolate them back at home and you just put them in front of a computer and ask them to just do business as usual. We've done quite a few researches on a regular basis, so really looking at the well-being of employees doing the questionnaires on a monthly basis. What we've seen is that we've had people who have suffered greatly from isolation and we have people who have benefited immensely from the possibility to have completely freedom in how they schedule their work and their private lives and almost everything in between.

00:05:29
Rena Riekenberg

Yeah, so it's really different from person to person regarding their situation.

00:05:33
Interviewee 2

It is very hard. And at some point we were trying to really gather the specifics of each one individually. But we just figured out that it was so different. There was always no two different situations because everyone has a completely different situation going on in their lives. So it is really a big priority. But if I would choose a few themes, I would probably think that isolation is one of the biggest impact. The difficulty for people who have been joining the company to really build their social connection with other colleagues when you're not really in the same physical space with them, it's been really hard. So we've seen quite a few people who've really had trouble going through onboarding in the first few months because they were really unable to build relationships with their coworkers because they were not in the same physical space. And again, that's different per person. Some people will adapt immediately and some people will really have the difficulty of connecting.

00:06:45
Rena Riekenberg

Yeah. And what would you say how did the general employee experience change in a remote setting?

00:06:54
Interviewee 2

Well, it's hard. I think we've gone through a couple of ups and downs. I think in the beginning, everybody kind of discovered very quickly, that with the right tools, which we do have in the software that we provide our employees, but also in the right set up that we actually, as a company, we very proactively tried to provide quickly to our employees to set up their offices at home. Once you have the tools, you can actually pretty much organize yourself and work as normal as possible. So doing the work, it wasn't really the problem. It was all the other things that were really hard for people.

00:07:35

Yeah, but you took initiatives to counteract the things that were missing out ?

Rena
Riekenberg

00:07:41 Interviewee 2	So again, through the researches that we did, we were able to see that, for instance, some people, or the majority of people, could really benefit from having some wellness help in the form of having coaches in the form of supplying them with, again, the possibility of hiring someone to help them out on a one-on-one basis or subscriptions for things such as headspace, an app, where there can be with meditation or just to relax. So we really iterated and tried a lot of those things. Something that we also did very actively from almost week one was really to try to keep on going with the socialization, even through the virtual tools and Zoom and video and stuff like that, to really help out with that connectivity among the employees. But yes, we still develop and things like that. We again, as I said, for their own comfort, we we came up with different solutions for helping them to acquire furniture or lend it from the office, get the proper chair or the proper screen or headset, all those small little things, that could just tweak and make their lives working from home a bit better.

00:09:06 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah. I think that was really impressive. And regarding the professional wellbeing, do you also think that the employee experience has been impacted by employees not being professionally fulfilled by not working from the office?

00:09:19 Interviewee 2	Well, I think one of the feedback that we got from research was that people were afraid that the visibility of their work was going to be less because we still have this perception that by just being present in the office, people see you there, they see you working. That's how you're going to get a promotion. This is a knowledge, that it's fading away as work culture is changing, and I think we definitely, in the tech world and even in our company culture, we don't have that much of that because we are so used to working in an asynchronous way where we're working with one side of the world and the other side of the world. And I don't need to be in the same time zone or in the same place or in the same country to do my work and to share that with my peers. So I think that had a really big impact. To begin with, some people were really afraid, like "I'm not going to be in the office. You're not going to see me working as hard as I do. The hard work that I put on is gone unseen." So we definitely, on the HR. We try to monitor that sense with employees and trying to guide them and give them the opportunity to realize that what is really important for us as a company is to really measure results rather than measure the amount of hours that people are putting in. So, to show that actively, we had our founders who were actually vocalizing that and say, "guys, we're not going to measure anymore how many days, how many hours you put in your work. We just want you to go with the work that you know that you can do and deliver on that". So I think that that took a lot of pressure on how people felt about their performance and their possibilities for development, because obviously, if you don't perform well, how can I how can I develop, how do I get a promotion and that kind of stuff. At the same time, it has been really hard this year to really make assessments on one-on-one with employees. For instance, I'm a manager and I manage people across different geographies. And I know that the type of work that they've been doing this year has been impacted by Covid. So we have tried to be very candid on how we were giving feedback and also how we were assessing employees just because we know that this has been an exceptional and a very different year than before.

00:11:47 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah. So you were also talking about the ability to grow and to develop. Did you also have any initiatives or did you change the way you were giving them the opportunity to educate, to develop and to grow now in a remote setting?

00:12:02 Interviewee 2	Not really. I mean, it is a bit hard for me to answer, because it's really not my expertise. That is really next to me - that will be my colleagues from learning and development. So I don't want to shoot myself in the foot by saying, "no, we didn't do anything". And then remember, "oh, yes, they shot out an initiative". But I think what we were trying to focus on for the largest part of this year was really to survive and to just make people aware that even if they felt that they were not working as hard, it was OK, because this is a really very tough year. So I don't feel like there's been really a lot of additional focus on promotion or development. It's been more of a survival status. And for sure, there has been the opportunity to change or to move to a different type of work and promote people. I know that in my team our work was changing and there was an opportunity for someone to just embrace something else that we were never able to do when we were doing, business as usual from the office. So this was an opportunity for that person to just get into that. And we've promoted and we've made that possible for individuals. Yes.
00:13:25 Rena Riekenberg	That's super interesting. So now I would continue with the digital and with the physical workplace. So now, since you have been remotely since March, how would you say that the employee experience have been impacted by not going to the office every day, but working from home?
00:13:43 Interviewee 2	So if I can speak for my own experience, I think that at some point, it feels like your personal life and your work really blends with each other. And it's really very hard to put boundaries not only in the physical space, but also in times. Your days start very early, they end very late. Everything comes in between. I have teenager kids in my house that tell me "we feel like we're stuck in your office" or my husband's office, which is on the other side of this room. So that has some psychological impact for sure. ust being all day in the same space, even when you are disciplined and you go for walks during lunch time and you go in sport at the end of the day or the beginning of the day, and you give yourself a breather at some point, the constrictions of just being in one space versus the way we were used to. When if you've been to office, you've seen that we have very different types of spaces where we actually promote that people transition from one to the other because it's not only healthy to move around, but also kind of changes your mindset so you can work in a different way. I know for myself, being here behind this desk or standing here behind this desk for 8-10 hours like I do every day. It's just it feels like a flat liner. And that's something that I've heard from other people. They're generally being stuck in the same physical space. It feels very, very, very heavy, especially after a year. And some people will say, you know, that they missed the commute, which is what? How do you miss commuting? But it's just the fact that you're now restrained and you can't get out of the place where you are. It has affected people more than we think they would.
00:15:38 Rena Riekenberg	And you were also just talking about the blurred lines. So you would say it's harder to keep a balance between work and life now, probably when you're at home?
00:15:46 Interviewee 2	Yeah, and it's funny because for years I've been an advocate of ditching the work life balance because I always feel I'm from the school that says, when you're using the the word balance, you're almost setting up yourself for defeats because, I don't know about you, but my balance is very bad. So I find it really very hard to keep things in balance. I always like to think about life work integration. So you have these moments where you're focusing on work and then you have those moments where you're focusing on your family and so on and you structure your day accordingly. So, for instance, you have rush hour in the morning when everyone's off to school and then you can focus on your work and then you have a break and then you focus on yourself and then you focus on something else. I think in some ways, if you have the discipline to really make breaks and understand that it's OK to go for one thing and go to the other, the situation

can be very helpful. I think, for people who really struggle or have a mindset like, 'OK, I'm working now. It's nine o'clock, I'm going to work until midday, then I'm going to take my pause for lunch, and then I'm going to come back and then I'm going to work until five or six'. This situation is really very hard, especially if you have other people around you. So again, it is very personal, but I think it really shows that we have to learn and teach ourselves to be a bit more fluid in the way we go with our time. And again, it is a great freedom. But, you know, it requires discipline, it requires being just conscious as well of what it is that you did it for.

00:17:41
Rena
Riekenberg

I totally agree. And, back to the physical place, what did you do as a company to kind of transfer everything that usually happened in the physical place in the office to ensure the same employee experience, and that this still happened somehow in the digital space?

00:18:01
Interviewee 2

So if you are not referring to furniture and things like that, which I think I've briefly touched. So we shipped or we made it possible for people to pick up chairs and different equipment and things like that. What we try to do is to replicate a bit of the social life through Zoom, replicate a little bit of the wellness programs that we normally would have in the office with having yoga classes, with having workshops, cooking lessons. All kinds of people have organized all kinds of games and happy hours. From talent shows to all kinds of things. And it's been really very, very fun to see also people taking the initiative to do that more than just a company doing it, but really people being involved themselves. It also really speaks very highly of how the culture of the companies is and how people really take ownership and really get involved rather than just sit and wait for the company to do a lot of things. And funny enough, I always get the sense like 'oh, we're not doing enough. People are not getting enough out of it also because, again, it's hard to combine with work and if I can take a pass from work to just attend a pizza cooking workshop". It really goes in people's mind. But I think that what I really liked is that people have really taken initiative and have been really pushing and doing things for themselves. And when we go and ask them if we should we do more, people are more and more just happy for us to just be in a conversation. So for my team to be in a conversation with them, like, "hey, what do you need? What does your team need?" And I think what we're hearing more and more that what they really want or what they really need is this all to end and to be able to go back to some kind of normal life.

00:19:59
Rena
Riekenberg

I feel the same, definitely. But what would you say was the hardest aspect to transfer now, like what was not possible to, what you usually have in the office, to now transfer it into the digital world?

00:20:13
Interviewee 2

I feel like I'm repeating myself, but it is really the socializing and the connecting people. Throughout the years, we've always, and that's really what my team does, through creating the work environment, whether it's the physical design of the office or all the small little programs and events. What we try to do is really to create and curate the space where people can meet each other, where they can make connections and where they can thrive. They can learn from each other, grow on a personal level, but also grow professionally, do their best work. How do you connect people when you don't have that meeting point at the coffee machine or at the queue in the canteen or socializing on Fridays for drinks or meeting up on a Wednesday night for a movie, because you all have these movie club where you like to watch the same kind of movies. How do you do that on a virtual world? It is really very hard, and especially because sometimes, the best encounters really happen spontaneously when you're not even expecting it. You bump into someone on the stairs and you start chatting and you end up going out for coffee and having a great conversation that is going to help both of you, with work for you or personally. And I think that's those things, because now even the social life has to be planned, if it fits in the Zoom agenda. So that is really very hard.

00:21:41 Rena Riekenberg	So the social aspect, collaboration, communication?
00:21:43 Interviewee 2	Yes, for sure.
00:21:45 Rena Riekenberg	I understand. And now you already talked about that you use Zoom for example. What kind of different technologies or digital tools did you now implement in order to ensure a positive employe experience when everyone works remotely?
00:22:02 Interviewee 2	Well, I think the biggest change was really to move all of our meetings to being zoom meetings. And this is something that we're really probably moving forward as well when we have some kind of a form where some people might be in the office and some people might be working from home. We are currently running a pilot in Sydney where the circumstances are better with Covid and some people are already going back to offices. We are maintaining the rule where everyone dials in from wherever they are into the meeting room, rather than all of them getting into a meeting room, which is kind of weird, but it's just emocratic with those who would not be in the office. They kind of dial in. And those are techniques and things, like using technology that we've learned from Anonymous/Program, for instance, which is part of our company but it was a company that we acquired previously. And there are a lot of other remote companies who do that. So for us, we didn't have to introduce that many tools because we already had a lot of collaboration tools. We were already using Slack. We were already using Confluence and Jira for all kinds of other things. But I think the normalization of Zoom meetings, that's really what became the biggest thing ever since the lockdown.
00:23:26 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah. So then it was probably not hard for everyone to familiarize with the tools, just that they have to use the tools now.
00:23:34 Interviewee 2	Yeah, exactly. Yeah.
00:23:37 Rena Riekenberg	Interesting. OK, nice then I would move forward to ways of working. So how did the usual processes and routines of employees change or have been impacted by not being in the office? and how has that impacted the experience of employees?
00:23:55 Interviewee 2	Well, I think we touched a little bit earlier the blurring lines that having a very specific start of the day and the end of the day, just because you're not in the office. But also having regular breaks and things like that, I hear a lot from people that those are things that they're missing just because when you're in an environment where you are with other people. Everybody goes for coffee - you kind of join them for coffee. Everybody goes for lunch - you go and join them for lunch. So I think that has made that people have really longer days, that they're less conscious of the use of their time as well and how they spend it only focusing on work and not not spending enough time recharging and refreshing themselves.
00:24:43 Rena Riekenberg	But did you also notice any tasks specific differences that for some people it was more challenging to work from home than for others regarding their usual processes they are using?

00:24:56 Interviewee 2	No, I think, again, because we're very remote focused. Within our organization almost, I dare to say, 70 percent of us will be reporting to someone in a different time zone in a different part of the world. We are very used to working independently and using the collaboration tools to really share information and stuff like that. So in that sense, it hasn't been that different. I think what I've heard from a lot of people is that, and this is not is not 100 percent true, but introverted people have really appreciated the fact that they didn't have to be in an environment with a lot of noisy people. And those who, like the noise are really being bothered by how quiet it is in their homes. To have to really change the way they work, I don't think it has massively affected the way we work. Other than not being able to have those impromptu meetings with someone, being able to approach someone on the same floor or even on a different floor and just go and have a one-on-one conversation on something. Now, again, you have to approach them through probably through slack, schedule a zoom meeting and then moving to the next platform and have a conversation.
00:26:22 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah. And regarding the management or the leaders of Anonymous/Company, probably it was different for them to handle all the different needs you talked about. Everyone has different rhythms. Can you maybe elaborate what you experience there?
00:26:43 Interviewee 2	You mean how our management has reacted to this situation?
00:26:48 Rena Riekenberg	Yes and how they had to implement new ways of approaching things and how they changed their way of working as well, I guess.
00:27:00 Interviewee 2	Yeah. I think again, yes and no. It hasn't changed that much. We have a leader who is also very much in between different parts of the world, between Australia, within the US. I think probably the biggest change for them is that we're not able to move to go anywhere, but just stay put and really and really from top down, really show by example, how to use the tools and prioritizing sometimes yourself over work and really learning how to be effective with your time. And also being disciplined and allow yourself to take a breather. I think they show us in many ways that it is important to for instance, take additional holidays. We've implemented that, especially for Covid relief for all employees worldwide. And they were the first ones to show by example to make sure "hey, you need to take care of someone because of covid things, just take time off, you should additionally take time to take care of your children because they are not able to go to school. Please take the time off". So I think that's the biggest thing that we've seen from them. And they were always already very present. We have very regular communications from our leadership. And we've gone through a lot of iterations on whether we needed a weekly update or my weekly update or a long letter or a short video. So we now have a combination of all of those. But we regularly hear from my leadership where they're actually reminding us on the new rules of engagement. And I think the biggest message that I liked it was the fact that this is not business as usual. And hearing that from our leadership, it was really... I mean, I have it on a Post-it on my wall because I think it is really important for me to know that although I can't pretend that I can do a lot of things like normal, the situation in the world we're living is not business as usual. So that's the biggest message I think we receive from them.
00:29:14 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah, I completely agree. And in the beginning, you already talked a little bit about your organizational culture, and the next chapter is the organizational culture. So how has this impacted the culture and the employee experience by not being in the office and not showcasing the culture?

00:29:32 Interviewee 2	Well, I guess it has taken culture into the next evolution cycle because that's what happens with company culture. I've been lucky enough that I've been working for Anonymous/Company for over 10 years, actually 12 years. So when I joined Anonymous/Company, we were really a very small Aussie base with a very small group of people in San Francisco and only four people in Amsterdam. We knew everyone and we really had a very different company culture than we have now, just because culture really evolves also as you grow and as you scale, but as you mature as a company. So obviously, us being a public traded company with thousands of people, with international presence in many countries, it is a very different dynamic and a very different company culture than when we started over 20 years back. So for sure, the Covid and the lockdown situation has really given another twist to the company culture. And I think that's how it has affected us the most is just a realization that we don't need to be in the same room to really work effectively with each other. And that's a pain for some people and it's a gain for some others. But I think in the end, it goes really back to that collaboration and also to that communication and that connectedness. And I think it's the one thing that we're resisting and the more people are suffering, the more it's a very essential part of our company culture that we don't want to see go away or change. So, again, we're holding on very much to connecting in many ways whether it's with all these events or programs just to make sure, that that part of our culture really doesn't change because we always stay in our values. We play as a team and now it feels like we're all playing by ourselves. So it's really very hard to maintain the culture when we're in this situation.
00:31:48 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah. So you also try to maintain this part, but also the other part you try to let evolve.
00:31:57 Interviewee 2	Well, you have to let go. You have to evolve. And it goes pretty much organically, obviously, with the fact that we can't be in the same space. A lot of things go away. You know, the natural fun that comes from having hundreds of people in the same space and in the same room really goes away. But again, I think the focus and the sense of ownership that people have of the work has only even increased, which was something that as a company, we're always very proud of. We have very intelligent people that work really, really hard but also own very much what they do and they are very passionate. And that, funny enough, has maybe increased even more now that they're away from others, because this is almost all they have right now. This is so important in your life, and it's and it's a way to show that you care and it's a way to show, you know, that you're still relevant and you're still here.
00:33:03 Rena Riekenberg	So they still have this sense of connection to the company and still that sense of belonging.
00:33:08 Interviewee 2	Yes.
00:33:10 Rena Riekenberg	That's really nice. And then just a last question for the organizational culture. What would you say is the role of it in order to ensure a positive remote employee experience, especially now?
00:33:23 Interviewee 2	I always thought that company culture is part of the connective tissue and how we really connect with each other and how we actually blend in an organization. You always have different types

of people. And historically, we've always hired, some people say, well, you hire for culture, but it's not really what we do. What we actually try to do is we try to have a variety of people that will actually enrich the experience. So adding flavors rather than just adding more salt. You know, you want to have a little spice of this and a little spice of that, it's like making curry. You know, you have all these different ingredients. And just depending on how much of one or the other you have, it would taste differently. So we are really trying to focus on having people that are individuals and different and that have something different to bring to the company. And that's something that we definitely are trying to do and continue to do, especially now, because it makes it more interesting. And even if we can't connect in the same way with each other. But it also helps in building for the future.

00:34:41 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah, definitely. That is super interesting. So that was basically already the thing we wanted to talk about. But now when you assess the past year, would you say that the whole transition to a remote setting has been rather positive or more negative?

00:34:59 Interviewee 2	Well, it's hard to say because it doesn't feel like we're fully transitioned to a remote setting. It feels more like we've been pushed into it or forced into it. And the hope that we have, of course, is that we can still go back to some form of office space if people desire to do that. So, yeah, it's really hard to say if it has been easy or it has been hard. Again as I said earlier, I think we find out pretty quickly that we could do work pretty OK from from home. I think the longer it goes, the harder it is just because I think that still the majority of people want to come back to the offices in some form or shape.

00:35:51 Rena Riekenberg	So do you also have that as a plan for the future that you will still continue for some people to work remotely, or will you go one hundred percent back to the office?

00:36:00 Interviewee 2	The statement that Anonymous/Company has already made publicly is that we are not going to require people to come back to the offices if they don't want to. But that doesn't mean that we're going to shut down our offices. So we're still working through the question, what does that exactly mean and how is that going to look in the future. We're right now working with other companies and monitoring a little bit, what's happening in the industry. But the predictions that are being made right now is that probably 50 percent of people will want to come back to the office in some shape or form, whether it's full time or part time, two or three days or maybe once a week. We want to make it possible for people to come whenever they want, how often they want or stay as much as they want, working from somewhere else, whether it's their homes or their home offices or maybe some kind of other arrangement that they want to make closer to their place or where they live. So it's still in development. And we'll definitely keep our offices as more of a hub and probably a meeting point. And that's something that I think that also goes together with our culture and also our philosophy of collaboration and coming together. And it goes with what we said earlier, if I know that I can do my work from home and I have no interruptions here, then I will go to the office to meet with people. And I think that could be ideally a good compromise, that's Anonymous/Company would like to work with.

00:37:45 Rena Riekenberg	So using the office for more the social aspect and for collaboration. And then whenever you have to focus...

00:37:52 Interviewee 2	For sure. For collaboration, because we do understand that again, different teams work in different ways within our organization. You will have developer teams, you will have support

teams, you will have sales teams, you will have financial teams. And some of them really can benefit from doing a sprint where you're on a whole week, all the other teams together in one room. But then the rest of the quarter they can just be wherever they want to work from. o to accommodate those teams that work like that, but also to accommodate the teams who can benefit from just being sitting next to each other and chatting. We want to create this diversity of spaces where people can really work in different ways.

00:38:36
Rena
Riekenberg

Yeah, that's super nice. And now, as a concluding sentence, what would you say was the biggest challenge that you had in order to create a positive employee experience in the past year?

00:38:50
Interviewee 2

I think the biggest challenge always comes with communications when you are in this crisis situations because you want to be clear, you don't want to be panicky. You want to give people hope, but you don't want to give them false hopes. And that has been in this last year very hard because we've gone through all these waves and all these different times where we felt like, "we're out of the woods in summer time". It looked like we could come back to the office, after summer and then it didn't happen. And here we are, right? And it's really not looking like it's getting any better for the Netherlands for sure. I think the last news I heard from Germany is also not good. xcuse me. I don't follow the situation in Denmark...

00:39:42
Rena
Riekenberg

It's actually getting better here. But you never know.

00:39:48
Interviewee 2

Yeah, so definitely the balanced communication and where we are given the relevant information at the right time, in the right tone and keeping people informed of the decisions that we're making. And for sure the why we're making the decisions that we are making, why we're keeping people still at home rather than opening offices, why we want them to feel like they can make the choice between working from home or in the office in the future. All of those things have been a challenge. But for sure, for us it was really a priority, because we know that that's also something where we build trust within our community with our employees. And to me, trust is one of the most important things that we need to have in the company to be successful.

00:40:43
Rena
Riekenberg

That's true. Well, nice. I think we already have so many valuable answers from you. But is there anything about, about remote working or employee experience that we didn't cover yet?

00:40:54
Interviewee 2

I don't know. You really have very good questions. And I really have to think " oh, my God, y eah, how was this?" And I really try not to repeat myself, but I think I've given you the perls?? of how it's been. It's been very emotional. It's been very weird. If I can speak of my personal experience and how I have experienced the change in my work. I've been focusing on physical spaces and offices and the employee experience within a particular setting, which is the office setting for the last decade. And then suddenly that is not relevant. So that was kind of scary, but if you flip it on the other side, it just means that I, together with my team, get to invent and to work and reimagine together with other teams, whether they're HR of the people, teams that we have at Anonymous/Company on how the work of the future is going to get done, where is it going to get done, how people are going to work and interact. And that's a great challenge.

00:42:07

Yeah.

Rena
Riekenberg

00:42:10
Kerstin Nystedt

Can I quickly jump in here?

00:42:13
Rena
Riekenberg

Yeah, sure.

00:42:16
Kerstin Nystedt

I think it was just really interesting to hear that you're now also starting to think about how you will do it in the future and that you will give employees the freedom to choose more to come into the office and not. So I was just wondering if you can see any difficulties or challenges with allowing employees to choose and if it's going to be difficult to have them 50 percent of the workforce in the office and 50 percent remotely?

00:42:43
Interviewee 2

Yeah, so we're working already a lot of those programs for quite a few months. And I think the biggest challenge that we see is that we want to have a democratic approach to things such as well-being, benefits. And, when you go to the office, you have all these hidden benefits just because you have free coffee and you have free meals and you can play at the pool table with people. I mean, silly stuff that we take for granted. But how do you translate those experiences of the lounge and of the community? How do you translate that to the remote environment? How do you make sure that people that are working from home, from wherever they're working in rural Germany or France or the UK or even rural Netherlands and never come to the office, how do we make sure that they get that sense that they're not missing out on things. Because it would not be fair right? So we really are squeezing our brains about "how are you going to do this?" And the same goes for employee engagement. How do we make sure that they feel that they belong, that their sense of belonging is a lot less because they don't belong into an office. How do we make sure that they're as engaged in things that are important to our company because they're part of our values, such as community engagement. We do a lot of things where we are paying back to community. And we're doing a lot of things with our foundation and things like that. And when you're remotely working far away from an office, it's just simply more complicated and more difficult. It doesn't mean you can't do it. It's just a different type of approach. Same things for other things and other perks that will just come with "we're celebrating this, we're giving out a party". It feels like it's only the fun stuff, but it really is beyond that. How do we make sure that the wellness of people working remotely is really met in the same way that the wellness of people working in an office? Obviously your own wellness, it's in your own hands. And we have this approach where we give the tools to people and we expect them to take control of it themselves. But it always helps when you're in a group of people where you have friends and they tell you "oh you should really check that app" or "you should really join this meditation, cause it's really very good", "you should really read this book". When remotely, just because you're socializing less, you might have a little bit less of that. So the biggest question is how we democratize the employee experience. And we make sure that our offerings but also our support, like my team, we support employees when we're in the office where we just bump into them, they come and ask us questions. They make suggestions on the fly. Of course, they can go into a bot and just create a ticket and raise a question. But how will we make it fair for everyone?

00:45:47 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, it feels like it would be more intentional with everything you do to really meet everyone. Because maybe we're used to that everything just happens in the office and that you don't have to think about all these different groups.
00:46:02 Interviewee 2	Yes and it's funny because intentional is the hot buzz word that we're using now for everything, because it is the way we need to design these programs and we need to have the approach for employee experience.
00:46:18 Rena Riekenberg	Super interesting and super difficult.
00:46:22 Kerstin Nystedt	It is also interesting to see how you are going to do it in the future.
00:46:25 Interviewee 2	I love to share the experience with you sometime if you're interested. That is a great question. Thank you so much.
00:46:34 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah. Nice, is there anything else about Kerstin that I forgot?
00:46:39 Kerstin Nystedt	No, I think we've covered everything. And Yes, thank you so much. Super interesting answer and it will be very helpful for our thesis.
00:46:47 Interviewee 2	I am more than happy to engage with you ladies. And if there's anything else that you would like to cover that you think that I can help you with, please have my email. You know where to find me. So I'm more than happy to help. I would love to jump on an airplane and go to Copenhagen and join you for coffee somewhere. I love Copenhagen and I haven't traveled in more than a year and I feel like I'm about to die.
00:47:18 Rena Riekenberg	Yes, definitely! Next time it will be possible you should let us know.
00:47:21 Interviewee 2	I will. Thank you so much for reaching out.
00:47:24 Rena Riekenberg	Yes, I have just another question, because now we're going to, of course, analyze everything you said. Is it possible to use your name and the name of Anonymous/Company in our thesis, or do you want to be kept anonymously?
00:47:36 Interviewee 2	I would rather keep that under the sleeve. No names. Otherwise, we'll have to go through the legal process to get everything signed off.

00:47:45 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah, not a problem. You can do that. And if we, for example, want to use a quote out of the interview, is it possible that we can send what we want to quote from you to you so you can approve if that's OK and then of course still keep it anonymously?
00:48:00 Interviewee 2	Yeah that is fine. We'll do that.
00:48:02 Rena Riekenberg	Nice and If you're interested, of course, in the final results, we can also send it to you when we're done in may finally with our thesis and then we can send the results to you if you want.
00:48:13 Interviewee 2	Yeah, that would be great. How many other companies are you talking to or are you interviewing.
00:48:19 Rena Riekenberg	We now have eight. And we're still hoping for a few more, but so far we have eight.
00:48:25 Interviewee 2	And are they all from different industries?
00:48:29 Rena Riekenberg	Our master is about the creative industries. So we had to stick to the creative industries and software and tech companies belong to this industry. But we also have gaming and music and film and fashion....
00:48:44 Interviewee 2	Wow, that's really interesting. Oh, that's great. Well, then I'm definitely interested in the result.
00:48:53 Rena Riekenberg	Then we will share it. Nice, then thank you so much for your time.
00:48:55 Interviewee 2	Yeah. Thank you again. And I hope to see you or hear from you soon.
00:48:59 Rena Riekenberg	Yes, hopefully.Bye, have a good afternoon.
00:49:01 Interviewee 2	Thanks, you too. Bye!

Interview 3

00:00:02 Kerstin Nysted	Then we will just put on the recordings, one second All right. So to introduce us very briefly, as I told you, we are students of the Copenhagen Business School where we're studying our master's in creative business process, it's called. So I am Kerstin and this is Rena, who is also here on the call. I am going to be the one who is interviewing and Rena is going to listen and maybe jump in whenever she has a little question. So in our research we are investigating what aspect of the employee experience are reconsidered in a remote work setting. And so we are doing this now by interviewing H.R. experts and other HR people within the creative industries to ask them about their reflections over the past year. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to ask you questions of how you have experienced that Employees at Anonymous/Company, am I saying it correctly?
00:01:07 Interviewee 3	Yes. From my experience, it depends where you're from and how you say it. For my first half a year, I also was pondering whether I said it right. Then I noticed that all the other Brits were saying the same and all the Danes say is a certain way. And yeah, it's lovely. Yeah. No, it's good.
00:01:25 Kerstin Nysted	Ok, then I'm going to continue with Anonymous/Company. So the questions that I'm going to ask you are going to follow four main themes, which are personal and professional wellbeing. It's the physical workplace, ways of working and also organizational culture. And the questions are very broad, which is our intention so that you can feel free of answering it your way. Please ask us for clarification also if it's unclear what we ask for. But before we start, we want to hear a little bit about your role in what you are doing at Anonymous/Company
00:02:09 Interviewee 3	Cool, ok so I actually came to Anonymous/Company about one year ago and I have a background in something totally different. So it's not HR, although I have definitely dabbled in HR. before. Prior to that, I have an education in multimedia design and digital concept development. And then I had my own company for about three or four years where I worked with location based audio for different XR applications. And then when I had my own company, along with three other people, I was always sort of involved with the very people orientated tasks, as well as many HR activities. And it kind of came quite naturally. I mean, when you have your own startup, then you actually have many hats on. So it was like HR on one hand, graphic or UX designer on the other side. So then I came to work about a year ago and I started as office manager and then gradually my role grew as the company has also grown and then that developed into a much more sort of HR orientated role.
00:03:19 Kerstin Nysted	It's nice when the role develops over time and then goes in a nice direction that you like.
00:03:26 Interviewee 3	Yes, I'm not saying this because it recorded but I'm actually, I mean Anonymous/Company has some absolutely wonderful people working for it. So it's an absolute pleasure and super inspiring. So I was very lucky.
00:03:39 Kerstin Nysted	How many employees are working at Anonymous/Company?

00:03:42 Interviewee 3	OK, so we have our headquarters in Copenhagen. I believe it might not be exactly correct, but I think it's about 38/39, some of which are full time, some are part time. And then we have about eight in Greece and then two in the US.
00:04:01 Kerstin Nysted	Oh wow, OK. And they are working remotely full time or...?
00:04:06 Interviewee 3	Yeah that's at the moment. Yes. In Greece it is a lot harsher than it is in Copenhagen or in Denmark. The restrictions are greater. Yeah. And so the US team is also working remotely, but we do have an office based in both countries.
00:04:24 Kerstin Nysted	OK. And how much have you actually been able to be at the office this year?
00:04:38 Interviewee 3	Um, I'm actually in the office now, but in general, I've been working from home. I have quite a lot of sort of hardware orientated tasks as well. So my physical presence kind of has to come in every now and then and so forth, yeah.
00:04:53 Kerstin Nysted	And for other employees in the company, it's also been like…?
00:04:57 Interviewee 3	It was quite interesting. So I guess it's roughly this time last year or a couple of weeks ago was kind of the anniversary of the one year, right? So we were actually, ironically, having very little that day got announced, but very sort of like understanding of what was actually happening, we had a team photo shoot and suddenly that evening, the announcements were made. And then we all had that initial two weeks where we just worked and everyone worked from home. So we actually currently have some production in-house. So we produce some of our products there. So for some of our employees, the work wasn't able to be carried out at home. So then we created really strict measures where we would have very minimal people that they couldn't travel during rush hour and so forth. I mean, we were very flexible in that sense. That was definitely for the first two weeks and then everyone worked from home. Other than that, what we've tried to do is also similar to other country or countries is create a level system so that basically we can move from level to level depending on the announcements made from the government. So we make a level one to five and we would then fluctuate between the different levels.
00:06:25 Kerstin Nysted	All right. All right, OK, that's interesting.
00:06:29 Interviewee 3	It was also an easy way to communicate to everyone rather than having these emails out. It was just kind of like, "OK, what level are we on? We're on this level, Ok what does this level mean? OK, this level means you have to have regular hand hygiene, no external visitors etc.". It varied, but there was different criteria within each, for example, who could be at the office or whether the teams get separated. So we also tried to have stagnated working days. So, for example, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, we would have the engineers and the software guys in or software team in and then growth and marketing teams on Tuesday and Thursday. So we did try to keep it. And then we also tried to keep sort of bathroom separated, floors separated and lunch time separated between the teams. So, yeah.

00:07:25 Kerstin Nysted	That sounds good. Sounds like you've had a very structured way of, handling the situation, which I think is very good. So do you also base it on departments and tasks. So this team with these activities where they need to collaborate together, then they can come in at the same time?
00:07:43 Interviewee 3	OK, so we have always followed what the government recommendations are. So a lot since what's happened from last year is that the government strongly recommends those who can work from home to do so. And we have also emphasized that when that happens, like liftin or leniency in the restrictions, then we've changed level. Sorry, what was your question?
00:08:08 Kerstin Nysted	Based on who could come in and when that was based on the activities and departments?
00:08:19 Interviewee 3	Departments. So for example, that we kind of split into different departments in Anonymous/Company and then for example the ones that are in production there in one department, but they're also on the ground floor. So basically pretty much that terrain didn't have any restrictions on days that they could come in. Other teams, for example, because I think it's also important to consider that not everyone has the possibility to work from home. So we have two other floors where we would then stagnate the teams and the teams, which could in theory perform the tasks at home, but for example, if people weren't able to do that, then they would have stagnated days.
00:08:59 Kerstin Nysted	OK. That's interesting.
00:09:04 Interviewee 3	How has everyone else done it?
00:09:07 Kerstin Nysted	I would say that it sounds like you've done it in a really structured way. We haven't gotten that many details about that. So I think that you were the first one, who really told us how you actually managed it. But of course we're interviewing companies who are located in different countries. So definitely a lot of them have been one hundred percent remote. So it's interesting to hear. If we now move on to the well-being of employees during this period? How do you think that employees personal wellbeing has been impacted by working away from the office and how does that affect their employee experience?
00:09:49 Interviewee 3	I think it's very individual. I think it's also very difficult sometimes to understand how people are really feeling. We definitely have some people which are very expressive, where you can have a dialogue with. I mean, it's not easy. I mean, you go from being social to not being social. I mean, some of our team are in Greece and the restrictions are a lot harder. And they have to send text messages when they go out. They can't visit the office unless we file a lot of paperwork and so forth. And I think for them, it's probably been pretty mentally draining. I think in Copenhagen, we've always have some sort of element of freedom.
00:10:47 Interviewee 3	So I think generally team spirit, I think that's something that we're now taking more video calls than ever. We are writing more than ever. And I think that gets to a point where it becomes a little bit exhausting and you don't get the same social or interactions that you do. In general I would say that everyone from my knowledge has adapted from day one super well. We just went straight to online meetings. We learn, everyone just kind of knuckled in and so forth. I do think that one thing that I've kind of noticed is that I think when you're working at home quite a lot and you don't have your teammate directly next to you just to spar with, then you get a little bit questioning yourself. And, I'm not sure if that sort of replicated with others, but I think that's something that you need from direct dialogue.

00:11:52 Kerstin Nysted	Yes, I agree. So what initiatives or things have you tried to do this year to kind of address these concerns?
00:12:03 Interviewee 3	Ok, so I would have loved to do so many more things. So initially when it first happened, we tried a couple of sort of like Friday bars. They all, like Google Hangout, were a little bit awkward, not because of the people, but just because it is awkward. Trying to have a social event that way. Also things like playlists around Christmas time, it was really some sort of collaborative playlists. Some people would add, and some people wouldn't. And that would be quite nice because you'd be at home, but you have that unified and collective feeling. We held one or two movie nights. It's also quite cool if it's an Anonymous/product theme because that is our way of life. And we have a slack integration called Donut. Do you know it?
00:13:03 Kerstin Nysted	No, I haven't heard about it.
00:13:04 Interviewee 3	It is absolutely fantastic. So it randomly pairs you with another person in the company every two weeks so you can schedule a virtual coffee. There's different plans. But we unboarded quite a lot of new people during the time of Corona, which I think is not the easiest to be on board during that time. Both, for them and also to do it, it's kind of interesting as well. But Donout is really great. It is not compulsory for everyone, you can join the slack channel, if you want to, and then you get randomly paired. And so far I have found that people in the company are getting paired with people that they would never necessarily even speak to if they were in the office. And it is down to the individuals. But what I see is that most people sort of schedule their time for like a half an hour coffee and yeah, it's brilliant. I really recommend it. I mean, from the feedback I've got, it was brilliant and I think it's really great for our remote teams as well.
00:14:14 Kerstin Nysted	Yeah definitely since this dialogue or that you can just spontaneously ask someone or meet someone is missing. So that's where you can exchange creative ideas or whatever.
00:14:30 Interviewee 3	From what I hear it is that people are just starting to talk more about their own selves and their lives rather than work, which I think is brilliant. I actually speak to most people often. We're still kind of at that size where I have the possibility to do that. Other people in other teams don't necessarily do that. But I had a coffee meeting with my direct manager, we're always in a meeting about something else. And this time, it was really nice because we both like music. And we had a conversation about that. And that puts you in a different setting. So we had that and we've also had online training sessions. So someone from Anonymous/Company knew someone that's given these online training sessions so we have that twice a week for one hour. I have to admit, I haven't joined. But I did look into yoga at some point, but never executed it. But the online training session seems to be quite popular. There are some regulars going and I think that it got high energy. What else? We've played online games among us. Jack Box as well, we have had quite a few of those and so forth. They just a bit limited with the amount people you can have at once. And other than that, we try and hold events and company wide meetings. ,
00:15:53 Kerstin Nysted	Sounds like you have done a lot, which is really nice.
00:16:00 Interviewee 3	Really? I don't feel like we've done enough.

00:16:03 Kerstin Nysted	I think it sounds like you've had a lot of fun. These are of course also initiatives that you've taken in order to maintain the culture. But what would you say that your organizational culture has been impacted by working remotely? How has employee experience about that been affected?
00:16:21 Interviewee 3	I think one of the major things or what we really like to do pre Corona, is, we really valued time with each other and being in the office. So, I think that has been impacted definitely because we didn't really have a remote work policy, so everyone would be in the office daily. We also communicate quite well to each other. To sort of retain that, we have a channel where we say, if we're away from the table for a little bit or so forth. So it's kind of nice to have that because you kind of feel like you're all in the virtual office together. And so that replicates that feeling of company culture. I think also one of the things that that work is really great for us over autonomy of your own work. And I think that's definitely been maintained.
00:17:19 Kerstin Nysted	Which is also, of course, very important in a remote work setting, because if you don't have autonomy while working, it's probably going to be hard when you're not in the office.
00:17:29 Interviewee 3	In general, it's a very sort of trust based organization. And everyone is very hardworking, very dedicated, and so I do think that we have actually really done a good job at kind of always being sort of available, always helping each other with sort of questions and slack and so forth.
00:17:53 Kerstin Nysted	So you feel like your organizational culture has been maintained during this year and that employee experience has not been impacted by a diminished culture or something like that?
00:18:02 Interviewee 3	I think that question would be very interesting to ask different people in the company from their perspective. I mean, of course, I've had that dialogue with several people, I think it has been difficult. We shouldn't neglect the fact that these are really unprecedented circumstances. And it's hard. It's really hard.
00:18:32 Kerstin Nysted	Do you think it's important to have a strong culture also while working remotely in order to ensure a positive remote employee experience so they still feel this connection to each other?
00:18:44 Interviewee 3	Yes, absolutely. Also when we've had new people which we onboarded, even if the remote or the Greek team took a tour around the Copenhagen office, just so you kind of understand, even from visuals who you're working for, what is it like? What is daily life? So, yes, I've done a few virtual tours, I think it does matter.
00:19:19 Kerstin Nysted	Definitely. You mentioned a lot of the social aspects that it seems that you've been missing from the office. Is it like anything else in any other area you think that employees miss having a physical office fo which impacts the employee experience?
00:19:41 Interviewee 3	To directly go to other teams and ask questions or lunch. The conversations that you get at lunch time I think are some of the best ones, especially for cross department and mingling
00:20:04 Kerstin Nysted	Yeah so the spontaneous interactions. Then I guess also that the done things on slack has been one way of trying to address these cross-department conversations, right?

00:20:26 Interviewee 3	Yes, I think it is also really important to note that, not everyone necessarily, but a lot of people, I would say probably about 60, 70 percent signed up or joined that channel. But I think it's also important to realize things like that are quite daunting for some. To have a video conversation with someone for 20 minutes that you don't really know, I mean, it's so pretty free. But, yeah, that is one way to try and address that. And also, I think that even playlists or something to connect on musically or so forth. And we had a team building thing the other day, which was brilliant. So as a fun center, I think they basically convert their business from doing team building activities physically to online. So we did escape games online. I think basically nearly all of the company, it was next to everyone joined and we beat the record.
00:21:39 Kerstin Nysted	Oh wow.
00:21:40 Interviewee 3	My team came last night, which was actually really quite bad.
00:21:45 Kerstin Nysted	That is so nice, I love it when you try out new stuff now. And then you really see what works and what doesn't.
00:21:51 Interviewee 3	Yeah. So that was positive. We should have had that going a little bit earlier as well. But there are things that people just don't like social events, when I say social events the aim is also just to get people to create those bonds across teams. But things like I pitched to others, like those sort of cocktail bar things and everyone just doesn't really like the idea of having a beer and then shutting off the video or having a cocktail and being drunk at home. And then, what?
00:22:29 Kerstin Nysted	I can understand that. I also feel like it takes away a little bit of the charm when you have it just digitally.
00:22:36 Interviewee 3	Yes. So a lot of people were really nice and responsive, but saying „no we don't really want these kinds of things."
00:22:41 Kerstin Nysted	And based on this year, what kind of digital tools and technologies have been crucial for you in order to ensure that your employees have a positive experience?
00:22:55 Interviewee 3	Webcams, so we purchased more webcams than ever. Google Meet, Zoom. Yeah, sorry, I'm not really a team person. So this one we use less definitely. But yeah, Google Meet or hangouts. I think it's good for me now isn't it. Well we've relied on Slack Cool, I know a few of them use that but I'm not a particular fan.
00:23:28 Kerstin Nysted	So then a lot of collaboration tools and communication tools to ensure that?
00:23:32 Interviewee 3	In general the tools we use are collaborative. But then we also use Notion. So that's a very collaborative format as well. And then we also use, for design it's Figma?, which is also very collaborative. So I

think in general, with the tools that we already had, have been fine for this purpose. Yeah, but I can only speak on behalf of my department. But yeah, from what I understand from others it is the same.

00:24:03 Kerstin Nysted	But then it sounds like maybe it wasn't that challenging for you to start working with this tool as maybe you had them before or do you feel like it's hard to get people to actually start working in it?
00:24:15 Interviewee 3	No, I think it has been fine. I mean, people used all sorts of tools differently. So, for example, some people would very much happily work in Notion and comment on the document itself, for example, where some people would like to tell you about that document in Slack. So I think there are some things which can definitely be like communication wise, how to make it more optimal would be will be something that could definitely be looked at and so forth.
00:24:42 Kerstin Nysted	Interesting. And if you think about different work activities that employees are involved in at Anonymous/Company, what kind of activities have been most difficult for employees to perform? I mean, you did mention that, of course, production then when you need to have equipment, that's, of course, maybe impossible to do remotely?
00:25:13 Interviewee 3	Yes, it is, because we have all the machinery here. So that's not possible. Some of the engineers, they also need access to different sort of equipment as well. But other than that, all the other teams have been fine.
00:25:37 Kerstin Nysted	And the creative tasks that you've been involved in, how do you feel like that's been impacted the employee experience not being able to do that?
00:25:47 Interviewee 3	Like is in brainstorming or…?
00:25:50 Kerstin Nysted	Exactly, things like that? Collaboration in general, maybe.
00:25:56 Interviewee 3	I know, for example, the growth marketing department definitely sort of thrive more if they're together. I think that's just natural. But again, people have done I think a fantastic job. I think they've gone for it and sort of taken up in the same context. If we need to have a chat with someone or discussion or time to brainstorm, then we are quite effective at just booking a meeting and doing that. I mean, it's difficult. It's not the same as when you're in person, that's all I can say. And, you know, it will have its limitations,
00:26:32 Kerstin Nysted	But it sounds like you've had a nice experience with it.
00:26:37 Interviewee 3	I think winter was a bit testing.
00:26:41 Kerstin Nysted	So now you've also adapted a little bit more. So, of course, it's maybe better than in the beginning. But have you implemented any new everyday routines to make your remote working easier like check-ins or…?

00:26:58 Interviewee 3	So in the different teams, we have different check-ins. Our growth team, for example, the director has weekly meetings with all of them. Then, other than that all the products and tech peeps have regular weekly meetings. So we're quite scheduled in general.
00:27:20 Kerstin Nysted	Interesting.
00:27:23 Interviewee 3	And then for example, we always have a company wide meeting every Monday. And then we have different events, also company wide, that everyone joins or not. But not specifically daily. Maybe individual teams have congregated that. But in general, I think it's weekly meetings. I think individuals have sort of created those for themselves. I know I had, especially in the first couple of months, definite particular patterns which I had to adhere by. Otherwise, you know, you get a little bit lost.
00:28:03 Kerstin Nysted	Exactly, you find your own way of tackling it.
00:28:08 Interviewee 3	Have you heard about other daily routines? Has anyone else done anything like that or did you heard of good initiatives or so forth?
00:28:18 Kerstin Nysted	I think that, in terms of the work process and routine, it's like it's mostly been this kind of daily check ins, basically where they want to start up the day by saying like, "I'm going to do this and you're going to do that." So to create a feeling of that's…
00:28:38 Interviewee 3	So like a stand up meeting?
00:28:40 Kerstin Nysted	Yeah, a little bit like that. To create this kind of feeling where you're not just lost somewhere or that people know what you're doing, et cetera. So you kind of don't feel like you're working by yourself.
00:28:52 Interviewee 3	We do have regular team meetings. So I think pretty much instead of every day, it's several a week. So it's. But I also heard of a couple in other companies that have morning meetings where they have a stand up or so forth. But my team has not. But maybe the products and tech team.
00:29:20 Kerstin Nysted	Interesting, good. Now we've actually covered the theme questions. So now to conclude the questions. Would you say that this experience with working remotely in the past year has been a positive or negative experience for employees?
00:29:48 Interviewee 3	I think this is a very difficult question. Well, basically negative because there's a pandemic and that's been very hard to sort of navigate through. I think definitely we have to look at the positives of things. I think you bond differently with people. You learn how to communicate better because you need that or you need to be able to communicate faster and quicker, more efficiently, whether that be by writing or picking up the phone and giving a call. Remote work, because, you know, it's also something that we didn't necessarily have beforehand, we viewed that little bit differently as well. I'm not sure how we will continue post-Corona. Again, I think we very much value our office, which is playful. It's fun. I know that some people find it easier to work from home, not all the time, but can be potentially less distracting from time to time. So I think they're positives as well as negatives.

00:31:00 Kerstin Nysted	Maybe the individuals had different experiences about it also.
00:31:04 Interviewee 3	Yeah, I would also say that I think is quite nice, especially for the Danish team. To get a taste of other teams that work in remote. This is kind of the context of what it is like.
00:31:20 Kerstin Nysted	You said that some teams have come into the office while the rest of the company is online. Have you experienced any difficulties with having people both, in the office and remotely at the same time? In maybe meetings where some are present physically, but some are online?
00:31:41 Interviewee 3	No, I think people coordinate quite well together. So, for example, if they need to be in, then they'll coordinate accordingly.
00:31:49 Kerstin Nysted	And now, if we are looking at the future, do you think that you and Anonymous/Company will continue working remotely to some degree, even here in Denmark in the office?
00:32:03 Interviewee 3	I'm not sure. I think our plans are actually to move offices. I can't answer that one. I'm not entirely sure. Yeah, sorry, I don't have a good answer for that. Yeah, I mean, I think we definitely have viewed remote work very differently.
00:32:32 Kerstin Nysted	So would you say it, just to conclude that, what's been the most challenging in terms of employee experience? I kind of grasped a little bit of this effective communication thing?
00:32:53 Interviewee 3	I think some of the major things are, for example, new people onboarding, I think that's been one of the major challenges. I think when you start in a new company, it is so important to sort of get a feel of the place. I've been trying to replicate that in a sort of digital format, I think is definitely possible. Yeah, but there is something about physically go into the office walking around saying hi, meeting someone at the coffee machine. That you can't quite do, although the virtual coffee kind of does replicate that as well. Yeah, so I think for me challenges also when new people meet other people and so forth, I think that's been challenging.
00:33:46 Kerstin Nysted	Interesting to hear. Is it anything that you feel that we haven't covered regarding how employees have been feeling this this year or how remote working has been for you?
00:34:08 Interviewee 3	Again, I can't really speak on behalf of everyone, of course I have dialogues, but I think generally for people it's a very up and down process. It's like you're kind of living from day to day. The days become weeks. I think everyone's been in quite high spirits. I think I'm just repeating myself now, but yeah I think I've expressed well,
00:34:37 Kerstin Nysted	Well but I definitely agree. I think it's day to day. But also like very cool to see how you handled it.
00:35:03 Interviewee 3	Yeah, I don't think I have anything else to add. One thing actually could have been a bit more useful for us is, especially government rules or regulations or advice is sometimes a little bit cryptic to follow. I think there could have been a little bit more material. It's difficult because the thing is, I am not a medical professional. Neither is anyone here. You get a lot of questions and I think I spent many months initially just calling the Corona hotline, trying to figure out what's. And then, things changed, so you're trying to adapt to that as well, because it's also that everyone has their own different Corona logic,

right? I'm kind of a person which is quite black and white and I like some really clear things to follow. I've spoken to a lot of different companies, a lot of different startups, just to also hear what they're doing. And it's all completely different. Some people have had no change, they are still going to work and so forth. There's no consistency between companies. So it is interesting to see how all the different people have handled it.

00:36:41
Kerstin Nysted

Definitely. And what the key learnings are going to be in the end then if it's going to change how we are going to work in the future. It is an interesting time to do research. Definitely.

00:36:53
Interviewee 3

So. So how's your project going?

00:36:57
Kerstin Nysted

It's going good. It's been really interesting. We just started to interview actually. So we haven't done that many. But you are number 3. We want to have around ten. But they're still booking interviews, so hopefully we will get more. But I feel like many companies are a bit stressed right now, I would say, which is totally understandable.

00:37:29
Interviewee 3

Yes, I kind of feel a general consensus, especially tech companies, are certainly busy at the moment.

00:37:38
Kerstin Nysted

Yeah, definitely. I understand also that they want to protect their core business and therefore everything unnecessary is not of interest. But it's super, super interesting to hear that companies have different experiences with how it's been. So it's really, really interesting. We are very much looking forward to writing and to wrap up this whole thesis and also to share the results with you if you're interested in reading some parts o fit?

00:38:15
Interviewee 3

Yeah, I would like to! It's always interesting to reflect. Or look forward. Let's see what the future brings and what hurdles we need to jump over with a smile.

00:38:34
Kerstin Nysted

Yeah, definitely. Good. Rena, do you have any questions or anything that you feel like we have missed?

00:38:42
Speaker 3

No, I think we covered everything. Thank you so much for your answers. I think it was really valuable.

00:38:50
Interviewee 3

It's very funny because most of time I didn't even know you were there.

00:38:56
Speaker 3

I was just hiding in the background. Just listening to your conversation. It was really interesting.

00:39:01
Interviewee 3

Well, yeah, I hope I managed to get you something.

00:39:04

Kerstin Nysted	Yeah, definitely. A lot of interesting insights. Good, but then we will not steal more of your time Alice. Thank you so much again for doing that with us.
00:39:19 Interviewee 3	Thank you too.
00:39:21 Kerstin Nysted	We are now transcribing it and then maybe in the thesis we will want to use quotes from what you have said then we will email you to ask if you approve of that quote.
00:39:37 Interviewee 3	Yeah, You have my email.
00:39:42 Kerstin Nysted	Perfect. OK, great Alice. But then I hope you will have a wonderful evening and rest of the week and we will stay in touch.
00:39:52 Interviewee 3	Perfect, great!
00:39:53 Speaker 3	Great. Thank you so much.
00:39:55 Interviewee 3	Bye!

Interview 4

00:00:02 Rena Riekenberg	Two students from Copenhagen Business School, I'm Rena and I'm from Germany and Kerstin is from Sweden, and I'm more or less doing the interview with you now and Kerstin is going to stay in the background and jump in whenever I forget a question. So we have basically structured the interviews in four different themes. So we first want to ask you some questions of how you experienced the whole last year of working remotely as at XX. First, we want to talk a little bit about the personal and the professional needs of employees that might have changed now in the year. And then the next part is the physical and the digital workplace and then new ways of working or how this has changed. Lastly, the organizational culture. Just to give you a little bit of an idea. So maybe before we start, maybe you can just tell us a little bit about your role, because your employee experience manager right?
00:01:04 Interviewee 4	Yeah. So my role is employee experience lead. So I don't manage a team, rather I'm part of a team that we call the hub experience team. That's basically five people in Barcelona that are looking into all things related to the employee experience. So location management and community building, employee experience as a topic itself, also including a little bit of talent acquisition, onboarding, these kinds of things. But all of them are not based in an HR organization, but we're part of the business. That's quite the big difference to most other employee experience activities that we have in XX. But we also see in a lot of other companies, because as we're located organizationally in the business, we have a little different outlook on things. So different KPIs or just, without measuring them, different goals and also a little bit more leverage with the daily activities of the organization. HR, in my experience, are pretty far away from what people are doing in their daily lives. And I like to think that we are much closer to them at this point. Yeah, maybe as a last thing, we're not burdened by a lot of the legal and procedural things that HR has to look after. So, I mean, there is still a major organization for our location. So they do a lot of these things and that gives us more leeway looking really after the teams and the individual employees that we have here
00:03:23 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah, I think then then it's perfect that we're talking to you because this is exactly what we need, because it's nice that you have an overview of what the people actually do. So really nice. But can you maybe tell us how many people in general are working at XX?
00:03:40 Interviewee 4	So as a whole XX has currently about 105.000 employees, including some subsidiaries that are there, their own legal entities, but still are part of XX. So we're about 40.000 people in the development organization, 35.000 to 40.000 in sales and then a lot of consulting and operations and so on. So that's basically the setup. But we in the location that I'm responsible for in Barcelona, we're about 400 people. We also have a few people that organizationally are connected to us in Cairo and in Dublin because they're basically serving the same market. Um...My siri is once in a while, just trying to...
00:04:48 Rena Riekenberg	to be part of this conversation.
00:04:51 Interviewee 4	So, yeah. I'm not sure if I said that, but the location here is a sales hub. Responsible for the whole of EMEA, more or less from Iceland to South Africa, from Portugal to the Middle East. So we have those other two locations where also a few of our people are located.

00:05:17	OK, interesting. Then I would start with the first theme, personal and professional needs. How
Rena Riekenberg	would you say that the employee's personal needs at XX has been impacted by working remotely or working outside of the office?

00:05:38	Maybe one thing I want you to put a little bit into perspective is that specifically the people
Interviewee 4	we have here in Barcelona are relatively young compared to the average age of XX employees. We do a lot of early talent acquisition. We have a lot of junior people. As I mentioned, we have people coming from from all over the place. So from South Africa to Iceland. That means that those people who come to Barcelona do not have any network, support network. No friends, no family here. Maybe not even an apartment when they arrive. So these needs are very different from, say, our headquarters in Germany, where people are on average 15 years older. Our average age is a little lower than 30 a nd in Germany, it's roughly45. So you have a very different population. And of course, because the people in Germany are older, they have a more established environment. They might have families, they definitely have a social environment because they've been in that one place for longer. That's very different. So what we experience here compared to Germany or France or the US will be very, very different things. That means that one of the big changes for us is that we're much more are looking into generating or providing that initial network for people that come to us. Because before that happened more or less on its own. Of course, you have the people in the office that you meet that are also new to the location. You build your networks, you whatever, do your sports activities and you get to know people. Currently that's not happening to the normal extent. So we have to invest more effort there. Because initially what we saw was that many of the people we hired early in the pandemic left after just three or four months. They said " I am alone here. I don't know anyone. I've met my manager once and I've talked over Zoom to some of my team members and that's all the people that I know. It's just not feeling like I'm part of this". So we have to really adapt to this kind of generating a home away from home. This initial step. With investing more into this, we more or less see two different levels of engagement or let's say to different levels of circumstances that we have for people. So on the one hand, you have people which I just described. They are young, t hey are alone, t hey really struggle with the lack of social network. Then what we also have a lot of here is young families that live in relatively small apartments. Because in Spain or Barcelona specifically is very much geared towards a life outside of your own four walls. Now and you have families in 40 to 50 square meter apartments with office in the apartment and two to three kids that have to stay home. So that is a very different situation where the one group has two little social interaction and the other group has too much social interaction. So you have to to find solutions for both situations.

00:10:17	Yeah. And because you were saying that you're trying to create this home outside of home,
Rena Riekenberg	can you maybe give us an example like what kind of things you implemented? Because you said that people left the company as they felt lonely and left out from the company. So can you give us an example of what you did in order to compensate for that?

00:10:37	Yeah. I mean, of course, there's always a lot of initiatives from the individual teams. So they
Interviewee 4	are trying to really create more of a team bonding with a lot of additional activities. Like a morning meeting, an evening meeting for the whole team over Zoom. More to just chat about what's going on. So these kinds of things that usually happen by the water cooler or in the coffee corner. Now you have to artificially set this up. But what we also did was that we introduced a new onboarding program for a week where we are not very much looking into the mechanistic parts of onboarding where you give people their equipment, give them all the accesses and help them to understand all the systems they have to use. I mean, this is

happening anyways. Also the skill based onboarding. We are doing much more when it comes to community building. So explicitly bringing people together across different teams and even different organizations that are located here in Barcelona. We try to give them outside of their team through supporting activities where people get to know the other new-starters better than they did virtually before. Of course, this is all still very much trying to simulate a normal situation that you would have in the office. But it's definitely something that is quite successful and gets a lot of positive feedback. E specially from the young people that now also find others that might have a little bit more of an idea of what you can do in Barcelona, even with lockdowns and so on. So that's definitely helpful. And of course, a lot of people then try to at least set up those smaller meetings that are allowed with 4 people. For or lunch or something that wasn't possible a half a year ago, but slowly is coming back, and of course that helps as well.

00:13:14 Rena Riekenberg	Next to this like social network initiatives, do you also feel that employees satisfaction or motivation has also changed? Which impacts the employee experience?,
00:13:28 Interviewee 4	Yeah, of course. I mean, it's very directly connected to all of this. You saw in the beginning that it was pretty easy to make it somehow acceptable for people. And you had it kind of an up and down throughout the last year depending on how much of going outside was allowed and how much interaction with other people you got. Everyone was really looking forward to the beginning of 2021 because everyone was thinking that everything will change. So that was an upward trajectory at the end of the year. January 1st, everyone realizes that nothing has changed and it's even harder to predict when all of this will be over. So we had a dip in the beginning of the year. Now we see that with a better understanding of what's going on w orkwise this year, with some help that we try to give people to just getting to grips with this situation, i t's really getting better. What we also see is that the mindfulness stuff that we were offering before has been much more used now than before the pandemic.
00:15:01 Rena Riekenberg	So what would that be like? What is mental?
00:15:07 Interviewee 4	So we have a pretty big mindfulness practice in XX with certain programs and trainings where you can just learn about how to be more mindful and get some coaching. There are daily activities in the morning and in the afternoon where there's like a general call for people to talk about their experiences, to meditate together. These kinds of smaller things. We see that they get used much more than before
00:15:43 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah, sounds pretty nice with the way you want to support them. Next to these personal needs, do you also think that the employees experience has been affected by that professional needs have been impacted when working remotely?
00:15:59 Interviewee 4	Yes and no. I mean, that's again, a little bit due to our very special situation here. Barcelona is mostly looking after small and mid-sized customers, which is a very small percentage of our revenue as a company. We mostly have large enterprise customers. But it also means that the people here are very much used to working digitally. Because of the small and mid-sized customers, you would do digital interactions even before the pandemic. Like if you're selling to someone in Nairobi and then two hours later in Johannesburg and then in Tangiers or whatever. Y ou wouldn't fly to each of these locations. So our people here were pretty much prepared for. But on the other hand, we were also doing a lot of coaching for the rest of the company on how to do this. Because as I've saies, we have had the experience before, the

infrastructure, maybe more refined approaches of how to do business digitally, and how to collaborate with the other teams digitally. Ao we were able to to advise also other parts of the business a little bit. But still, I mean, you see that people just constantly try to develop how they interact. You see that a lot of tools get used now that that didn't a year ago. But I think the biggest problem still is how to get those auspicious coalitions, as Pixar calls it. How to enable that. So meeting people that you're not supposed to meet in quotation rather than the daily business. Because the daily business runs pretty smoothly now.

00:18:25
Rena Riekenberg

And do you think, in terms of their own development, because they may want to grow, have training opportunities, because now when working remotely, that probably also had an impact? Can you maybe talk about it?

00:18:40
Interviewee 4

It's two things that are really obvious here. One is about the general way, how people get managed by their managers. So what you saw, especially in the beginning and now a little less, but in the beginning you saw that a lot of the lonely people were working much more than before. Just out of boredom, there is more happening. At the same time, their peers that have a family worked less than before because they had to take care of the kids and so on. So you had this unnatural imbalance that some people can do more, others can't. But that doesn't mean that this group should have a bigger bonus or more development opportunities than the other. Specifically, when you look at the female population, you see that women are much more involved with the kids so it can have a negative career impact. And that is something that you really have to have in mind. You also have to push out this to the managers again and again that they really have to consider the environment apart from the job when it comes to career decisions and these kinds of things for their employees. The other thing that you see a little is... In this time, we've had to move away from implicit peer learning. So just to sit next to the person next to you and see what they are doing. Through talking, you figure some things out. That gets so much harder. So you have to be more proactive as an employee, but also as an employer and pushing for training and learning opportunities. So we are doing a lot more skill and soft skills training than we did before. W e are pushing much more in the direction of the managers to enable learning in the teams and these kinds of things.

00:21:28
Interviewee 4

So it's definitely something that you feel. But over time, I think it is just changing behaviors that have settled down a little. And some of them we had to push. But a lot of this people were just subconsciously developing.

00:21:56
Rena Riekenberg

Yeah. For these new more proactive training opportunities, are they now happening virtually or did you have to implement certain tools or equipment for this?

00:22:13
Interviewee 4

I mean, we have a very extensive virtual training and learning system anyways. Just because it's a software company, it's worldwide operating, it's huge with 100.000 employees. So you feel that it gets used more and also more effectively. Sometimes it's still better to do a face to face training session or an offsite for certain activities. And of course, all that fell by the wayside. But definitely this will come back after the pandemic because there are just kinds of interactions, and specifically interpersonal interactions where you have a much better way of teaching and learning when you're face to face. But in general, I think people are about how to use virtual training and learning tools than they were a year ago.

00:23:36
Rena Riekenberg

So since they were quite used to already using these digital services, it was like not a hard time to get them to use them?

00:23:44 Interviewee 4	What we saw was that it took a lot of changing behaviors, right. So you have to be more conscious about how to distribute your time, how to use the systems that are there, the company portal and all these things compared to before. Then, a lot was through word of mouth and just knowing the right people and talking to someone here and there. Then this was developing more organically, I think. So now it's a little bit more structured. And again, you have to change your behavior a little, otherwise you miss out.
00:24:34 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah. Because you were just saying that some tasks such as collaboration are pretty hard not to do face to face. So when you are now thinking about the physical workplace, that is not consistent right now, have you figured out that things that were hard to transfer from the physical place to the digital place that has been affecting the employee experience? Like what kind of activities or tasks, for example.
00:25:01 Interviewee 4	So I'd say there are two things that really make a big difference. It's three things. So the biggest one is really the spaces between work, where it's really about building your network, talking about your family or soccer on the weekend or what's your next vacation plan. These kinds of things where you build emotional connections and through this develop more empathy to your coworkers. That's definitely changed for the worse. As I said, the training, learning and the peer learning is weaker than it used to be. Because you have to be so much more engaged and involved to be able to do this. What is also difficult are those creative collaborations. So all things like brainstorming, just talking stuff over to develop new ideas. Of course, there are a lot of tools like mural, mind mapping, and all these things. But still, it's not as immediate as a personal chat or a whiteboarding session in front of a physical whiteboard. You can walk back and forth and just hash out ideas. So these three things are definitely different and harder to do. I think the social and emotional part of this is the biggest problem, if you want to call it that.
00:27:09 Rena Riekenberg	And for the collaboration and communication brainstorming, did you also implement new ways of getting people to continue working together or giving them the possibility to brainstorm even when they're not together?
00:27:25 Interviewee 4	Yeah, there are so many small things just from just introducing more breaks between meetings, being OK with the fact that the first five minutes of every meeting is small talk, which is very different to how it used to be in a German company before. The general idea to introduce tools like mural for working with posters and so on in the initial onboarding of new people. That's so much a core device by now that everyone has to know how to use this and how to interact there. I think what is definitely still or more happening than before is this idea of really saying " OK, there is this one concrete problem. Let's just the two of us go down to the beach and have a walk and figure out how to do this". There is a little bit more of an understanding that you just have to do these kinds of things for for certain problems
00:28:48 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah, super interesting. I would like move onto the next topic, which is the different ways of working. Just for us an idea, how much was it possible for employees to be in the office in the past year where they are like 100 percent remote or where the periods where they were able to be back?
00:29:13 Interviewee 4	Before the idea was that because we have such a young population, the general guidance was to be in the office at least four days a week. In general, XX has a home office policy and has been having this for quite a while. A home office policy that if your manager doesn't object to it for some business reason, you can work from home. But we very consciously said that here

in Barcelona, we cannot do this because most of our people are so junior. So we want to push for this peer-learning, for like the Nordicees learning from how or the Middle East is doing something right. So tthis was kind of an integral value proposition of the Barcelona hub as well. Otherwise, it doesn't make sense to bring people from Ireland and Portugal to the same office in Spain. So that is definitely something that we're r eally painfully aware of. The fact that this general idea and also the benefit of this kind of collaboration is not here. At least it is very hard to artificially generate. Ao for us we're really trying to figure out how to get back to the office as quickly as possible. At the same time, being aware of the fact that XX is very cautious and conservative about this. So we we were in lockdown, or at least in the home office before any lockdown anywhere. I think we will still be there after most of the lockdowns are lifted. So, yeah,

00:31:21
Rena Riekenberg

I have my fingers crossed that it's going to be better than we think now.

00:31:25
Interviewee 4

Yeah, well.

00:31:28
Rena Riekenberg

So when everyone is working remotely, how much support and control has been needed for these employees to ensure they have a positive experinece? Because you're not really seeing what they do at home.

00:31:43
Interviewee 4

The thing is that it's really about trust. From general experience, we know that our people would rather work more than less when they're working from home. We've had a lot of burnout, or at least close to burnout situations of people in the beginning where we really had to figure out how to prevent them from doing too much. That's maybe also something that's a little peculiar about sales in a way. Your personal financial achievement is very closely related to your business success because you have such a huge bonus part in your salary. So I think the problem is less about controlling how much people work but rather help them to be smarter about how they work. Because that is something with our very new population when it comes to junior roles, that many of those people are working like crazy, but it's not very effective. So you have to be very much a coach as a manager and help them to work smarter, not harder. And again, I really have to stress this, the whole concept of trust is really important and has been from the beginning.

00:33:39
Rena Riekenberg

That's interesting. We already talked a lot about how communication and collaboration tasks are really hard to do now. What other kinds of new processes and routines have you maybe implemented to ensure a positive remote employee experience? Are there any specific things you can talk about?

00:34:03
Interviewee 4

So we see a lot of different behaviors in the teams just because they don't sit next to each other. So they do a lot more of those day and end of day meetings, weekend activities together when it's allowed. Also, a lot of activities, like a pop quiz or something to just bring people together. What is funny, or not necessarily funny, but remarkable is really how different management behavior is as well. Because you have to be a little bit more transparent. As the leadership team, you have to be more about creating this psychological safety. In a sense, that's very helpful for my role. When we started this team two and a half years ago, we had a lot of difficulties to justify why a sales organization is spending money not on hiring five more sales executives, but rather five people that look after the employee experience topics. With the pandemic, this question is not a question anymore. It's rather "Oh, now we understand that

this is why we have to take care of this". So, unfortunately, the situation has been a proof point for the team. So I have some guilty feelings about that situation. But on the other hand, it's just always been clear to me and now I don't have to explain it to other people. So maybe a trade off,

00:36:18
Rena Riekenberg

So is a positive thing that this probably brought. That employee experience is more in the focus now definitely. Now I want to talk a little bit about the organizational culture of XX. How would you say that your culture has been impacted without people being together, without having the usual day?

00:36:42
Interviewee 4

Actually, I don't think it has changed too much in general. I mean, as a whole, and not looking at Barcelona as a whole, has very much felt to me more like a university than a business anyways from the beginning. So it's a very open, a little less hierarchical than lot of other large enterprises. Also everyone has been involved in a lot of discussions anyways. So I'm also considering the fact that we have no workers. At XX, about 30 percent of the employees have a PhD or something like that. So it's nothing special. And at the same time, with that kind of qualification comes the expectation that you get asked about everything. And so it's a lot of discussion culture anyways. And maybe this has faded a little. And that's a positive thing because you don't discuss everything five times, but only three times now. But at the same time, in general, I think this hasn't changed and that's a good thing. Also this very specific focus on making people part of the family here in Barcelona and so on. What we had before, and maybe had more implicitly before. The only changes that we are very much aware of, the fact that we need to do this and we are more proactive about it. But the culture as a whole hasn't changed too much I think. Maybe the idea, in a little more experienced managers and leaders, that you have to be more transparent, that you have to to be more trusting has been emphasized a little. And again, I'd say that's a good thing.

00:39:06
Rena Riekenberg

Yeah, definitely. But when you talk about this open culture and low hierarchy and now the transparency and trust, how would you say that you try to make these values visible when talking to people? Like, how do you transfer them now when people are not in the office and they might not see that, but now you can only communicate with them virtually?

00:39:30
Interviewee 4

Yeah, I think you have to be more conscious about what you communicate. Not so much in filtering it, but rather, for example, even if there is no change. you have to communicate that there is no change. Before, it was like, "Ok, everyone is in the same room feeling that nothing is changing". Now you have to constantly give updates, even if nothing has changed. So, again, the whole communication culture has to be more conscious. You have to always be a little over communicating or more than you usually have to do as a leader. But again, that is more of learning on the individual leaders side and not so much on an organizational level. I mean, of course, we are doing the same on an organizational level. But still. the biggest thing, is that we are offering a lot of coaching, mentoring and training to managers around the topic of communication and around the topic of coaching of employees instead of managing them. I often feel that it's accelerating a few new work topics a little. So in the beginning, we all were afraid of the fact that it might throw us back a few years back into deeper hierarchy's and into more micromanagement. It started out a little bit like this when everyone was really insecure and fearful about what is going on. You saw that happen. But by now, I think we've moved forward in time instead of backwards.

00:41:42 Rena Riekenberg	That's really good, and then to sum up the organizational culture part. How would you describe the role of organizational culture to create a positive employee experience at work?
00:41:59 Interviewee 4	I mean, it's a field. It's basically the same. The organizational culture is what makes the Employee Experience. It's not like the one influences the other, but one is the other and vice versa. Specifically because it makes us so much your conscious efforts to do certain things and the unconscious stuff that's happening anyways. I mean, it's a little bit like communication. You cannot not communicate and the same thing is true with experience. You cannot not have an experience, it can only be good or bad. So, again, as I say, we are more conscious of the fact that we have to support a good employee experience. But this is totally intertwined with the culture in the teens between the employees, but also between the leadership and the normal employees. And with this, I'm mostly, of course, talking currently about Barcelona because this is where I can have a clear perception. I guess that it has its ups and downs throughout a huge company with 120 different locations that we have in the world. But in general, I feel that also with what happened with our leadership over the last year, if board changes and all of that stuff. But people are more conscious of the fact that you have to be really aware and invest in the employees a lot.
00:44:05 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah, that's pretty good to hear. So that was basically everything about the things we wanted to ask you. But now, when thinking back of this whole year, what would you consider the biggest challenge for creating an employee experience this year?
00:44:22 Interviewee 4	You know, as I say, it's the two things. One is your personal situation, like either being too lonely or too overwhelmed by your social interactions. And the other is that we've had to learn to be so conscious about everything. So my feeling is that, of course, it's been a very taxing year and it will continue for a little while. But at the same time, it also gave us the opportunity to really show how well we're trying to support our employees and how much we are trying to make the situation right for them. So as I said, you have had the ups and downs. But in general, I think it's been a great learning opportunity. Because everyone, whether they want to or not, experience how the general mood and the general employee experience is reflecting back on the business. And that's for better or worse, influencing how people in the future will interact with the employees. I think that has been the big learning.
00:46:25 Rena Riekenberg	So it was not only the negative experience, but also some positive aspects to it. And what do you then say, when you now look into the future, is there already a plan if you will continue to partly work remotely as you did before? Or do you think it's going to be more because now you know how it works and that it can work? Or do you think everyone will just go back to the office a hundred percent?
00:46:50 Interviewee 4	No, I mean, as I said, XX already has a very relaxed Home Office guidance anyways. Most people will just go back to that. I also think that here in Barcelona, we will relax it a little bit. But still, everyone also has experienced how important it is to go to the office. Not for doing your work, but for everything that supports work like building networks, learning, these kinds of things. So I hope people will just be more conscious about their decision whether to go to the or not. And then I also have to say, someone who is not going to the office in Barcelona is a really weird person anyways, because it's one of the coolest offices that I've seen. Including everything they have at Facebook, Google, ideal, wherever. It is right next to the beach and it's very cool as an office. You have this vibe off of having 400 relatively young people there.

So I don't think that for us it will be a negative thing. Rather, a lot of people will be very happy to be allowed to go back.

00:48:23
Rena Riekenberg

Yeah, I can understand that. I mean, with the beach in front of the office it sounds amazing.

00:48:29
Interviewee 4

Sometimes a little distracting when people pass your window with with a surfboard in their arms and flip flops a nd you have to sit there in a suit and tie and work.

00:48:48
Rena Riekenberg

Maybe you can go for a lunch right at the beach. Well great. I think that was basically everything we wanted to cover. Is there anything, since you're the employee experience expert, that you think we missed or anything else you would like to elaborate on which you thought was not part of this interview yet?

00:49:09
Interviewee 4

No, I think we touched all the big learnings. I mean, as I said, there are so many very personal things that are happening, and that has to happen, and that as an organization you can only do o much. But again, this is our big advantage here in this location, that we're very close to the people and can interact and coach on a personal level, which will be very different in locations where they have 16.000 people compared to our 400. So I think the biggest learning, not for me, because in this job, you know this, but for the organization and for the organization as a whole, the biggest learning is that employee experience is also a very personal topic. And in the end, you have to accept that your employees are predominantly human

00:50:20
Rena Riekenberg

So do you think that might make it also even a bigger challenge to like? Because, you know, everyone has different needs and everyone has different ways of working and to like, give them all the flexibility they need individually? That's probably going to be challenging as well.

00:50:39
Interviewee 4

Yeah, I think we're in a situation with all the technology enabling it and with the new understanding of all of this throughout the whole leadership structure, that everything is set up for a positive development. Sometimes I am a little cautious about what I see in the legal context when it comes to the laws that are changing in Spain or Germany, where it still goes back and forth with more control and more structure and so on. So that's sometimes a little questionable. But in the end, as I say, it's it's better than it's been ever before.

00:51:42
Rena Riekenberg

Well, I think that was a nice ending sentence. So I think for me that was everything. Kerstin, do you maybe have a question that I forgot to ask?

00:51:51
Kerstin Nystedt

No I think that we've covered it all and I've just been sitting here and enjoying you talking. It's been very interesting to hear. I'm very jealous of your office. And I hope you'll be able to go there soon.

00:52:09
Interviewee 4

Yeah. I guess that maybe at the end of the summer it is the next checkpoint that everyone is looking at and hoping for. But let's see, maybe next year.

00:52:24
Rena Riekenberg

fingers crossed.

00:52:28 Rena Riekenberg	Yes. Super nice, but thank you so much for talking to us. I think we really get so many valuable answers. And so just one question I still have, because now we're transcribing the interview. First of all, I wanted to ask if we can mention your name or the name and XX or if you rather want to be kept anonymous.
00:52:51 Interviewee 4	No, it's OK. It's just important to make a clear distinction between XX as a whole and XX in Barcelona. That is kind of a thing where my level of influence is just focusing on Barcelona. So don't make me speak for the whole of XX.
00:53:17 Rena Riekenberg	Yes, of course. If we for example now want to use certain quotes that you said, is it possible if we send you the quote for you to approve if we can use it?
00:53:29 Interviewee 4	Yeah, sure.
00:53:32 Rena Riekenberg	That's good to know. Well, then I think it was everything. And if you are interested in our final results, we're, of course, happy to share it with you. It might take a while.
00:53:44 Interviewee 4	Yes. So what's the time frame you're looking at?
00:53:48 Rena Riekenberg	So now we we have to hand it on the 15th of May. So it's almost there. It went faster than we thought, but yeah, it's almost done. So now we're going to analyze the interviews and then write down our results.
00:54:03 Interviewee 4	OK. Yeah. Looking forward to seeing the results. Definitely.
00:54:08 Rena Riekenberg	OK, great. And thank you so much for talking to us. And then we keep in touch.
00:54:16 Interviewee 4	Thank you. Thank you. All the best of luck. Thank you. It's not about luck. It's about expertise, but all the best of whatever over there.
00:54:27 Rena Riekenberg	Thank you so much. Then have a good afternoon.
00:54:30 Interviewee 4	Okay.
00:54:31 Rena Riekenberg	Bye bye

Interview 5

00:00:02 Rena Riekenberg	So, I'm going to ask you questions about how you at Riot games experienced the past year of working remotely. OK, so we basically grouped the questions in for a different theme. So first a few questions about personal and professional needs of the employees, how that has been impacted, and then also the physical and digital workplace, the ways of working, which might be different now and then the organizational culture in the end. And we intentionally keep all the questions quite broad so that you are free to talk whatever comes into your mind. So please just talk freely. That would be super nice. Could you maybe first start by saying what exactly your role is now at Riot Games?
00:00:37 Interviewee 5	Yeah, I'm the head of workplace experience for Riot games in Europe, so I take care of all of our European offices, State offices, of varying sizes and based in Dublin.
00:00:40 Rena Riekenberg	OK, and how many employees are working at Riot Games? Just so we have an idea?
00:00:45 Interviewee 5	I have no idea. I'm sorry. Across Europe, there's like about eight hundreds. At Riot games, a lot of our employees are subcontracted or they are agency employees and they work in different areas. So the number changes drastically, there could be 100 one day and two hundred one day so it changes depending on needs and stuff like that.
00:00:47 Rena Riekenberg	OK, but that's already good, so we have like a rough understanding of how many. Great, then we can maybe start with the personal needs of employees. So how would you say that the needs of employees and the well-being has been impacted by working remotely and how has that impacted the employee experience?
00:00:47 Interviewee 5	I think human interaction we probably took for granted a loss as an employee. It's kind of given that you have a space to go to every day and people to see that those people around you kind of drive you through your days. And I think when we all went to a work from home model, we lost that daily interaction of just being able to lean over and be like, "hey, look at this, what is this?" Or getting off of a call that wasn't easy and having someone to turn to and be like, "oh, God, that was a nightmare". So it becomes a thing where things that when you were in the office like giving your thoughts, your feedback et cetera. So I think that was the biggest. The human interaction side of things for people at Riot Games. They are super, super creative people and they thrive on interpersonal learning and peer learning and peer review. And they thrive on the body language of understanding. When you're presenting something that you've created, when you're presenting that to a group sitting in front of you, and you can see their immediate reactions. And suddenly you're looking at photographs on a Zoom screen and everyone is on mute because they're being respectful and they want to let you talk. But ordinarily, you would have got those laughs at the parts of your jokes in your presentation - that is missing and massively. So some people thrive on working alone and some people just don't. And so trying to understand the needs of both of those types of people as well has been interesting for Riot. What we dreaded was that people would lose their sense of creativity and would lose that entirely and that momentum would disappear. But if anything, writers are very challenge orientated, so they kind of like "that's a challenge", so actually increased productivity. We launched four games last year and for Riot, it was something that was like a boost or something. People did miss people. And there were those moments of that lockdown fatigue and stuff. But, we did rise to the challenge. So I think we had a very balanced kind situation, we had a ups and downs. And when someone was down, someone stepped in and boosted them up. So that sort of place to work where teams want to help each other

and collaborate and stuff. So everyone understood the loss of interaction and tried to step up to compensate for that loss. So we were really lucky.

00:01:28
Rena Riekenberg

And did you as an organization also implement any new ways of compensating this loss of interaction?

00:01:30
Interviewee 5

Yes, we have an events team in our central office in L.A. and they came up with a lot of online and team events and collaboration, and we implemented an non-meetings day every month. So you have no meetings? You are not on camera. You just get to do whatever you need to do, work through your day. And it kind of removes that feeling of having 15 calls a day, at least once a month. And on those days, you can have maybe a team event or do something fun. We also implemented a whole vitality department basically. And the vitality people researched all kind of health and yoga and all those things that you can imagine vitality encompasses. So we were really lucky because that team was and still remains so dedicated to our well-being and our welfare. So they come up with really cool ideas to bring everyone together. And it might be creating a cookbook and everybody gives their recipes and stuff like that to meditation to virtual walking your dog - it could be anything. But they came up with phenomenal ways to continue to bring people together while straddling that line of like making sure it wasn't pushing people together, which was wonderful. So, I can see the benefits of what they've done. I can see the work they've done. And everybody at Riot is accepting these challenges, everyone is moving, they have amazing tasks and things they've never got to do because there's nobody in the offices that can create these amazing spaces, that money to do it. For facilities, people like me, in the job that I do, your core is the office. So the building, the actual space and the people in it, that's what you do. That's your daily bread and butter. And when you remove that, there's a sense of like who am I? Where do I fit in here? I cannot go to the office, what do I do and how do I make everybody feel like I'm supporting them when I'm not physically walking or something like, "hey, what can I do for you?" Like helping. So there was a whole readjustment and moving the sales and heading in another direction of how we support people outside of the office, in their homes. I'm not condemned to ergonomics and all that sort of stuff.

00:02:40
Rena Riekenberg

Can you maybe give some examples of what you did in order to make sure that everything that usually happens in the office is now kind of transferred digitally to ensure a positive employee experience? And also how you think that employees accepted it and how they were impacted by that?

00:02:45
Interviewee 5

Yeah. So I think the first thing everybody did was they went home. And when I said goodbye to people this time last year, it was the 11th of March last year, I walked around my office and I was like "ok, you guys take what you need but we'll probably see you soon." But in my heart, I was like, "I'm not going to see these people propably till like June". But I was like, everybody just take what you need and head home. And when you got there, just let me know what you might need. And people went and worked at their kitchen tables. Nobody had desks or offices. And I came home and I was like, "I need to build an office immediately". I literally left my office and went to IKEA. Because I needed a desk and I needed a chair and I need to not sit at my kitchen table because we're going to be in this for a long time. And then very quickly, we had to look at a holistic approach to "how do we make people feel like we're giving them facility support in their homes" and that turned from standing next to someone and giving them an ergonomic assessment to doing that online. How do we do that online? What sort of photographs do we need? What kind of set up do we need? How do we do "how to.." for this stuff? We have to create „how to..." for everything. So ergonomics, couriers since everyone had to independently look after themselves while still feeling supported. So we were creating manuals, holistic approaches to small spaces, finding the best vendors that could supply us with

| 00:05:20 | Kind of online assessments of people's homes to say, „ok, this is the best desk for you in this tiny |
| Interviewee 5 | space". I had pregnant users as well. So I had women that became pregnant during lockdown. And I |

had to move all of my pregnancy assessments online. In person, when you do a pregnancy assessment, it's a strange time because women are either really ecstatic or terrified, there's very little balance at the time when you're doing those assessments. And that lack of interpersonal holding hands situations, it was gone. So it was more like „ok, you are pregnant, I will just throw everything at you, I am just going to send you everything you could possibly need. When you get to this part of your pregnancy, you're probably going to need this.". I've been doing this for like 20 years and I'm telling you, you're going to send people off to make sure that they were safe and well. And that went on a lot. So I think we were in about a month and we drew up a work from home policy, which we had never had before. And that was like an allowance. So you'll have an allowance, you go to this vendor, you buy what you need, and if you need to add any extra, just let us know. And people were like "I had a standing desk when I was in work" and I was like, "I'm sending it to you". So I was in the office, I was couriering standing desks to people's homes and trying to make sure that employees have the same situation in their homes than what they had in the office. But at the same time, we had a snack program, people had their lunch and stuff in the office. So every time I ship something, I was shipping snacks and treats because there was an office full of food. So every time something went out, a crate of food went with it. So it was wild. And then, we also have to try and send people the usual things they would get during e.g. St. Patrick's Day. We would have gifts that all had to be sent and shipped and people have to opt into it for GDPR reasons. We were sharing their addresses with couriers so we had to make sure that they were OK with that third party knowing their details. So there was a whole bunch of stuff. And in the background the whole entire time we were planning for a return to office. And that was changing every five minutes because it was like the information that "we should go to a shared desk policy and then it was like nobody should share a desk and nobody should touch anything", "No, this thing isn't done on surfaces" ... it was changing every day. We had like an extra protocol cleaning matrix. When the pandemic came and we had business continuity plans and stuff, but none of us had allowed for any of this stuff. But every time you uncover one part of it, there was 10 parts below it. So my team was like, "but we don't have an office. We're doing this from our heads". They were completely lost. It was just awful, but it was brilliant at the same time. It's really strange because, we have spent four years working in an office, doing the same things day in and day out, and suddenly we have to look at those phases like they were completely different. We have to reimagine them. We had to fit the pieces of the puzzle. And at the same time, we have to make sure that everybody at home was getting comfortable chair, a desk they needed and that it was fit for purpose that it was in their homes and that they weren't struggling. And also that pregnant users weren't being forgotten about. And we had to make sure that the spaces that we had just left were safe and being checked every day while worrying about our own health and that you cannot see anybody…it was so wild. I had a whole team in Milan at that time as well. And in Italy it was so bad and they couldn't leave their homes and. It was just wild. We were letting people go at that time, firing people. And like hundreds of people were just gone. So we had to try and ship their items that they owned and that they left in the office, and ship them to them, or arrange a time where they could come back in the social distance way and retrieve their items and basically say goodbye to their office, say goodbye to their facilities people. So you had to shut off, it was at that moment of like shut down for people who put their heart and soul into their jobs to care for the people to be like, "OK, bye thanks". So we organized these talks with them. It's different, like inspirational speakers. There was a guy who did it. He was like a blind athlete and he did a whole hour long talk with my team on losing your vision. And because they all were just locked in their homes and we're letting people go so they were traumatized.

00:11:49 Rena Riekenberg	It is super interesting to hear how many initiatives you took, and how much you did for the employees. Now, we also talked a lot with other companies, and it's really good to hear that you're supporting them that well, even though you have these crazy different experiences. But it's really nice to hear that they have help. And now because you talked a lot about the office and the physical space that you had to move everything remotely. Next to that, what kind of technologies and digital tools did you implement to ensure a positive employee experience now and how would you say that the employees reacted to it? Was it easy for them to adapt or was it hard to get them to use the technologies they now had to use?
00:18:03	Equipping everyone with technological equipment, like Laptops. And we have a whole scheduling system. So employees had to get used to being self-managed slightly more than usual. And they had to get used to team standups and being on Zoom calls. Yeah, I guess the technical side, the technology side was that stuff. But we didn't implement anything specifically new or unheard of that we hadn't had before. Everybody was doing most of what we were doing already before we went into remote work. However, there were differences in the game creation and the Skins creations and the champion creations. However I would have no insight into that stuff. But I imagine they had to implement a huge amount of newer stuff. I would imagine that computers were burning out and falling apart. But also a lot of the stuff that we had never done before was that we had to look after people's Internet, so we had to make sure people had the ability to work. So we were either buying boosters and sending them out or we were giving an allowance for people to pay for their Wifi.
00:20:06 Interviewee 5	There were people that were that lived in really old buildings where the Wi-Fi connections were terrible and they were living in apartments with four people, and they couldn't work. So we were trying to come up with solutions. Home networking would not have been something we would ever have been worried about because there was an office. So, it was a lot of trying to figure out how do we support people at home, what new fandango thing can we find that will help them get a better Internet. Do we send them dongles what we do? And there was loads of troubleshooting around that stuff, which we had never experienced. And that was kind of interesting as well. But all solvable, everyone was kind of working. I mean, they were going out of their minds, but they were working.
00:21:52 Rena Riekenberg	Now, you said all the creative people needed these specific types of technologies. Where they, at a certain point, also able to go to the office? So did you then sort of different activities that you rather only do in the office and tasks that you can do at home?
00:22:00 Interviewee 5	Yeah, so we have to be really careful about things like that because there are people who had to physically be in the office to make certain activities. So there were specific designated people that were allowed and they had an official letter and they were essential to the company. So there would have been essential workers who would have had to be really careful. Because before a pandemic, we would be like, "OK, you've got to be here, you've got to do the work", and they would be like, "yeah, cool, no problem". It wouldn't have been a question. But now it's like, "you've got to be here. You've got to do the work". And the person is like "there is a disease, there's an illness in the world killing people. I'm not coming in." So we had to be really careful of that. Yeah,so we had essential workers, people who carry out essential work and they could come to the office, but when they came to the office, they wouldn't have been sitting at their original desks. It would have been like a socially distant desk and they would have had to wear their masks. And that was timed - they could only wear them for four hours and they would have to be given a new mask. We were like covering off every single WHO and CDC guideline. We were being so careful in countries outside of Ireland, like in France, Germany, where there's a works council, we were talking to the works council every day, preparing people going to the office, making sure everybody was comfortable, having written affidavits to say we are not forcing anybody. We were taking every single precaution that people were going in there, that they were safe.

00:22:19 Rena Riekenberg	But that's really good. Now, you also said it was pretty hard that you cannot be with the remote people in the living room and see what they do. Would you also have a different way of supporting employees to ensure a positive employee experience?. Now, when they didn't work in the office, but at home.
00:22:30 Interviewee 5	At least for my team, I've never controlled them. Because it is literally their job to be able to be self-sufficient, to do the work. So I'm really lucky in that sense. But for a lot of people, are very young and it is their first job. They are probably 18. You've got a workforce that starts at maybe 18, 19 and probably didn't go to college and then goes all the way up to like C suite level, with extremely qualified executives. It is a very broad workforce. So you're basically asking teenagers to self manage themselves and behave. And they did not behave when they're in the offce so there is way they're going to behave when they're out. Even hiring and look after those people was a bit like herding cats. You kind of have to be a mom and you kind of have to be a disciplinarian because they write on the walls. So you're basically sending teenagers home to be like „behave yourself and do your job or You'll get fired". But at the same time at the very senior level, we were trying to not fire people because they're in a pandemic and we have to be mindful of their mental health and their well-being. It was wild.
00:27:04 Rena Riekenberg	And would you also say that in general the ways of working of people, how they conduct their work at home has changed compared to the office?
00:27:08 Interviewee 5	I've always worked with people and their work ethic is like they don't stop till the thing is done. And that's how I work. And I would have been in the office like 10 p.m. I would have gotten up at 5:00 in the morning because I guess I couldn't not do the work and I'd go into the office. So that way of working...when we came home... it was too much. You couldn't maintain that at home. And the reason, I think, is because what drove you through those days were the people around you and when you're at home and you're like, "I have been doing this since seven a.m. and it's like 10 o'clock at night and I can't see straight", and nobody was like, "come on, we'll get a drink or we'll go for dinner". It was really weird. So you couldn't maintain the level of work we did in the office at home. We had to rethink. You can't be in your home, on calls and working twenty four hours of the day, you can't do that. Your home is not a prison, so you have to be able to walk out of the room, close the laptop and get on with your life. So the American teams were asked not to schedule calls past 6:00 p.m. and at six p.m., you close your laptops down, go live your life and be with your children, stay with your family. And then there were company days, where everybody took Friday off at one point. Or there was like a monthly no meeting day. Because otherwise, it would have been like a torture. I think it would have been like the four walls are closing in on you. And we did try to do things at the start that were like "show us what you see, like what's your view? What have you done to create this office?" We sent out kits to people for pride and things like that so they could be involved in our virtual parade. And we're still trying to maintain the level of inclusion that we have always had. And then in the middle of all of this, black lives matter happened in America. And everybody was like, "what are we doing? How are we making this better?" So that became an added thing to look after people in their homes who were watching stuff on TV and what I'm hearing from their colleagues in America of their lived experiences. So we were trying to manage the well-being of pandemic and horrific things happening in the world and not being able to be together. So everything changed every few weeks basically There was a lot of moving pieces

00:32:59 Rena Riekenberg	But by sending them all these kits and trying to make them part of your parade virtually and so on. Would you say that was so they feel more connected to the company, more connected to the employees which influence the employee experience?
00:33:15 Interviewee 5	Yeah, I think what we did was we gave them an opportunity to update as well. So we want to remind you all that we're here. You're not alone. But also, we're all acutely aware that we've been sitting on calls all day. So if you don't want to join this call, you don't have to join the call. It was very much an opt in and there was a lot of stuff around the postage so people could opt into that stuff as well because it was like it's not good for the environment and we don't want to send stuff all over the world. If you don't want to opt in, that's OK. I guess we overcompensated in ways we've never overcompensated before.
00:35:22 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah, that sounds amazing. But would you say also that the communication between managers and employees and employees and colleagues was also impacted by not being able to quickly talk to each other and to not be at the same spot?
00:35:30 Interviewee 5	Yeah, so there was also people being hired. So if something happens in normal times, if something was going on, we'd all be on a plane and we'd all be in the one room together and we'd all be strategizing the best way to make this happen and how to be very human about it. And that became a thing of like "you were asleep. So we made these decisions". This was gotting and really tough. So communication from a line manager to direct report point of view was great. Everybody was probably talking too much. And there was lunches and daily standups and this whole new implementation of checking in and different slack channels and so all that stuff. But from a very senior level, it was like, "oh my God, what do we doing, we can't tell anybody?" And it became this secretive situation that never existed before. So there was a lot of learning happening and communication was changing across the C-Suite level of people but down to the manager, direct support level communication was increasing. It was more like nine o'clock at night, kind of being like, "hey, look at this, are you watching Tiger King?" We probably became more of a family because we were all in our houses together. We created lockdown playlists. It was a lot of things basically. But optional communication as well - You didn't have to be there.
00:37:18 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah, that's super nice. And you were talking a lot about hiring people but also firing people. How would you say that for the employees that were in the company throughout the whole pandemic, their professional needs, their needs of growing and developing. Was their employee experience impacted in that way?
00:37:22 Interviewee 5	I think for the people that were left behind such, there was a sense of picking up the slack of who's left. And that has stunted the development. I was letting people go, not on my team, but I was involved in all those conversations. And at the same time, I was being promoted and I was getting pay rises. And it was the closest thing to survivor's guilt I've ever had in my life where it was like, "I can't talk about this. I can't discuss this" because people are being let go and I'm continuing on. So that was crazy. And then new joiners are coming in and they had no clue of the heartbreak that people have gone through, that they were like, "I'm so happy to be here." And everyone was like, "we hate it here because my bestie doesn't work here anymore". So there was a lot of conversations around, how we engage with our colleagues and our peers in a respectful manner. It's not their fault that they got hired. We have to be very clear and we have to give them the welcome that we've always given. But we can't because we're not in the same places. People will be hired in America and they would usually fly here for like a week. But they were onboarding in their bedrooms and trying to make relationships and build relationships with people who had been on calls for six months. So there was a lot of that fatigue. I am a people person, I would be around people all the time and my being physically in the same space

as people, my body language is very high. I'm very open. I give you a hug and I'm really cautious as well. I'm really clear. And I notice people. I know what people are like. I can read people really well. And I spend a full month looking at pictures on the screen of people. I was like, I don't know who any of these people are. It was really strange. So what has usually taken me probably three weeks to bed in and be like, "you all know me, you all trust me." took three months.

00:37:39
Rena Riekenberg

Yeah, I can imagine that's hard. If you don't see the people and if they don't see you regularly to even build the connection and the relationship. Definitely.

00:38:30
Interviewee 5

Yes. And because of that, as a workplace experience person, I can then say to the talent team „this is what we need to do. This is what's missing". So you get to kind of come up with newer ways to make people feel involved and welcomed

00:40:53
Rena Riekenberg

That's so true. And you were also talking a lot about that you want to give employees the feeling that you are all here for them and maybe that's your culture of the company. Maybe we can talk a little bit about the organizational culture now. How would you say this was now impacted by not being able to show your values in the office, but you have to do it somehow, virtually? how has that impacted the employee experience?

00:41:11
Interviewee 5

I think that the culture didn't really change as such, the culture remained the same. And that is that everybody kind of works to a level. At Riot it is like you're a striker. So you have to be getting the goals. That's the way it works. So everybody works of that basis. That's sort of way of working, I guess. The culture is not aggressive, but it's the way we work can be quite passionate. So. That culture never changed during the pandemic, it never went away. Whether they were in the office or not, they remained passionate. They remained loyal and focused on the game.

00:43:40
Rena Riekenberg

Just like that or did you do something for that?

00:43:42
Interviewee 5

Well I think the commitment to make sure that people keep their jobs and reassuring them that the work is not for nothing, that we are still on goal, that we are still on track to getting to where we need to be at the end of 2020. And they have very clear goals and they have very clear guidelines. We designed this in 2019, we need to borrow through and everyone was on board. Our CEO was like "I won't let you down, I won't give up on you guys". A lot of historical, really awful stuff happened at Riot and they work really hard to make sure that never happens again. And a lot of that is based on trust. And so as soon as the pandemic hit, they were like, "you can still trust us. You can still trust us to take care of you". We're still very much committed to that. And so that's why I think the culture never changed, because, first of all, they worked very hard to get the culture to where it is today. It was really grim and horrible. And it's online. You can read about it. It was horrible. And now it's diverse, it is really respectful, everybody is in the game together, everybody is a player. And there is no end of support for everybody. And also our behaviors - We live by them. We live them in our day to day lives. It's not just a Riot thing, it's a personal thing. So you stay humble and you stay respectful and you relive that every day. You put people first every day in your life and you do that at work. So they really try to keep hold of those behaviors. And I think that is the key to why they're so successful through the year.

00:44:30 Rena Riekenberg	Yeah, that's super interesting to hear. And now we're also already at the end of our questions we had for you. But maybe just one last thing. In terms of employee experience, what do you think has been most challenging and also most frustrating for employees in the past year? Like the one thing you could pick.
00:44:51 Interviewee 5	I think the most challenging thing is the loss of interaction in the space and that peer led learning and working. That is the most challenging thing. The most frustrating thing is the starting and stopping the like, "OK, we're almost there... no, we're not". Yeah, that's the most frustrating thing because we have new joiners, we have new people and they're all like, "what does the office look like?". There is a mystery there. But we're currently working on a 3D video tour of every office to try and get our new joiners to feel like they're at home, feel like they know where they are. So when they come back to the office, they'll know it. But that's no small thing, that takes like four or five months in the making. So, I think the frustrating part is that people are really getting it up to be like, "we're going back to work". And then you're like, "no, we're actually going to be locked into our houses for another five months". I'm eager to get everybody back in so I can meet everybody and they're eager to come back in.
00:45:16 Rena Riekenberg	Now you said that everyone wants to come back and you also want them to come back, do you also want to keep some part of remote work also after the pandemic, or is it going to be one hundred percent back to the office?
00:46:20 Interviewee 5	No, I don't think that anybody ever in the world, in any office ever will be 100 percent in their offices again. I think there will be a model of maybe an AB roster. It depends on the size of your space and how you created it. But I think there will be either that or a core work day situation where there will be like core days..
00:48:22 Rena Riekenberg	Where you have to be in the office?
00:48:35 Interviewee 5	Yeah, maye like a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. And everybody is in and then everybody's not in. That sort of thing. But I know places like Hotspot have created that you either work from home, you work in the office or you are hybrid. And you can only change that once a year. You sign a contract for what you are and once a year, you can change it. So you can change back to work from home. You can go to hybrid or whatever. And I think that that is the way that nearly every single company will look to. And I think that in my experience, looking at all of this now, offices will become a place for people to gather and collaborate rather than a place for people to come and stand or sit at their and do their admin and work away. It won't be like that anymore. You can do that at home. It's easier to do that at home. You get more done when you're at home. Offices will become a place where people come to have their meetings or come to do those team events or have those town halls or stand ups or whatever. It will be a completely different experience.
00:48:57 Rena Riekenberg	But do you think that that's a good change?
00:50:27 Interviewee 5	Yeah. And I think that, as a facilities person, one of those things about being facilities people is that you love where you work and you love your space, you're constantly trying to make it better and make it and move along with the times. And there's constantly going to be people that do not appreciate that, that don't respect the space. There will always be people who are write on the walls. There'll always be people who do crazy things wherever. And I think that what will happen now is people will

understand what we took for granted before, and they will appreciate offices more. And they will appreciate the fact that they can pop over someone's desk and be like, "hey, look at this." I think we are taking that for granted a lot before the pandemic. And I think for me personally, what's come out of this pandemic is we took way too much stuff like that for granted. Hugs and all that small stuff that we just did automatically. We took all that for granted. And I think people will really make offices a better place to be because of that

00:50:39
Rena Riekenberg

I think that's a very nice ending sentence, and I totally agree. Yes, so basically we got every answer we needed. Thank you so much. But do you maybe think that we forgot anything that you still want to elaborate on?

00:51:08
Interviewee 5

No, I don`t think so.

00:51:09
Rena Riekenberg

You gave us all the answers we needed. So that was very helpful. But maybe Kerstin, do you still have a question that I forgot to ask?

00:52:28
Kerstin Nystedt

No, I've just been sitting here and enjoying your conversation. It's been super interesting to ar. So I think we covered most of it. Yes.

00:52:32
Rena Riekenberg

Also, I remember that we arranged the meeting for only forty five minutes and now it's almost an hour. So really sorry for that.

00:53:44
Interviewee 5

Oh that's OK. I had an hour. So you're fine. If you need anything else for me. Let me know. Best of luck. I hope that it goes well, I'm sure it'll be super interesting. Please send me a copy

00:54:02
Rena Riekenberg

Yes definitely. That would also be another question. Can we use your name and the name of the company in our thesis or do you want to be kept anonymous?

00:54:04
Interviewee 5

No, I don't see any reason. There's nothing to shocking, no industry secrets in there so yes that is fine.

00:54:16
Rena Riekenberg

OK, and when we transcribe this interview and when we find a nice quote we want to use, is it okay if we just send it over by email, then you accept if we can take that.

00:54:24
Interviewee 5

Yes, of course. No problem.

00:54:30
Rena Riekenberg

Nice. Then thank you so much for taking the time. And sorry again for annoying you all the time.

00:54:47
Interviewee 5

Not at all. You're fine. I need this. I need somebody to be like on me. So don't worry. Thank you so much. Take care guys.

00:54:55
Rena Riekenberg

You too. Have a good afternoon.

Interview 6

00:00:00 Interviewee 6	So you can see the text of what we're talking about. I'm not sure if you can see it or not, but that would save you a lot of time. Transcribing is the most boring thing ever.
00:00:15 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, it's not our favorite part of the thesis.
00:00:19 Interviewee 6	I understand, I can relate.
00:00:22 Kerstin Nystedt	Yes. You have been through the same process. All right, but let's get to it. So we're going to ask you questions about how employees have been impacted by working remotely. And the questions are going to follow four main themes, which are personal and professional needs, physical workplace ways of working. And lastly, organizational culture. And the questions are intentionally very broad. So please just talk about anything that comes to your mind. Great. But first of all, we would like you to just briefly talk a little bit about your role at XX and what you're doing.
00:01:01 Interviewee 6	Yes. So I'm head of HR for one of our four business units. It's a standalone area within XX and my business unit is called XX and XX. So we're doing and building everything that our user experience will be using the app for information and someone else. As well as the online platforms. So the backend systems and infrastructure operations. So very R&D focused. So that is my part.
00:01:42 Kerstin Nystedt	Oh, that's great. And how many employees are working at XX
00:01:49 Interviewee 6	7 000 roughly.
00:01:51 Kerstin Nystedt	It's 7000 roughly. And you are working with the like R&D in several countries and not only in Sweden, right?
00:01:58 Interviewee 6	Yes, that's correct. Mainly the U.S. and Europe.
00:02:01 Kerstin Nystedt	OK, that's very nice. All right. So how would you say that employees personal needs or wellbeing at XX has been impacted by working remotely?
00:02:16 Interviewee 6	First of all, I think it's not working remotely, but it's most working during the crisis. So there are other things that people, I don't think we can draw any conclusions on how people would feel and react post the pandemic. So if they were given a choice. Or if they themselves own the decision. Do I want to work from home or do I want to work from an office? Or do I want to work from another country or what have you? And I think it's going to be a lot more positive once we have explanations out in the world and the world is starting to get you don't have very sick relatives or friends or similar that you need to to cater to. But all in all, how it's impacted our employees. It's actually like a 50/50 split. It's a bunch of people saying that they're doing

much better. They have more control of their time, of their lives. They can spend more time with family. I'm one of those. So ignoring the fact that it's a pandemic and people get really, really sick, it's been positive from that perspective. And then you have others and they think it's a negative impact. They really miss the energy that happens when people interact basically. They might have re-located from one country to another one just before the pandemic. They don't have a social network. They don't have friends, they don't have family. And they've been restricted from traveling the last year, which means that they haven't met anyone. So they, of course, feel very, very isolated. So all and all, I think the majority assumes a negative impact on mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic. But they also create more freedom and control of their life. So it's not per say the remote part that have impacted the negatives. It's the pandemic. I think that's an important distinction.

00:04:15 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, I totally agree that it's hard to draw any conclusions about what is actually impacted by working remotely or the pandemic as a whole. But how would you say in general that the motivation has been this year and how has that impacted employee experience?
00:04:32 Interviewee 6	The motivation and the what?
00:04:34 Kerstin Nystedt	The general satisfaction at work. Do you feel like that has been going up or down?
00:04:40 Interviewee 6	It's stable, It's the same. I think the assumption or the fear that many people have had, and organization have had, when they talked about remote work that productivity and engagement would go down. I think it's very clear that it really hasn't. So we fast forward the development of work that looks like, like years in one day because everyone was forced to go home. We poked holes in a lot of those assumptions that people had before. That productivity would be impacted negatively on those sorts of things. They really haven't. So it's been the same. I think many traditional organizations measure input rather than output. If you're a knowledge worker, if you show up at nine to five, then you're doing your job. The number of hours you put in are those type of things. But that's all we have never subscribed to that way of looking at work. We've been looking at outputs more, which I think that many organizations needs to doing. it's going to be impossible for them to control employees now when people are working from home. So there are other things that has impacted. The sense of community, a sense of having the XX team jargong. Those type of things. Productivity and engagement is the same.
00:06:07 Kerstin Nystedt	So before even this whole pandemic hit, you were already measuring output rather than looking at actually what people sat and did?
00:06:18 Interviewee 6	Yes. leadership versus controlled based. Then it's very difficult to measure output in a knowledge based organization. What is output, what is impact? Have the individuals had any impact or is it a team or if it's something else. So it's more about the fundamental belief. If you trust people and if you invest in people you will get a lot more back. So it's more about that rather than exactly being able to measure. Like I work in HR, it's impossible to measure what impact I'm having unless it is a self reported impact or ask my peers what they think. But it's still a subjective measurement, i t's not objective in any way. So it is more about how I look at people and my employees? Well, trust them and set the direction for them and they will do great. But if you control them and if you delegate tasks, they will be disengaged and illoyal. Because that's boring. No one wants to be in that environment.

00:07:24 Kerstin Nystedt	Exactly. Since leaders had to really trust their employees, have you made sure in any way that leaders really did that?
00:07:37 Interviewee 6	I think we had that culture already going into the pandemic. So it wasn't that big of a challenge for us. And so when we talked a lot in our leadership training about trust based leadership. We've talked about the growth mindset, allowing people to fail, we've talked about the drive model, like how do you motivate people today in a knowledge based organization? Well, you need to give the purpose, you need to set the direction and give them autonomy, how to get to the goal and we need to allow them to grow and learn new things. And all that comes with leadership. You can't grow when someone keeps delegating you tasks and that you are not allowed to fail. And if you don't have autonomy, you won't have engagement. If you don't have a purpose, you won't be invested into what you are doing. It will just be a job. We already had that culture, so that wasn't a big challenge for us. Our challenge is going back to the community piece. People seem to feel a greater sense of belonging to their immediate , to their manager. But they seem to feel a smaller sense of belonging to the organization. I think that the offices created that connection to organization. You walked XX in the past, you don't do that today.
00:09:03 Kerstin Nystedt	And what have you done in order to try to create that community feeling during the lockdown's and the remote working to ensure the employee experince stays positive?
00:09:13 Interviewee 6	So when we launched our program where we told people that they can work from anywhere going forward, we also launched a virtual workshop that's about our culture which we call jam sessions. It's an opportunity for people to reconnect to who we are and why they chose to come here. So the "why" that I joined XX resonates with me when it comes to our mission statement, our values that we as a team rate as not so good and what can we do to improve those kinds of things. That's one piece. Then when we launched the program itself, w e also launched a learning hub. So we have a LMS, learning management system, and we have a bunch of courses that we've created ourselves so that people can watch. Both virtual and person and e-learning courses as well. We created a specific hub connected to distributed work. And we add things like, how do you create a sense of belonging? How do you ensure that people feel motivated in a distributed world? How do you lead with empathy? How do you create opportunities for people to connect and not only talk about work all the time? An the content, we direct to both teams, managers and individuals so they can invest in themselves. When it comes to that.
00:10:38 Kerstin Nystedt	That's really interesting. So that learning hub you didn't have before? That was like a new thing that you implemented?
00:10:46 Interviewee 6	The specific learning hub, yes. But we had the L&D system. We're learning and development organization.That's specifically for this. We created a standalone hub and we took a bunch of learnings that we had. Thank you for being on base. And all those units are connected to working remotely. Yeah. Some things that we did, so that's new connected to the pandemic.
00:11:13 Kerstin Nystedt	So that was kind of to not stop the professional development during this time, but to really like to make sure that employees' experiences were not impacted negatively and professionally?
00:11:28 Interviewee 6	Yes, it was a directed effort so that we could continue and that we could get the tools we need to continue working from home.

00:11:45 Kerstin Nystedt	You already mentioned that employees have really missed the physical workplace has been this sense of the broader community that you have at XX. Is there anything else that you feel has impacted the employee experience by not having a physical workplace?
00:12:04 Interviewee 6	Yes but in a positive way. We've seen that people in our remote offices, and that people that have already been working from home already before the pandemic. It seems that they are working more on equal terms now. They are more part of the organization, they are more connected, which is opposite to what the raw data is telling us. So imagine being at a remote office, a smaller office, of like 50 people. And you're the one who always dials into the meeting but everyone else is sitting in a conference room. It's always difficult to contribute on the same terms. You want to say something, you lean in and you need to interrupt the whole meeting and you interrupt the flow of the meeting. Then you start to be quiet instead because you don't want to interrupt the other. So then you're just listening and then you're disconnecting and disengaging because you are not participating in the same way. Now everyone is dialing in and everyone is contributing in the same way. Everyone has the same opportunities. That is then a positive change that I think we need to maintain for the future. It also allows for other groups that haven't been able to participate in the past to participate. And all of a sudden we can you can hire people with disabilities that couldn't come into the office in the pas, and they can contribute in the same way that anyone else can. So it's opening up a bunch of new opportunities,
00:13:33 Kerstin Nystedt	That's really interesting. So you think like going forward also when you start coming back to the office, that even though you have a meeting with workers not being physically present in the office, you will like have the idea that then everyone will be like digitally in the meeting instead?
00:13:54 Interviewee 6	Yes, I think it will happen. We need to find new ways of running meetings. We cannot go back to old ways because this is so much more valuable for everyone.
00:14:04 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, we also read like an interesting quote. That said that, "if one person is working remotely, then everyone is working remotely in the team", which is kind of a nice way of saying it.
00:14:19 Interviewee 6	Yeah, exactly. And then you need to find new ways of working. And one of those things is on the basics. How do you run meetings in order for everyone to be able to contribute and have the same impact? Everyone should dial in if someone is digitally present. You need to be better at documenting the outcomes of the meeting so people can follow up. Once you start to have more time zones, you also need to understand that you may not even be able to have a meeting. People won't be awake at the same time. They don't have the same working hours and they're not overlapping. So you need to document your decisions. You need to be better at hand over so you can utilize that to your benefit. You don't have to stop ever, because you can always find people that are present. People can continue to work. So you can change the ways of that you have as a team.
00:15:13 Kerstin Nystedt	That's really interesting. In order to maintain your work and the employee experience regarding that, what kind of technologies have been crucial for you in order to create this digital remote working?
00:15:34 Interviewee 6	Video calls of course, so you can see each other. But we had that before. Yeah. Instant messaging systems. We've had most of the tools before that. The interesting piece now is that

we all have to harmonize our standards for what tool to use and when. Because that will allow people to own their own time to a larger extent. Let's say that you have three different video conferencing tools. It's a hassle when people send you different types of invites. You need have all the different tools on your phone a nd computer. You have to learn every time and how am I going to share my screen? I don't remember how you doing mistakes. Standardising, harmonizing, killing your darlings, having few and tools and clarifying when to use them and how to use them. I think that's going to help in the organization. It makes it less stressful, and it is going to remove a lot of friction.

00:16:40 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, definitely. Was it difficult for you to I mean, since you already work together with colleagues in different countries being international, but did you experience that it was hard for people to change to these kind of new ways of working with the technologies?
00:17:01 Interviewee 6	Not at all. But we're also a fairly new company. I poke to a friend who works at a a large truck manufacturer. They were encouraged to not use video calls in the beginning, They did phone conferences instead. They didn't have the infrastructure to support the demand of data that would go through the entire organization. Those problems don't exist for us since we are new as an organization.
00:17:33 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, that's true.
00:17:36 Interviewee 6	So its and easy transition. It's more about the energy in people. Since it's a pandemic, not everyone has a lot to talk about. No one has enough space at home. You might live in a small apartment, you might schools are closed and daycare closed. That's the challenges, and are because of the pandemic, not to working remotely. So we've been looking more into how we can help people balance, allowing them to step down in time if needed and those type of things.
00:18:15 Kerstin Nystedt	That's interesting. And moving forward now to ways of working a little bit. Did you experience that any kind of work activities have been more difficult to perform remotely for employees which has impacted their employee experience?
00:18:31 Interviewee 6	I think we are more practical and operational now than before. And you need to find new ways of having those strategic discussions. And I think the most common trap that organizations fall into, the most common pitfall is that you try to translate the office setup to a virtual setting . But virtual doesn't work the same way as the office did. So if you have your weekly meetings with your team, you just continue to do those without questioning if they are as successful virtually as they were when you met in person. You continue with the same agenda, but working virtually means that you don't bump into each other in the hallway, you don't go out for lunch, you don't meet at the coffee machine. So your weekly meetings need to contain some sort of social element where people also get an opportunity to just talk about anything that's not work related. So you continue to get to know each other and continue to build trust. And strategic discussions, you need to make time to think, discuss and debate. You can't continue as you did before. So a winning concept for me personally, has been to do a lot more walk and talk with people, more meetings, but also moving those one-hour meetings because they're not efficient anymore. So that's a bit of a change. And documentation is important and ensuring that you save and keep the context on the decisions that you've made so people can read up. Those who were not able to be there. In the past you can always check with someone after meeting. We went past their desk and.*Can't hear*... We don't do that anymore.

00:20:37 Kerstin Nystedt	That's really interesting that it's not really about just copy pasting what you did into the digital. And also about leaving traces after meeting or after what you decided, so that people, as you said, can catch up.
00:20:59 Interviewee 6	I think you just have to learn to work more asynchronously. You can't depend on instant interaction or instant meetings. You have to collaborate differently.
00:21:12 Kerstin Nystedt	That's really interesting. Now since you were also working a lot with the R&D, d id you experience that, since employees are involved in creative tasks, did you experience that that was harder for them to do? To like share knowledge, share ideas or to collaborate or stuff like that?
00:21:33 Interviewee 6	No, I think they've been first of all, we don't know yet, to be honest, because productivity is the same and since we can see that people are doing ok ish. But I have concerns which are around collaboration, creativity, energy, and innovation. But we don't know yet if it's going to have a long term impact and we need to invest in understanding more and mitigating them. But they've been very creative in how they collaborate and how they program together. For instance, they set up squad programming and they call it. So people are going into a meeting, but one person is sharing the screen and doing all the programming and the rest gives feedback and comes up with tips and tricks. And then they rotate. So one person is always programming and the other stop it. Then they hand over this thing to the next person. So they're doing a bunch of those things. Before they did pair-programming. So two people sat next to a computer and discussed. So it's changed a bit.
00:22:41 Kerstin Nystedt	You already talked a lot about that a trust based leadership style has been really important. But how much like support do you feel like employees have been in need of during this time? In their work?
00:23:04 Interviewee 6	You can see that the ones that are successful are the ones that have found their rhythm and are able to start to work, they are able to close their work, they are able to find a way of setting structure for themselves. And the ones that are struggling are the ones that haven't successfully done so yet. So they have a hard time starting the day, they never really turn off in the evening so they continue to do work in their free time. Then they are feeling exhausted. They haven't found a good way to structure their days. So we've invested in helping our people find that rhythm. Managers, of course, the managers talk to the employees about how they can set boundaries between work and private life and those things
00:23:59 Kerstin Nystedt	Interesting.
00:24:02 Interviewee 6	It's also clear that, which I think is interesting ... and it kind of makes sense. But it's clear that junior employees and younger employees are struggling more than senior and older employees. And there's, of course, a bunch of reasons for why that could be the case. We don't know fully yet, but young people tend to have more social interactions than older people, because then you get fewer social touch points but the deeper they are and those are easier to maintain during a pandemic. But if you're young and depend on a lot of social interaction, you can't have that during the pandemic. So of course, that impacts negatively. When you're early in your career as well you depend on networking and collaboration. That's a way for you to grow your career and to show your presence and show your impact. That's more difficult because all meetings

are deliberate. While in an office they're not, they happen randomly. So there are some data points indicating that those are the ones who struggle the most. They might also live smaller, you don't really have space to a real desk. So sofa or something. There is a bunch of things that influence them.

00:25:25 Kerstin Nystedt	Have you done anything to try to recreate these occasional meetings or water cooler/ coffee machine moments or whatever they can be called? Have you in any way tried to replicate that in the digital workplace?
00:25:42 Interviewee 6	Yes, but the Catch 22 is that they will never be randomly then. They will always be deliberate. You have to set aside time to do it. But we have tried different networking tools when you randomize interactions. So doing 30 minutes of networking now and then you have the tool that randomizes connects people. We have tried to set aside times in our normal meetings where we just talk about social things so you get to connect on a different level. We have seen the activity of one manager who sent home a kit so everyone could do own carpet. And it was like a training class. Also these escape room challenges where they can do virtual escape rooms. We have tried to do a bunch of those social things that people connect.
00:26:51 Kerstin Nystedt	with new people in the organization?
00:26:53 Interviewee 6	Yes
00:26:54 Kerstin Nystedt	That's really cool. I feel like companies are really getting creative now with what kind of social activities to do. I think it's super nice. We already touched upon it a little bit. But in what way would you say that your organizational culture has been impacted by people not seeing each other and how does that affect the employee experience?
00:27:18 Interviewee 6	I don't think the culture has been too impacted. I think that the sense of community has been impacted. Maybe its smaller... the connections to our mission statement as a company. On the other hand, it's stronger connections in your team mission statement. Why are we here as a team? Sp spend more time debating that. I think that's what has been impacted. I think long term this will, if you look at work from a historical perspective, 50 years ago people spend their entire lifetime with their employers. Today, people change jobs on average every third year. That is what the data is saying. I think that will go down in the future as well. So loyalty will be more with the individual, with yourself, but not with a specific company. I think the whole employee experience is becoming more and more tailored for individuals. Like our program in itself that we are launching is tailored for the employee. We say that you are the most successful if you work where you are most comfortable. Is that at home, or in an office, or something in between? Is it in a different country or city? All that drives this conversation with the employee experience which then drives an emphasis on the individual. That you internally can create stronger individuals who are more empowered. I think loyalty will go down. And I don't say that as a bad thing. I think it's more an observation of where the world is going. And if you as an employer can't provide for personalized employee experiences to people, then you will have a talent and attraction problem.

00:29:25 Kerstin Nystedt	Do you see any challenges with giving employees that kind of flexibility in choosing? Like how much you are able to choose yourself? Do you see any challenges with doing that in terms of employee experience?
00:29:41 Interviewee 6	I think there's some obvious challenges when it comes to collaboration. When you place yourself on the scale between the individual and the collective, and you're indexing towards the individual. Then we always talk about "the team before the I" and those type of things to mitigate for that. I think that will impact collaboration, we need t o figure that out. I think it will impact innovation when people don't meet and have that cross of thoughts. Then innovation will be disrupted, because that's where innovation happens in those small randomized interactions, not in a structured meeting. I think it will, this is a small minority, but as a manager it is going to be more challenging to identify if someone has an addiction for instance. If someone is late to work, if someone smells in the office space, if some of those more obvious signs are there. It's going to be more difficult in the future. That in combination with society suffering more from mental health problems than ever is of course going to be a problem. Who catches those individuals that need help? How do you spot early warning signs?
00:31:00 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah. That's really interesting because as you said, you can see those cues when you meet someone. But in a virtual world, that is obviously much harder.
00:31:11 Interviewee 6	Exactly.
00:31:15 Kerstin Nystedt	Going back to organizational culture. Because even though you're more about the individual when you're working for the organization. How do you feel still like the organizational values are present when you don't see each other in the office? So do you feel like that is a difference in how you communicate online versus in the office?
00:31:45 Interviewee 6	To be honest, we were already distributed before. Just by having multiple floors in the building or just by being present in multiple cities, or countries in our case, in many many different time zones, in many different countries and regions. We were already at the shooter, and people were working remotely and they were forced to collaborate because those boundaries. So it's not a new problem for us. We have gotten more input and now we optimize for this one, rather than before when we optimized for Co-located World. And that's what we build things for and that's how we think. in reality, people are not working in that way. I think it's more about us understanding that this chang is inevitable. We're already operating in that way, allow for more flexibility and double down on what needs to change when it comes to ways of working to be more successful in this. So I don't think that it will impact the culture too negatively. I do think it will impact elements of the culture. Those are the ones that we talked about. Creativity, innovation and sense of belonging to the community that I have in the teams and so on. But all and all, there's no clear indication that we have a weaker culture in any way. I don't think so. I think the opposite. By leening into this, people feel that we stand true to our culture because our culture is about making bold bets, taking risk, making a decision, adapting that decision and constantly evolving it to adapt to new constraints and new impacts. This is just sign that we have done that. So it actually helps us to reinforce the culture. Your culture is defined by the decisions you make and by those strings you have to your employees. Trust and constraints, and being brave. This is all about that.
00:34:02 Kerstin Nystedt	A very good point that this transition is also a way of showcasing your culture and also probably that employees are going to have a stronger perception of the brand. Also, when you live up to

your values. So that's very interesting and nice. But do you also know when you're going to, like, launch? Is it this summer that you're going to more launch the work from anywhere program

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Interviewee 6

Yeah, mean, we did that two months ago. So we are in the middle of that transition now and people are about to make their decision. So the application window closes now in the end of March.

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Kerstin Nystedt

OK, so individuals are able to choose from different options?

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Interviewee 6

Yes, they can choose between if they want to work from home, the office, or something in between. They can also choose what location they want to work at. That's what we mean by working anywhere. It helps reinforce the culture that we are going to have.

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Kerstin Nystedt

That's really interesting. Can you already now see any indications of if people want to mostly go back to the office or not, or is it too early to say?

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Interviewee 6

It's too early to say. And also, I think the decision is impacted by the fact that people don't know what the office will look like. Yeah, because we haven't opened the offices yet. So there are still discussions of when the office will open, will you be forced to wear a mask, will you be forced to have a vaccine. Like what restrictions will there be? And then it's always easier to say I'm going to continue to work from home. We also allow people to change. But at the moment, it is a majority wanting to work from an office with flexibility, of course, maybe not every day from the office. But still a very large chunk of work from home and continue that way

00:36:13
Kerstin Nystedt

Well, it's really interesting that you're really taking the opportunity. What do you think has been the biggest challenge, just like ending questions here, the biggest challenge for employees in this remote work setting?

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Interviewee 6

during the problem or just working from home?

00:36:50
Kerstin Nystedt

maybe just working from home?

00:36:51
Interviewee 6

It's impacted by the pandemic, hard to ignore the fact that it is a pandemic. I think the biggest challenge has been the sense of isolation,

00:37:03
Kerstin Nystedt

the sense of isolation.

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Interviewee 6

That's mainly driven by the pandemic. You had to isolate yourself. It's not the fact that you're working from home, its actually that you're in a pandemic. Do you see any indications on symptoms related to COVID? Can't go out to restaurants. You can't go to places.

00:37:28 Kerstin Nystedt	OK, so now we're kind of gone through all the other questions. Is it anything that you feel like we haven't touched upon that you would like to share with us about employees and remote working?
00:37:45 Interviewee 6	I think it's I would like to stress again that it's the way we're working now., it's not the how it will be when working after the pandemic. Now, we're working during a crisis. After the pandemic we're going to work distributed for real and that is when we know exactly what things will be. And we're moving very clearly in this direction when we offer employees flexibility. I don't think it's the right path for everyone. I think everyone has to find out which is the right path for us. I don't think that it's that it makes sense to for somebody to choose or to make an organization choose if they want to work from home fully or from an office fully. I have seen in a few cases where companies take this as an opportunity to save money by downsizing office space, I think that's wrong and it is going to come back and bite you. And you see this as an opportunity where organizations have said we're going to double down on the office, offices are what matters, we will ask people to come back in. I don't think that's the right way either. I think you could find flexibility. And I think you need to base it on what you can offer as an organization
00:38:53 Kerstin Nystedt	Will XX lchange to offices in some way depending on what employees want in the future? Do you think that a downsizing might be relevant for you?
00:39:05 Interviewee 6	Yes, but as a consequence of what people chooses. S not as a consequence of us wanting to save money, but rather it doesn't make sense to pay for unused office space. So people are indexing towards working from home more, or fewer days in the office, and we see that there is room to remove some of the space then we would do that of course.
00:39:27 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, that's nice too
00:39:29 Interviewee 6	But it's a consequence of what people choose and nothing else.
00:39:32 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, that's nice too of course it's dependent on the employees and not on the business. That's a nice ending sentence. Rena, do you have anything that you feel like we haven't covered.
00:39:50 Rena Riekenberg	No, I think we have very valuable answers already. So thank you so much for giving us all the information. I think we covered everything we wanted
00:39:59 Interviewee 6	I'm glad to hear.
00:40:01 Kerstin Nystedt	All right. But then thank you so much again for doing this interview with us. We're super happy about it. It was really interesting to hear you're very smart and valuable thoughts. We wanted to ask, since we want to use quotes of what you're saying and then we would like to have your consent for that. So would that be possible if we just send you an email in a month or something with the quotes and then you can agree?
00:40:33	Yeah, of course.

00:40:36	All right. But then I think that we want to take up more of your time today. So that was everything from us.
00:40:47 Interviewee 6	Awesome. Thank you so much. Thank you,
00:40:49 Kerstin Nystedt	Yes, thank you. Bye. Have a nice day.
00:40:52 Interviewee 6	Bye

Interview 7

00:00:02
Kerstin Nystedt

So I'm just going to start my phone as well. So the questions that I'm going to ask you are going to be about four different things where one is about personal and professional needs, one is about the physical workplace, ways of working and then organizational culture. And the questions are very broad by intention. So please feel free to talk about anything that comes to your mind. But first of all, what is your role at the XX, could you clarify that?

00:00:38
Interviewee 7

I am director, head of HR, communications and Strategy.

00:00:45
Kerstin Nystedt

And how many employees are working XX?

00:00:50
Interviewee 7

Roughly about 2400

00:00:54
Kerstin Nystedt

3400?

00:00:56
Interviewee 7

2400.

00:00:56
Kerstin Nystedt

And during this pandemic, how much have you actually been in the office and working?

00:01:07
Interviewee 7

me personally or the rest?

00:01:12
Kerstin Nystedt

The workforce.

00:01:12
Interviewee 7

Well, that kind of depends. If you're in the news department, you have to be at work. If you're a cameraman, you have to be at work. So I would say that about 40-45% percent have been able to, or have been working from home.

00:01:34
Kerstin Nystedt

OK, so the people that's been in the office, that has been based on the task and activities that they are not able to perform from home? Yeah, OK.

00:01:44
Interviewee 7

And then I would say that 10, 15, maybe 20 percent had one day at work or maybe two. Then the rest they have been they have been at work. But we have made it very clear that the people who are able to stay at home and work, they need to do that in order to protect the environment for the people who can't choose.

00:02:09 Kerstin Nystedt	So you then had periods, like all the time basically, where people have been collaborating together, both being in the office and at home?
00:02:20 Interviewee 7	Yes, and slo since we make television programs, they are not necessarily made at our studios. They are sometimes made at other locations. So where we are filming from different parts, so in nature or whatever. As you know, when you make a drama series or whatever. So we have on location, in studio, at the office. So we have like in the news department, it's like in the field interviews at hospitals or, you know, depending on where things are happening.
00:02:58 Kerstin Nystedt	So it's very complex.
00:03:01 Interviewee 7	Really hard to say. It's really depending on what the task is.
00:03:11 Kerstin Nystedt	OK, good. How would you say that the employee's personal well-being or needs has been impacted by them working remotely? How has that impacted the general employee experience?
00:03:25 Interviewee 7	I think that we are used to work remotely. As I said, working remotely is different to us to working from home. So we have divided when we talk about this being having your manager in another city, then you work yourself. That's quite common. And it was before as well. And working on location, people know how to do that. But working from home to this extent, that's what's been the new thing for us. Then it's kind of more about ergonomics, about IT security, making sure that you are seen, having clear goal settings and being able to follow up on them. That kind of clarity on what you're supposed to deliver, that has become more important. B ut if you already had your manager working from another city, then when you're what you're doing yourself, that has always in terms of goal setting been the focus. So it's more of the "at home thing" that's been different.
00:04:35 Kerstin Nystedt	Have you taken any new initiatives or done things differently this year in order to address these needs?
00:04:49 Interviewee 7	Yes, we've done many things. Everything from, you know, supplying practical things like screens and tables. We didn't do that before, but now you're able to have it sent home. We have also one hour per week extra "friskvård", what you call that like, personal health hour. So employees can use it for training and exercising and just go out and leave the home during daylight hours. So we've added that. We have also done "arbetsmiljörond" digitally, I don't know what it's called in English. But normally it's something that you do in the workplace to make sure that all of the ergonomics is fine. Now, since you can't visit people's homes, we do that digitally. So you can have a work environment expert who kind of joins you on your iPhone. Then you use Teams or FaceTime and you go through your home and make sure that you are working in the right environment. We also have free and open discussions i f you want to have extra support. If you are leaning more towards an addictive behavior so that we capture

them in an early phase in terms of alcohol and gambling and things. And we've provided that information on the Internet and we've seen that it's been used. So I think that is good. Every manager is supposed to have a discussion concerning the work environment twice per year. So that we are sure. Not about the physical, but the where the mental health is discussed.

00:06:50
Kerstin Nystedt

How do you think that the mental work health has been impacted by this? Of course, it's been very much because of the pandemic. But do you think that it's any like needs that have been really impacted by just being away=

00:07:05
Interviewee 7

We see that women, especially in families who have younger kids at home, the sick leave has decreased and that they feel much happier now than they used to do before. And then we can see , and older people, living at home on their own have been impacted in a less positive way. They feel like they're missing out meeting people on a daily basis, which is natural. This really depends on life stage, I would say.

00:07:45
Kerstin Nystedt

Yeah, yeah, I agree.

00:07:47
Interviewee 7

Also, I think it depens on the season here in Sweden. Because we're very impacted by, obviously, the light.

00:07:58
Kerstin Nystedt

Exactly. These couple of months has been quite hard. Is your experience that employees feel like they've been impacted professionally by working remotely?

00:08:17
Interviewee 7

We do not see a decrease in productivity. But it's hard also to judge. Because this is kind of a business built on adrenaline, i f you are working with news. And everyone's been working so hard this year. And I think that kind of adrenaline can be positive, but it's not sustainable. So I think that the sustainability in working from home and working at the office is something that we are discussing now when we're planning for the next steps.

00:08:59
Kerstin Nystedt

Then moving onto the physical workplace. Employees who have not been able to be that much in that office, what would you say that they miss and how has that impacted their employee experience?

00:09:13
Interviewee 7

It depends. Some people are very dependent on being a part of a team and they want to come back to the office. But they want to come back to the office to spend time with colleagues. And some of their colleagues want to be at home because they have small kids. So I think that it's kind of "me and the team thing" that we need to discuss in depth. Because have said at XX that when all of the restrictions are gone, we are not going to say yes to a hundred percent working from home. We want people to be at least one day at the office. That is also so that we can provide for the people who needs interaction. We see also after a year that the creative processes in developing new television formats, the digital environment doesn't lend itself very

well to those activities. On a daily basis having team meetings and kind of check up on where people are, meeting their goals and everything. But to create new things.

00:10:28
Kerstin Nystedt

So it's mostly those sharing knowledge, collaborating and those kind of tasks that has been more difficult to conduct remotely for you?

00:10:39
Interviewee 7

No, I would say that those are OK remotely. But, you know, in terms of innovation and development, you kind of need to meet. But it's also hard. If you, for example, talk to our developers who are creating code, they are perfectly happy to stay at home. But if you talk to the people who are creating a new kids show for kids between two and four, they are not comfortable sitting at home doing this from scratch.

00:11:17
Kerstin Nystedt

Yeah, which is totally understandable. So what aspects of the physical workplace would you say is hard to transfer into the digital one?

00:11:32
Interviewee 7

I think the process where you need to read people, the body language. These kind of small in between chats where you need to take a break and reflect. Reflection doesn't lend itself to Teams. I mean, we are doing that now, but it's hard to be quiet here. If I really need to step aside and really reflect on things or reflect together. That is not the best place to do that. I think celebrating things when you've done something really good or when it's someone's birthday. I mean, we've tried to sing Happy Birthday like 15 times on teams with 80 people and it sounds dreadful and everyone's laughing. It's fun because we have to. But it's so much better to celebrate in real life. And downtime, you know, all aspects of downtime. Lunch, coffee, having a glass of wine after work. Everything that kind of builds those social interactions that is not connected to delivery. Well, it's better done physically.

00:13:01
Kerstin Nystedt

Yeah. It doesn't come as natural maybe in a digital workplace. What would you say have been the key digital tools and technology this year? What's made you, like, survive in ensuring employee experience?

00:13:17
Interviewee 7

Well, I think like most people, it's been Teams, but different ways of using it. Sometimes it's been very helpful to turn the screen off and just talk. I see that a lot of people need to do things with their hands at the same time. And it's interesting because most people then they have a second screen and you can tell if my eyes are turning this way. I nit while I'm talking, not now. But one of my best friends is the CEO of a big company s he has this thousand piece puzzle in front of her computer. She puzzles while she's in meetings. Just to keep the brain clearer. Because you're so exposed. It's interesting, we talk also about the managerial role and your face is so big on my screen. S o if I kind of come in and I want to negotiate your salary, it is a bit different in terms of roles when you are doing it this way.

00:14:28
Kerstin Nystedt

That's really interesting. Yeah, these are interpersonal.

00:14:32 Interviewee 7	Kind of the impact and the eye movements. The small things that you can see. It becomes so much more important in terms of connections. I can sit here and nit and you will not notice and that would be an awkward thing to do in an office.
00:14:54 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah. Interesting. And you mentioned that you had the employees being more in the office and some people not being that much in the office. Have that been difficult for you to manage in terms of employee experience? Like in meetings or whatever? That some people are not physically present while some people are? Have you experienced any difficulties with managing that kind of hybrid solution?
00:15:21 Interviewee 7	I think we all want to see some progress there. But we had before. I have a person in Malmö and one in Gothenburg. I think it's actually so much for them now. They've had like 15 people in Stockholm and one in Malmo, one in Gothenburg. Now it's more equal. So they are much more integrated in the team than they used to be. But of course, we have hybrid meetings as one of our key issues going forward into when we're stabilizing this way of working in the future.
00:16:00 Kerstin Nystedt	In what other ways would you say that ways of working are impacted when you're not physically present which can affect the employee experience?
00:16:09 Interviewee 7	The traveling from different aspects. I mean, from a climate perspective, it's a very good thing. And also from an economic perspective for a company. We save a lot of money on travel. I think that we will travel in the future more obviously, but in a more kind of planned way so that you really know why you're going. And you probably would cluster more meetings when you're actually traveling. So that it makes more sense. So we that sustainable thing is really important. But also in everyday commuting, commuting is also travel. We can see now that managers are actually having meetings from 7.30 because they can from home. And that is not something that we are endorsing at all. We really want have the time in the office from 8.30 to17.00 in a normal way. So that kind of flow sort of. When you're working from home, you start earlier and end later. We are trying to get rid of that.
00:17:29 Kerstin Nystedt	Maybe employees have different time patterns in their lives then and then you have to like maybe adapt to others with time schedules?
00:17:43 Interviewee 7	But it's easy, now that we are a Swedish company. I used to work in Microsoft before at five o'clock Seattle opens. Here, it's not that big of a problem really. It's more since we're in a , when our audience watch TV we are at home, but something can happen. So a lot of things that are happening in society, happens outside of work hours, and we need to take care of that.
00:18:15 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, that's really true.

00:18:17 Interviewee 7	But from a workplace perspective, also, the people who have to be at work, they are very aware and they are very particular that the right people are in the office. So if I would work down the studios, they would tell me to go home. "You are not needed here. Go home, because you don't have to be here."
00:18:47 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah. So the office has really been for the people who need to be there. But how would you say that the people working outside of the office, how much support and control they have been needing to have a positive experience of working remotely? Since the managers are not able to see them?
00:19:08 Interviewee 7	Well since productivity hasn't gone down, I think that self leadership is something that has developed this year. People are taking much more responsibility for their own and what they are supposed to deliver. So I think that everyone's done a really good job. Leaders have to become more of facilitators, and help support employees to take responsibility and to practice self leadership. I'm more concerned about the people who kind of disappear because they are not the ones who are taking space in the big discussions. That's why every manager at XX have to have a personal team meeting every week or at least every second week. Because it's so much to disappear in a digital environment than in a physical.
00:19:56 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, that's interesting. What other kinds of work processes or routines have you implemented this year to enable remote working? if there is any other?
00:20:09 Interviewee 7	No, I think that since we have to have the work environment t alk, the ones. Then we have all the development talks and salary talks and, you know, all of the things that you normally have. They are just transferred into digital.
00:20:29 Kerstin Nystedt	Then moving forward to organizational culture. Would you say that your organizational culture at XX has been impacted by this year? and if so, how has that impacted the employee experience?
00:20:47 Interviewee 7	Can you define that?
00:20:49 Kerstin Nystedt	Well, we kind of say that it's your values...
00:20:54 Interviewee 7	like our company culture?
00:20:56 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah your company culture exactly.

00:20:59	No. I think that we would be described as a company with a very strong "why" because we are
Interviewee 7	a public service company funded by the public. You know why you were working at XX. So
	in terms of values, it's as strong as ever. Then it's easy to kind of mix the public service, core
	values with the kind of work behavior that we want to establish. And for us, those two are not
	the same, but they're equally potent. I would say now we're at a place where people are very
	tired because they have been in production and it has been a very high focus from society since
	people have been at home and they've been watching a lot of television and the news
	departments are working 24/7. So I think that if something would happen, it probably will
	happen now and based on the fact that people are tired.

| 00:22:15 | Fed up with the whole situation and everything |
| Kerstin Nystedt | |

| 00:22:18 | and physically tired, they've been working longer hours and more hours for a year. |
| Interviewee 7 | |

| 00:22:25 | So have you experienced that you've had more news to report and more to do this year because |
| Kerstin Nystedt | of the pandemic? |

00:22:33	But from my perspective, yes, because I'm responsible for all of the internal restrictions and
Interviewee 7	regulations and how we interpret the authorities. So, yes, of course. We are in the process of
	talking about the future of work, too, so we're kind of doing both now. Preparing for the autumn
	when we are hoping that things will like from a health perspective, we'll be back to normal.
	But what do we want to keep from this period? And what do we not want to keep? To make a
	very conscious choice there. And since we have 150 different professions at XX, it differs a
	lot. A cameraman and someone working in our finance department, obviously their daily work
	life is completely different.

| 00:23:41 | But what do you think that you will take with you as key learnings from this period that you |
| Kerstin Nystedt | will keep like in the next phase? |

00:23:55	Well, obviously, we want to make the most out of the digital transformation that's happened
Interviewee 7	already. We want to make the most out of balance, that happened for some people but not for
	everyone during this period. We want to keep on to the climate impacts, the positive impact
	on that sustainability, both in terms of climate and in people sustainability. I think that the
	creativity that has exploded, especially last summer, f ast tracks and everything just to provide
	for the situation. We would like to kind of explore that and see how we could develop that as
	well.

00:24:47	It's really interesting and good, we actually learn a lot as well. It's been a challenge, but from
Kerstin Nystedt	challenge comes new ideas as you sai. To conclude, what you think has been the biggest
	challenge for employees during this time.

00:25:08 Interviewee 7	I think it has changed from the beginning when everyone was really scared, but also very fulfilled that we had a very important role to play. In both transmitting the message to the Swedish people in what's happening, but also to do our job as a news department and challenge the authorities and, you know, get to the bottom of things, which is our job, too. So I think that has been the most important thing.
00:25:53 Kerstin Nystedt	Very interesting, I think that was the ending question from our part, is it anything about remote working or employee experience that you feel like we have not covered, that you think is interesting for us?
00:26:10 Interviewee 7	I can check because I have a presentation of the latest that we're working on. So what we're doing now is actually to gather information from all of our employees on what they think has been the best and the worst. Also from the unions and also from the managers. And we have a long list. In terms of work, based on creativity and learning, the ability to work cross-functional, the ability to develop a new meeting culture and the ability to share and to learn - those three are the most important things going forward for work. In terms of sustainability, it 's the development of the digital technique, the whole review of our physical workplaces. How should they be constructed in the future in terms of meeting rooms, areas and collaboration and so on. We for example also need to make sure that our communication efforts are reached by every employee. So physical areas and digital technique. And how we commute and travel. And the third thing in terms of effectiveness, a clearer work kind of goal performance and how work needs to be done. Clearer discussions about culture and principles for how we work remotely and at the office. And lastly, when we're looking at the leadership going forward, it's a new type of remote leadership. The ability to reboot and what that means and how we should work with facilitators to do that. So we have to establish a leadership culture that supports change, learning and personal development for everyone. We need to create a mutual and more trustful and facilitating leadership where clear vision and goals gives each employee, and each team, autonomy and time to experiment and develop towards the goals.
00:28:39 Interviewee 7	I think that this slide is really the cluster, the actions, how we do this. This is what we're actually doing right now and this is what we need to look further into. The infrastructure for learning, cross-functional sharing, private meetings, I.T. security, collaboration for example we have to find a structure for how we meet each other and how we collaborate. When should it be in real life? When should it be digitally? Then also facilities, how to support managers, goals, expectations on the workforce. We need to find and set up tools and structures to help employees regulate their working time. Meaning that we need to ensure that they take time for their personal life and that they take breaks they need to in order not to be exhausted. So this is kind of how we process it now in clusters. And then our management team is actually making decisions now in how to take the next step
00:29:34 Kerstin Nystedt	So based on this and then making it into like policies and new practices and stuff like that. Yeah?

00:29:43 Interviewee 7	We're trying to get to kind of not do as many policies. We try to actually change things in reality and not just write them in policies. So this is more sort of what we are doing already on this and the next one is how to take it.
00:30:02 Kerstin Nystedt	And this is based on data that you gathered from the employees?
00:30:07 Interviewee 7	We have had lot of meetings. This is the list from 70 managers. This is what they want. This the list from the Union, this is what they want. This is the list from the working group that is responsible for "ditt nya arbetsliv". And these are the points from the management team. And then we've done the cluster activity based on work, sustainability, effectivity, leadership, and self-leadership. Then everyone has actions under them. So this is what we were processing at the moment in order to get there.
00:31:02 Kerstin Nystedt	So this is what you've learned now? Yeah ok. That is super, super interesting. Thank you so much for sharing those slides with us.
00:31:13 Interviewee 7	It's OK. You have them on tape.
00:31:17 Kerstin Nystedt	Thank you so much. Super great insights to hear about. So thank you for that. Now when we're ending this call, do you and XX want to be kept anonymous in our master thesis?
00:31:41 Interviewee 7	How do you plan to do it? Is it like are you going to put quotes in or are you?
00:31:50 Kerstin Nystedt	Probably it's going to be like some quotes. We're basically going to discuss all cases based on the themes that we can identify in the interviews. And then when we have, for example, then I quote that we think is interesting from this interview, for example, then we would mail it to you and ask for your consent. Iif you want to be kept anonymous and then also we will still, like, ask you for the quote if you still think it's good since it's your property, basically.
00:32:27 Interviewee 7	But no problem, then I can put both my name and XX name before if I can just see the quotes, that would be great.
00:32:37 Kerstin Nystedt	Of course. No problem. Right. Thank you so much for this. We really, really appreciate it. Rena, do you have anything to add, if we missed anything?
00:32:47 Rena Riekenberg	No, I think we covered everything. Thank you so much for all your answers. It was really interesting to listen to.

00:32:55
Interviewee 7

Thank you, guys, and good luck.

00:32:57
Kerstin Nystedt

Thank you. Nice Easter also.

00:33:00
Interviewee 7

Bye bye.

00:33:01
Rena Riekenberg

Bye

Interview 8

00:00:02 Rena Riekenberg	We have structured the interview in four main topics, so we will first talk a little bit about the personal and professional needs of the employees and how these needs have changed a bit. Then we will discuss the physical and the digital workplace, the way of working and then in the end the organizational culture. I will ask the questions intentionally very broad, so that you can just talk about whatever comes to mind. Before we start, maybe you can briefly tell us what your position at Elbdudler actually is.
00:00:47 Interviewee 8	Yes of course. I am a Talent Manager at Elbdudler. That means that I take care of all issues relating to the personnel area. It starts with recruiting, advertising, conducting the first job interviews, recruiting, but then also taking care of employees. After starting at Elbdudler, I do the onboarding and lead discussions with the employees. Actually, it is really everything from A to Z. All tasks in consultation with the management or with the respective team leads. This is a very colorful bouquet, so to speak. All tasks are actually included, which are part of general HR work.
00:01:31 Rena Riekenberg	And how many employees do you have at Elbdudler?
00:01:34 Interviewee 8	We are currently around 70 employees, including student workers.
00:01:44 Rena Riekenberg	Perfect. Then let's start with the first topic. These are personal and professional needs. How has working remotely affected the personal well-being of employees and how has that affected their employee experience?
00:01:59 Interviewee 8	Negative. So you can tell that people lack the personal component. So we did a lot of home office even before Corona, which at least technically worked quite well. In other words, you could work from home without much notice, which was actually quite good and was very well received. But that was one's own responsibility. As it is now, so to speak, someone else's responsibility, it naturally feels completely different and you can tell that this personal component is missing in the work. Just talking to each other every now and then is just missing completely. Everything only takes place in appointments. And everything works with agreements, but you don't get these very quick agreements like in the office. That you just shout something to someone over the table, you can't do that. We are struggling a bit with that. I think that we are actually quite well positioned in our organization, that we are also getting very good at it. But still, our own aspiration is that people are really satisfied. And that is very difficult to achieve right now.
00:03:06 Rena Riekenberg	And have you done anything specifically now in the past year to somehow make that possible again?

00:03:12 Interviewee 8	So what we have done is only very, very small. We have opened a constant video chat, where people can just come in. Similar to the smokers' corner, where people can chat and exchange a bit of gossip, which is also accepted a bit. Of course, not everyone does that, but it's the same in the office that not everyone always goes to the smoking area. Then we always try to send employees little gifts. So it started last year with sending a small plant growing set with for example a salad. Or sending headphones. Right now there is a flower subscription. So that you somehow try to give people such little attention. It might sound a little bit stupid, but we try to keep the morale high somehow. Organizationally it is also difficult. So what we have done is that we have calls across departments, which are now all video calls. That works so far too. But all just these ritualized appointments that have always existed, that were somehow transferred. And then we tried a little more - we had lunch roulette in the time before Corona. This means you were drawn to people with whom you then somehow could eat together. As eating is quite difficult I am currently planning whether it is somehow possible with a coffee break and that everyone makes a coffee somehow and then you can then chat with people. Because of the random draw, the pressure is lower, which is maybe a bit easier for both sides. Because otherwise you just fall into the grid, that you only do something with your buddies.
00:05:17 Rena Riekenberg	It sounds like you are definitely doing a lot.
00:05:20 Interviewee 8	Yes, we definitely try. You always have to look at how it is then accepted. We started doing fitness classes a few weeks ago. Rather it started with an ergonomics workshop and there are a few other things to come. It's always a bit of testing. But I don't know beforehand how that will be accepted, because of course everyone's motivation is different. Especially at these fitness workshops, I can imagine that most of them will do it for themselves via YouTube or something like that anyway. But we try out a lot of things in any case, in order to get a little more interaction in addition to the normal appointments, so that you also are in connection with people with whom you do not work directly.
00:06:02 Rena Riekenberg	And did you somehow notice that the general motivation and satisfaction was somehow influenced by just working at home and not being in the office?
00:06:13 Interviewee 8	I think so. I think people are a little more irritated about certain topics. You have to be even more careful when communicating. So we said relatively early on in the pandemic that we work from home permanently and every time we have to extend this measurement, we just have to see how we communicate that. It is different for some who live alone or who live in a shared apartment, for example, where it is not cool if you then work in your own room all the time. You will probably feel the same way?
00:06:50 Rena Riekenberg	Yes, I do.

| 00:06:51 Interviewee 8 | Exactly. You have to be really careful how you communicate the whole thing. It feels like a damper every time we communicate that we will stay in the home office for another x months. This is really not that easy. Because everyone takes it differently right now. And because people then deal with everything at home instead of being in the appointment and can't approach you shortly afterwards, it is difficult. And you can't look at people and see what their mood is like. There are people who just descent. You may still be able to see that in the office even though that didn't always work there either. There are also people who also have a poker face. Sometimes there can be something bad and they don't show it. But we just don't see it. We were and still are a little dependent on individual people coming to us if they have problems or questions or something like that. It's kind of like this phrase 'Our door is always open'. Yes, but not everyone accepts that! That is a question of the type of person too. |

| 00:07:59 Rena Riekenberg | Yes that's true. Now we've talked a lot about the personal aspects. Would you also say that the employees are impacted professionally, and if so, how has that impact their experience? |

| 00:08:09 Interviewee 8 | I think that worked out pretty well. So all the arrangements, all the regular appointments went well, we then simply created a video call, which works too. Of course, there might be a couple of impairments if the internet is not stable, which in Germany is often an issue. But that actually went very well. In some cases it even has the advantage that we no longer have to drive to customers elsewhere through Germany every time. These customers are also more willing to simply do the whole thing via video call. That also makes a lot of things easier. But for us it depends entirely on the trade in which you work. I can imagine that it is the case with creative people, for example, who like to sit together with two or three people and think about a task for a long time. It is of course difficult for them because they don't just sit down for a quarter of an hour, but it takes longer. That means, they have to find ways and means of managing this situation together without sitting in one room, together. Especially when it comes to a pitch or something, about new customers. It is difficult how they can then work together over a longer period of time, I think. And for my area, for example, all of this works well because we don't have that many arrangements and everything can be packed into small appointments. I think there is still a difference in the area in which you work. |

| 00:09:39 Rena Riekenberg | And regarding the development of employees. Many have the desire to participate in workshops or to have training opportunities. Have you somehow come up with something in order to still offer that? |

| 00:09:52 Interviewee 8 | So what we always have had are internal training courses. That is, when people in a particular area have built such a special knowledge that they then share this and give workshops. We actually still do that. That's just a reduced right now, because we are just a lot in pitches. This means people have a lot to do, so unfortunately that is just a bit too short right now. We have no external offer, service provider or any media library, on which one can rely on. That is, most of the ???? |

00:10:30 Rena Riekenberg	Yes cool. And if we go to the next topic, digital and physical workplace. Can you tell me since when you are working remotely and whether everyone works at home or whether you have somehow split them into groups?
00:10:44 Interviewee 8	So since mid-March last year we have now completely… or should I say something about the time before? Or it is now only about the corona time?
00:10:53 Rena Riekenberg	It is generally about working remote. So it's also good if you can talk about it, if you worked remotely before.
00:10:58 Interviewee 8	Yes exactly. We already had it before. That was already, what I believe, far before my time. So I am there since the end of 2016 and before that remote working was already a very loose regulation. That is, most people are equipped with MacBook, so they can work from anywhere. We currently also have three motion designers and those have a fixed computer because a MacBook is simply not powerful enough. But also they got a notebook so they are able to work theoretically on the way or at home and are not dependent on the office. So already before Corona, they had the basic equipment to work from anywhere. There is no limitation with us how many days of the month you can work from home. There is not a licensing process or the like. That is, if you see in the morning that you have no appointments in the office, then you could stay at home. As we have no specified working hours you just had to make sure that you will, of course, get your work finished and, on the other hand, do not bring others into trouble through your structure. That is, you have to think three times if it makes sense if you only work at night and then won't be available during the day between 9 and 18 o'clock at all. It's beneficial if the times always overlap a bit, but we're not going to do anything about it. That was previously well received and I did that too. It used to be the case that people work half a day in the office and then maybe drive home or vice versa or spontaneously work from home the whole day. We also had the working model, with a greater agreement, that people have worked out from abroad with us. That also went well. We had a colleague, who was from England or another colleague who then worked from Spain. This needs a bit more preparation and if it goes over Several months, they come in the office in between for a week or a short week in case not everything could be done via video call. So that was before and as I said, it is also well received. And exactly since mid-March last year, we have switched to complete home office, but have opened the office for the cases, if the internet does not work or we also have a lot of young parents, who maybe sometimes say they have to work somewhere where it is a bit quieter. Especially when the day care centers are closed. And accordingly, there is also a few, who then really work from the office. But out of 70 people it is maybe 3, 4 people maximum per day, who are really in the office.
00:13:38 Rena Riekenberg	So most are really at home.
00:13:40 Interviewee 8	Yes, they are really at home.

00:13:43 Rena Riekenberg	And would you say that they will also be affected by not having this physical space, and that they cannot come to the office?
00:13:58 Interviewee 8	That of course has positive and negative consequences. It is positive especially for the commuters. Of course, we also have some who may then be 30 to 45 minutes on their way. They are really happy about not commuting right now because they simply save 60 to 90 minutes a day. So if we are developing in this direction, I can imagine that many do not even see your place of residence in the city center. That will, I believe, be also an interesting component. A disadvantage are missing boundaries. That is something, that is heard more often in conversations. I also realize that myself. Normally, it is somehow like that: you have the way to work or back. Whether this is now by train or on foot or however. Either in the morning you start the day by going to work. Or in the evening you switch off your computer and have free time. Now you close down your laptop, but somehow you are not really distant. That's such a very strange state of uncertainty and I believe that tampers with the employees and you catch yourself checking and writing emails again at 9 o'clock in the evening. And I believe for people who really have problems to distance themselves or to consciously say 'I am off now, I'm not doing anything anymore', it can have really negative consequences, because they are in standby mode the whole time and that's difficult. This also cannot really be controlled from our side. Of course we can say that from 10 o'clock on, we always lock all access, temporarily. But we do not want that because we have many young parents and for them, it is sometimes cool, that then it can shortly work again in the evening, to split their working time a little bit. And since we have no fixed working hours, it works. So I would say that the negative consequences are predominate. This demarcation is really a topic. So you have sources of distraction both, in the office and at home. At home you can start the laundry so you can manage the household. But on the other hand, there is always something on what you can still do at home which distracts you from working. Maybe one thereby gets pulled out of working quickly, when having roommates or children or else, which can disturb the concentration. If you are in the office, then you can focus on work. Then maybe you have other distraction sources, which are also welcoming distraction sources. But yes, you realize that many complain about distraction at home.
00:16:46 Rena Riekenberg	You had just talked about equipping people with laptops when they work from home. What new technologies or what equipment have you implemented now, to ensure employees are enabled to conduct their work?
00:16:59 Interviewee 8	So what we all already had is that people had previously received MacBook and the accessories. And now we also delivered monitors, chairs, sometimes even tables so that everyone who needs that then somehow still in principle have the more or less identical workplace or the identical equipment at home. Except maybe a height-adjustable table. Unfortunately, we have not yet logically managed that. We also distributed daylight lamps for people who need it. But in principle everything you had in the office, we delivered home for the people who need it. Some had a fixed workplace at home anyway, others sit at the dining table and then have a large monitor like I do.

00:17:59 Rena Riekenberg	And in terms of technologies or any software programs?
00:18:05 Interviewee 8	We did not implement any new ones, but they are now accepted better because we have already worked with the Google Cloud before and there is always Google Meet. And that was already possible before. But now it is only used more. That's why we have not implemented anything new. But you realize that the willingness is more there, to just briefly make a video call. And I believe that before, that would have been an effort. Although it is technically possible, you would have called and now you realize it is quite cool, to see people.
00:18:42 Rena Riekenberg	Did you notice something that was very hard to replicate? Something, which usually is present in the office, which you want to convert to the digital world now, but somehow does not really work? And how that impacts employee experience?
00:19:02 Interviewee 8	I have to think about that.
00:19:04 Rena Riekenberg	You already talked about these spontaneous times when shouting over the table or…
00:19:13 Interviewee 8	Yes, exactly these short arrangements, which shifts. So we still have Slack as a communication tool in the company. This is more frequently used for short arrangements but that was already like that before. Now it is maybe even more accepted. A problem I had already addressed a bit is conversations between the appointments. Another thing you also realize this is to have one's say in appointments. If you are sitting with several people together, regardless of whether its is physically or digitally, you always have these spokespersons, who are always loud and always talking. And it is harder to speak up in a video when you're a quieter person. For this we have not really found means and ways. I think that Google Meet has now also copied the function of raising one's hand from all other video tools. So that helps at least that every person who wants to say something, that they can then do that too. But it is still a bigger hurdle in such a video call to talk or raise the hand, compared to a real appointment.
00:20:48 Rena Riekenberg	Yes true. You had also talked about the creative people and that this is very difficult for them sometimes to perform the creative activities. This also fits to our third topic, which is about the ways of working. Have you noticed which activities can be executed without problems remotely and which ones were less easy to complete?
00:21:13 Interviewee 8	At least technologically we did not have big problems because we are a digital agency. That is, everything already took place via the computer. We have nothing that is happening offline. So even if several people somehow work together on a project, they also sit on their separate computers in the office. Whether this was next to each other or if that was in the home office, that usually does not matter. So nothing has really changed a lot now. So I would not think of anything now, nothing we had to change big times.

00:21:53 Rena Riekenberg	OK. And did the employees change their way of working?
00:22:00 Interviewee 8	The working hours did not change, that was quite flexible already before.
00:22:14 Rena Riekenberg	So you have not introduced new work processes or any work routines that you did not previously do?
00:22:21 Interviewee 8	No, not really. So as I said because the place of performance was in principle never important, it was not a great change for us. Accordingly, we had no new processes, at least none I know about. It may, of course, be that individual small teams have come up with any new ways of collaborating together or something. But at least we have not had to set up new processes from the outside now. I would have to think more about it but actually this is at least as before.
00:23:01 Rena Riekenberg	At least. And have you noticed that now that the employees somehow have to be supported or controlled a bit more, because you no longer see what exactly happens and who works when and how?
00:23:15 Interviewee 8	No, also before we controlled only very little. We generally have relatively little mechanisms because as soon as you need a mechanism, you also need someone who controls that and in the end you have someone whose task is just to control the other employees. We did not like that thought and we already said before that we actually only employ people, whom we trust, otherwise we would somehow do something wrong with our job. Accordingly, we have relatively little control mechanisms and we are aware of the fact that we do not see what the people do at home. That's why we think, and already thought before, that the way how of employees to get to the goal, more or less does not matter. We don't care about how the whole process of conducting a task proceeds. The result is ultimately crucial and that it works for everyone involved. That's why we have no further control mechanisms or the like. We do have tracking tools, which I however don't use in terms of personnel tasks. But that is just about that you can then assign the worked hours to the respective customer. But we do not have a proper working time recording or something. We will probably have to introduce that at some point because it will become a requirement in the EU. But so far we do not have that.
00:24:51 Rena Riekenberg	So you say, that control has not really changed and that nobody is now controlling more than before. But do you think that management and leadership positions in general have changed a bit since they have to handle employees differently now?

00:25:06 Interviewee 8	I do not know if they have changed to a great extent. At least for me no big change has been perceptible. Just a little bit. The problem is there again so a bit of the tangibility of managers. Usually the executives were more likely to be in many appointments and hard to grab. And now it's even less easier or more difficult to get to them, because if you want to contact someone, then they have to somehow accept the video call, go to the phone or answer on slack, it is easier to simply ignore these things. And of course you cannot simply go over to that person in the office when you see him. That's why I would say, most likely the accessibility of the executives, can only have worsened or may be the same. But it does not actually improve through such a situation. That's why I would just put the hypothesis in the room that it has rather worsened in terms of tangibility.
00:26:22 Rena Riekenberg	Interesting. And now moving on to the last theme, organizational culture. Would you say that your culture has somehow changed or influenced people who no longer come to the office and no longer interact with each other?
00:26:42 Interviewee 8	Yes, we used to have and still have a very high identification or people have a very high identification with the company, I would say. Of that, we also live a bit and that's why many have decided for Elbdudler. Now, these loose meetings on site and collaboration does not work that well from home. That's why I think that somehow culture is affected a bit. That will not have changed the entire organization or all of the culture. But yes, we for example have colleagues who are now with us soon a year and you have never seen them live in person. Of course this is somehow a very, very weird feeling. Because you cannot build a relationship with them. It is not like simply having a beer at any time. And that's just missing somehow. So I can only describe it from the perspective of a person who was in the organization before. And for me it is already a difference, whether I have really experienced and met the person a few times or if we have worked completely remotely, have sent everything home and then never saw each other. If this situation lasts longer, that would also definitely impact the culture in whatever form. So probably it will lead to a lower identification or feeling of belonging.
00:28:26 Rena Riekenberg	And have you done somehow anything about it? Have you implemented anything specifically to continue spreading your values? That people still have this mentioned sense of belonging?
00:28:43 Interviewee 8	That's one of the harder things right now. Of course we try to connect people to each other to create any kind of activities. offering cooking class together or similar. Of course you cannot force people to do that. So there are only the people who want to do it. That's really a big challenge for us. The general cooperation works fine so far. We get the organizational tasks done quite well. But for us, I believe the big challenge is how to get and keep this interpersonal factor, which is a large part of our corporate culture, how can we bring that almost on such a level as it would be on site? We are aware of the fact that we cannot completely replicate that. Accordingly, we try to encourage them with incentives by promoting workshops and so on a bit, that we will return push people to exchange information with each other in between. We are still far from the end of the road, in terms of what else could be done. Thus, we are always looking for an exchange of ideas with colleagues. These whole ideas should not always come from any ivory tower, but it would be cool if they come out from the workforce. So we ask if the people have cool ideas, because then the acceptance is higher for such things.

00:30:18 Rena Riekenberg	Cool! We already talked to six different firms it is are always really interesting to hear what everyone does. And I think that sounds really exciting, what you guys do at Elbdudler.
00:30:27 Interviewee 8	Yes, so actually you try to get inspiration from somewhere else, because he everyone is different. There are also companies that probably do not have to do that much, because maybe people really just seen it as only a job, so after 18 o'clock nothing matters anymore. That's also completely fine. There are also people who then deliberately decide they do not need that in the office or something, because they have their circle of friends already. And yes, because it is an important part of the company, we really try to create activities to maintain a good culture.
00:31:11 Rena Riekenberg	Yes, really cool. Does that mean that the most difficult thing to replicate digitally is the interpersonal aspect in your opinion?
00:31:22 Interviewee 8	Absolutely. Because the whole organizational activities can be easily converted into digital as I said. But the interpersonal is difficult, because a video call feels almost always like an appointment. And within an appointment, the people often want to have an agenda. Fortunately, it is not that strict in our company. I believe it is very, very relaxed with us, very loose and even when having an appointment that was set for an hour, it can also happen that a third of it is filled with talking about private topics. So you are looking for his means and ways to talk about other topics. But in the end you always have in mind or somewhere it says in the corner that is the appointment xy and it is so it must be about it. Then this loose feeling is missing and the meeting is discrupted by simply being over.
00:32:20 Rena Riekenberg	Yes, I can understand that well. But it is very interesting to hear. So we are already at the end of our topics. To sum up, what do you consider the biggest challenge for the employees at Elbdudler? Or what was the most frustrating?

00:32:39	Yes, this often goes hand in hand with eachother. It is actually the onboarding of the new employees.
Interviewee 8	So they all feel comfortable. I think they came in quite well, according to the circumstances. And they are all satisfied as far as possible. But I think that's not the same level of identification as you maybe would have if you were on site. It is still our biggest task or one of my biggest tasks, to make sure people feel good and have a good association with each other. It's too easy, if you just provide the people with the technical equipment and then they should work with it. Is not working so well right now in the industry. That's what I believe such a difficult point. The other things, in terms of providing things and so, that's all doable. That's all just an organizational question. Otherwise, you have to communicate a lot. So you have to talk a lot with the people. It is not enough to just say 'if there is something, then please let me know'. We just have to have much more the antennas out there. How are they? Is there anyone with whom you should talk to? You have to pay attention to little things. If you know that normally the person participates in the discussions but has become quieter in the last few weeks, then we have to catch that somehow, without being too insensitive. We also offer psychological help. We said if you notice, you have problems, then approach us. We have a pool on coaches that can help. But you really have to be careful. Because sometimes you have blurred boundaries between what really is a psychic problem, which requires professional help and other issues. And of course we cannot take offer professional advice and the like for psychic problems. But we have to be very open to these topics, be careful and really have an eye on it and maybe ask twice, because not everyone then says what is going on, so we somehow ask again if everything really is all right. And yes, that can be really frustrating. So we also have a colleague who has left us in the meantime, where the overall situation and Corona this permanent home office has overwhelmed her. It was also a timing thing. She was injured for several weeks or even months and I believe the first Corona week, so where we were in the home office, was the first week, where she would have come back to the office. That means she was already looking forward to it and than was disappointed. So we realize that the topic of mental stress and problems is even greater and you just have to pay attention to it. So that's probably even more serious, because it is really about diseases and not just about the question 'how can we get a good mood in the team'. That's something else. And people who are really struggling with this situation, don't feel better if we somehow send a flower bouquet to them, that does not change the situation. This is far from done. Yes, that's what I think is the biggest challenge.

00:37:12	And in addition to these rather negative influences, do you also believe that there was something
Rena Riekenberg	positive for the employees?

00:37:21	Yes, so I think you can somehow try to pull something positive from almost every situation. And now it's just a bit, like proof. So we have already guessed before and now it is shown in the economy, that one can trust the employees quite well if they work from home. The fact that they do not just chill all the time and do nothing, but can also be quite productive leads to quite a consideration if it is worth whether to offer home office regularly. Because it helps to manage his everyday life while working at the same time. Of course you have to see if you can get everything separated. But it helps some people even to allow them to work two days a week in home office. That can help many people already. And the situation is now just evidence, so to speak, it is proof that it works. So I believe that we also heard that a lot in the circle of our acquaintances, where people worked in companies where home office was seen as being lazy, where now everyone had to work from home and now bosses realize it actually works. And that's what I believe is something positive. And it also crystallizes a bit out how the respective company values the employees. How much do they take care of them? Of course, for all this is just an exception situation. But how much do they take care of their people, not just keeping them in the company and holding up the morale, but how much are they trying to do satisfy their people and keep them healthy. So there is the psychic component on one hand, that some companies force their employees to still come to the office now, although it is not absolutely necessary and then they are exposed to public transport or whatever. So that's so an important question or a great issue, because there are enough companies, that then say that is absolutely necessary for them. But actually this is just such an ego problem, which perhaps gives companies more control and the fear that if the people work from home, that they can no longer control them. And actually, that's the core, which is why people still have to get into the office. And I believe that that it is important to us that people are rather healthy and from where the work is then fulfilled in principle does not matter.
Interviewee 8	

00:40:13	And do you already have a plan for the post-corona times, which is hopefully soon? So did you always think about how to continue? As you already talked about the idea to continue providing the option for people to work from home when they want.
Rena Riekenberg	

00:40:29 Interviewee 8	Yes, we have. In the meantime, we have formed one Post Corona Task Force with people from all the departments who have come together. I think we are now ten people. In this task force they talk about what aspects out of the current phase are good and should be taken over for the time after Corona. And then we are talking about the situation that some people are in the office while others are at home. How do you do that with video call? How can you implement this technically? How does this work properly? And besides that, we will probably leave our beautiful office next year. We are currently working in a desecrated church, which is really cool. Unfortunately, we cannot use it right now and the lease runs out in the middle of next year. This means that we are looking for a new office and now we have just started a big survey. What should we pay attention to? Which neighborhoods in Hamburg come into question? But also asking how many people want to work from abroad in the next few years? Because when people work from home, then they realize they could actually work just as well from somewhere else and there is no difference. Sure, then you have to obviously consider a few other things. But there is nothing against it. Some people have already done that before. I think there will be such a bit of the trend that you then work for a certain time of very elsewhere. That's exactly what is discussed and planned in this Taskforce. So how can we take the positive things with us? Regarding the return to the office itself, we are just a bit more pessimistic. So we said at the beginning of the year that we can do this until the end of June and there was the development, as it is now in Germany, not yet foreseeable. That's why we assume that the situation will still move into the late summer. We are already a bit careful because we also have people who are in a risk group or have near relatives. And as soon as we say we want them back in the office, you build a bit of pressure that people feel somehow that they have to come back or need to justify if they stay at home. And in order not to bring people into such a situation, we will probably extent this home office situation as it is now, as long as possible. But of course we do not try to do that too long, because of course we also have people on the other side who want to come back to the office and they do not want to continue working from home. That's just a bit of the split we have to do there.
00:43:36 Rena Riekenberg	Yes, I think it is really cool that you involve the employees and ask exactly how they imagine something and what they find good and what they did not think so much. By doing this you know what they expect and what makes them happy. So that's what I like a lot.
00:43:51 Interviewee 8	Exactly. This is then part of the corporate culture - that there is a lot of participation from people in all departments. So it makes it easier because if you involve people in the decisions, I believe it will develop a better result. And they are also happier because the acceptance is also simply higher because they have made the decision. So that is important.
00:44:18 Rena Riekenberg	Yes, I agree. Well, these were already all questions that we wanted to ask you. Is there anything else from your side, what we have not discussed now, which you still would like to elaborate on?

00:44:32 Interviewee 8	I think the best things you usually come up with after the conversation. So I do not know if there was a point somewhere where you thought that was so interesting or what does that look like? So right now I would not think about anything else.
00:44:54 Rena Riekenberg	Yes, I also feel that we definitely got all the answers that we need now. So it was really interesting and really cool. One question I still have: we will now transcribe the interview and then would like to also use quotes from you. Is it possible to name you or also Elbdudler? Or should we anonymise you?
00:45:19 Interviewee 8	No, you can do that. So we also have no PR departments or the like, so you can also name us without a problem. Because there would no one ever look over it again anyway and would say no, you cannot say that.
00:45:45 Rena Riekenberg	Perfect, and if we find quotes we would like to use, I can simply send you any e-mail again. Then you can see again if you agree before we publish this.
00:45:54 Interviewee 8	Yes we can do that – that is a good way.
00:45:59 Rena Riekenberg	Perfect. Then thank you so much for taking the time. You exactly mentioned the points we were hoping for. So that was really good
00:46:09 Interviewee 8	Yes, I am happy to be of help. Good luck with your thesis and stay healthy.
00:46:17 Rena Riekenberg	Yes thank you! Have a nice day now.
00:46:22 Interviewee 8	You too!

Interview 9

00:00:02 Kerstin Nystedt	Good, so first of all we were wondering if you could just briefly describe your role at XX? ,
00:00:14 Interviewee 9	Yes, so my official title is VP for People and Organization Development for International. So by international, w e mean anything outside the Americas. So I have a counterpart in the US, who looks after North America and Latin America. And then I cover the rest of the world. So yes, based in London, but I have responsibility for UK, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. So my day tends to fall into different time zones. I tend to do Asia early in the morning, UK, Europe in the afternoon, then a normal day and then the US in the evening. So I sort of compartmentalize that way.
00:01:10 Kerstin Nystedt	Wow. So already before Corona you were already quite used to working remotely and with different time zones and everything?
00:01:17 Interviewee 9	Yeah. So I used to work with XX as a consultant for about four years on leadership development programs, innovation, creativity, those kinds of things. So that's how I first got to know XX. And then they asked me to join them on a 12 month contract to do some specific projects. So I did that with them. And then as that contract's coming to an end, they asked me to join permanently and to take on this new role. And literally, I stepped into this new role in March of last year, literally the week before we went into lockdown and remote working. So I had, as you do with any new role, I had that sort of 90 day plan of I'm going to build this network of stakeholders, I'm going to have coffee with these people, I'm going to have lunch with these people. And obviously, all of that got turned upside down as we went into this crazy situation of leaving the office on Friday and then started to work from home the following Monday. So if you like my 90 day plan, obviously that wasn't the priority. The priority was supporting our people in the best possible way in terms of getting them to adapt to the new way of working. So I guess my role has been obviously very covid dominated over the past 12 months. But generally speaking, what we're looking to do is all about talent development. So it's all about developing our people across the international markets, everything from onboarding new employees right up to developing our executives and anything in between. And I guess for me, it's always about striking the balance between we're a global company, so we want to be as consistent as we can be. But different markets and different cultures are in different places. So where it makes sense to do some more local customization or local adaptation, then absolutely we do that. We don't try and force things. If something works in the US, w e wouldn't just pick it up and use it in Singapore without looking at whether it's the right content, the right format, the right language, all those kind of things. So I guess to me, a lot of the time I spend is both developing new ideas, but also then translating those to the different markets and working with the teams in those markets to make sure it meets the needs of their people.
00:03:50 Kerstin Nystedt	Wow. That's a really nice mindset to have. Not to force anyone. That's what we learned so much in school also that it is so important. So it's really nice that you also have that mindset. It's amazing.
00:04:02 Interviewee 9	I sometimes have some interesting debates with the US because, bless them, some of the people in the US really don't understand the world outside the US. And this isn't a XX thing. I've worked with lots of US companies. I worked for PepsiCo, GAP clothing, Exxon Mobil and often find the same that the guys in the US, not all of them, but some of them really don't understand the world outside the US and really think that the world operates the same as the US does in terms of thought

process, mindsets, even language s ometimes. I had a conversation a couple of weeks ago with somebody in the US who said to me, "Oh, we've communicated this thing to Europe". And I said, "well, no you communicated it to France and Germany " and they really thought that France and Germany was Europe. And it's like that there's a few more countries to think about here. So we have some interesting debates. But my mindset is always global consistency, where it makes sense, but not trying to force these things in and also to make sure that the local people have their say as well. They have some great ideas and perspectives. I'm not a fan of the top down approach. This is very much about collaboration.

00:05:18
Kerstin Nystedt

I think that's so important also if you want to implement something, and if other people don't understand the value in that, you need to like.... Yeah it's really interesting to hear. So if we now move to how this past year has been and how employees have experienced it. Of course, employees' wellbeing and personal needs have been very related to the pandemic. So it's hard to answer the questions without reflecting over that as well. But how would you say that an employee's personal needs at XX has been impacted by working remotely this year and how does that affect their experience?

00:06:00
Interviewee 9

So I think, I think we've been very lucky in the sense that commercially the pandemic hasn't really impacted us. So if you look at the travel industry or hospitality, obviously they've been devastated by the pandemic and they've had to make some very difficult decisions around headcount and their employees. We've been very fortunate. We've not had to let anybody go. We did go through a bit of a headcount freeze for a little while because of the uncertainty, but nobody has lost their job. No one has had to leave the business or anything of that nature, which has been really positive. So we're still having a strong commercial platform. I can honestly say from day one and from the very top, so our chief executive chairman in New York, the focus has always been about the well-being of our employees. It's been all about "are our people ok? What do they need? What kind of support? What kind of office equipment? Do they need a new laptop? Do they need an office chair at home? It's all been about are our people okay, because we know that if our people are okay, they'll perform. Because most of the people working for our business are very passionate people. They're very passionate about music. As you can imagine, most people join us because they love music and they want to be part of the industry. So again, we're lucky. We don't really have to motivate our people in that sense, as long as we're supporting them, giving them some really interesting assignments and projects and great feedback and all those kind of standard things. So I think for our people, it's really making sure that their well-being was in a good place and that anything we could do to support them, to get them in the best possible place, we were doing that for them. And quite early in the pandemic, our chairman, Rob, sent out a personal message in terms of "Are people okay?". And also for people not to worry. So he jokingly said that he'd already been on a number of video calls where somebody's young child, had run into the video shot or somebody cat leapt onto the keyboard. And he was saying, "that's all fine. Just because I'm the chairman or you're talking to a senior manager, please don't worry about it". And that's where we are at the moment. And that's part of life. And no one should be worried about trying to be too professional or hide their personal life away from the business call. That's where we are at the moment. And that's all o kay. So if you have a problem with your broadband or your two year old needs some attention and you need to drop off the call, then come back later, that's all fine. No one should worry or stress about that. So I think he was giving permission to people not to worry and that now that work life and personal life have suddenly come together with us all working from home, that these things are going to happen and it's all okay. And not to be worried about what impression that gives or if people going to think I'm unprofessional in some way. Absolutely not.

00:09:04 Kerstin Nystedt	So you tried to build trust and be transparent with how the top management viewed the whole situation so that people would be more eased?
00:09:15 Interviewee 9	Yeah, when you hear stories of some companies, checking who's looking on when - I know some companies have installed almost surveillance software to see when and how long people are on their laptops. I think that's the complete opposite to what we would ever do in our business, which is not that kind of business. We trust our people and we want them to know that we're there to support them. We've done lots of virtual workshops around resilience, dealing with uncertainty, the practicalities of working from home, how to have those boundaries between your work life and your personal life. And we have a great employee assistance program that people can use whenever they want. We have a partnership with a company who are specialized in well-being. So we do workshops where they got an app that everyone has access to and a website. So it's really all been about the human side of the pandemic more than the work side. Because, again, we know that if we look after the human side of things, the work side will look after itself.
00:10:25 Kerstin Nystedt	What you've had to do to keep this motivation and the employee experience going, what have you had to do during this year to ensure that?
00:10:39 Interviewee 9	So I think it's been two things. It's been providing the support mechanisms that I've just talked about in terms of the workshops, the app, the one to one counselling for those who might need it. And also saying to people on a regular basis that if you're not feeling great at the moment, that's OK and that these things are going to happen. You're going to have some good days and some not so good days. And again, our senior leaders, people like myself have been very open and honest with people in terms of "actually, I'm not having a great day to day". This is another day where the sort of monotony of days being very similar. This, after a while, just gets to people. And I think if senior leaders are being very authentic and being happy, being vulnerable by talking about these things that hopefully it shows to other people as well that it's okay to feel that way. We can't expect every single day to be really positive and upbeat. There are going to be some days, which are more difficult. And when that happens, then if you are happy to work through it yourself, you just want some quiet time. That's fine. If you need some support from your line manager or somebody in human resources or my team, that's fine as well. You can use the other resources like the assistance program or the app. Whatever works best for you, there's no one solution that works for everybody. It's giving people a range of choices and giving them access to all those choices. And then each individual can decide what choice and what solution works best for them at that moment in time.
00:12:13 Kerstin Nystedt	That's great. So you've experienced that you have succeeded in staying unified, even though people have been spread out in their homes?
00:12:26 Interviewee 9	I think we have lost something, because we're a very relationship based business. For example, the new people who've joined us since the pandemic, they've literally never visited the office. So we've been in this. We work with it, try and reopen the office in autumn of last year in London. And then we had to close it back down again because the new variant came along and things went backwards. So for those people in the U.K., who joined since March, they've never spent any time in the office at all. And therefore, all of their experience has been virtual. So I think for those people and I've got one in my team, I think working virtually, they've been able to build some very good individual relationships. But what has been more difficult is working out what the culture of the company is, because with not being in the office and seeing the environment, the conversations that you overhear in the open planned spaces, having lunch with people you don't work with all the time, but you just catch up with on an infrequent basis. I think what they found

is that they can pick up the technical knowledge of how we do things, but that the cultural symbols of what we're all about is more difficult to pick up because you're not immersed in the office for eight, nine hours a day.

00:13:57 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, so you see that the physical office is kind of a hub where culture happens in between people and that that is one of the main functions of the physical office? one of them, of course it has several functions, but...?

00:14:14 Interviewee 9	Yeah, I think particularly in our business, if you go into our office, you've got lots of visual imagery of our artists from the past and the present. You've got gold and silver discs on the walls. You've got posters, you've got music that suddenly comes out of nowhere because someone's playing a new demo that's just been received or it's a new release from one of our artists. So one moment you can be having a quiet moment and then suddenly there'll be this blast of music from somewhere further down the office. We've got some big video screens in our restaurant, so we'll preview the latest videos. So it's got a really nice vibe to it, probably more so than a probably an insurance company or a bank. We've got lots of great stuff that we can share with people that people are genuinely interested in. So as you go and you spend time in the office, there's lots of visual and audio signals that tell you what our culture is all about. And even to the point, you see how people dress and there is no dress code. We get people who dress very smartly and we get people to come ripped jeans and T-shirts and baseball caps and anything in between - anything goes. We are very much about people being themselves and being comfortable being themselves. So there's no expectation around how people show up. And again, because when you join virtually you tend to spend most of the time with your immediate team. But you don't get to see the bigger picture of people from other departments and get to see the range and variety of people that we have in terms of how they dress, age, gender, sexuality, all sorts of things. We have a really diverse demographic. But you don't you don't get that whole picture working from home.

00:16:04 Kerstin Nystedt	But have you done anything to try to transfer your organizational culture into the digital workplace, if we call it like that? Have employees experienced that the culture has been missing?

00:16:13 Interviewee 9	Yeah. So we have done quite a few spotlight sessions, which is basically focusing on a particular leader or a part of our business to talk more about what that part of the business does. We've got a number of employee groups. We've got one employee group, which is represents all our ethnicity groups, and we've got another employee group which is more focused on the LGBTQ+ community. So they've been doing a lot of events in terms of getting guest speakers. And again, employees in the business talk about the world at the moment because as well as having the pandemic, I guess the other big focus we've had is around diversity and inclusion. Particularly on the back of the George Floyd Black Lives Matter situation in the US last year. It was always a big part of our agenda anyway, but it's become even more dominant since that happened. So for some of our people, it's almost been like two crises. I t's been the pandemic crisis, but also the diversity crisis as well. Particularly for our colleagues in the US, where it's been a very emotional time for them because the George Floyd incident, it just reminded our black community members and other groups that there's not equality in the way that there should be, even in a developed country like the US. So that's been another big topic that we focused on, because there is a danger that if people are emotionally affected by situations like that, then working from home means they don't always have the same opportunity to talk about it with their colleagues and their line manager about how they're feeling. So we try to deal with that situation as well to give people support and again, have as many opportunities to... For example, we've set up, what we call safe spaces. So they're basically virtual meetings that people can just turn up to and talk about what's on their mind. There's no fixed agenda. If was in the office, it would just be dropping into a meeting room or a space to talk about things. We tried to do it virtually. And it's not quite the

same because we're not all in the same room together. But I think what we have sometimes found is that because people are working from home and they're comfortable in their surroundings, sometimes they can be more honest about how they're feeling. It is perhaps not quite as daunting to talk about your feelings when you're at home rather than being physically in the same room together. Although to begin with, we wondered whether people would open up and talk, actually, some people have opened up and talked more because they've sat at home and they feel comfortable talking about what's concerning them, what's worrying them and how they genuinely feel about things. So there's actually been some upside of working virtually because of that comfort factor.

00:19:05
Kerstin Nystedt

That is really interesting because we also came to the conclusion that this whole pandemic has also made things more human a little bit. As you said, it's easier to speak up about your mental health and stuff like that because it's more up on the agenda right now, which is really, really good. Now we talked a lot about the culture. Are there any other aspects of the physical workplace that the employees' have been missing a lot or that's been hard to transfer into the digital sphere which kind of hurt their experience?

00:19:38
Interviewee 9

I think we would all agree that for most business video calls, virtual is OK. It works fine. I think where we found it more challenging is those more creative meetings where you're at the beginning of a project and you want to brainstorm lots of ideas. You might be starting a new marketing campaign and normally you would be in a room in the office. You'd have whiteboards and Post-It notes and all sorts of things going on. And everyone's generating lots of ideas and you have a great energy in the room and everyone's bouncing off each other and building upon ideas that others are talking about. And that's a really nice meeting to be in - those kind of blue sky thinking that kind of innovation, creativity ideas. Trying to do that on a digital, virtual platform like Teams is not so easy. Trying to get the same energy, the same interaction, even whiteboarding is not quite as easy. I mean, there are some software, there's Mirrow, there's bureau. But it's just not quite the same as sometimes having a flip chart, pen and a piece of paper. That's a very human kind of thing. It's quite retro, but it actually works really well, whereas virtually it just didn't have quite the same energy. And also sometimes those creative meetings are quite long meetings. So it might be an all day session and you can't do it all day session on teams, otherwise people start wanting to pull their eyes out. It's just too draining. So you can obviously break it down into a one hour session, then a break, and then another one hour session. But it is not quite the same as all being together. If it is an all day session, you then go and have lunch together and keep the conversation going. So I'd say those creative meetings, which are more difficult by not physically being in the same space. And I know that not only for us, but also our artists as well. You also often have a creative input as well. Again, I know they may not be able to come into the office and have those kind of sparring sessions where we just generate lots of ideas and then decide, "OK, what can we what can we do with this?"

00:21:50
Kerstin Nystedt

Yeah, I totally get that. Have you also implemented new technologies in order to try to support these processes?

00:22:06
Interviewee 9

So I think we're certainly using tools like Mirror tool, which we started to use a lot more. We've used it in the past, but now we use it a lot more. We've used systems, like Mentimeter. We use Slack a little bit more. So we are using more of those tools and they do help. They actually do help bridge the gap. But I think the magic that we sometimes get in these creative meetings, we've just not always been able to replicate virtually. And even if you've got a lot of people on a virtual call, whether it be people talking over each other or some people are a bit quieter than they would normally be, there's those kind of human dynamics as well. Because some people are more comfortable on a video call than others. Some people are much more comfortable expressing

themselves physically, face to face. So I think we've moved it forward, but it's still not quite the same as a meeting back in the office or an offsite meeting.

00:23:13 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah. Totally understandable. But these creative tasks that you haven't been able to do. Do you think that that's also impacted the motivation of employees? Since there is a lot of creative people working at XX, you think they've been impacted by not being able to do these kind of tasks?
00:23:46 Interviewee 9	I think we probably went through a phase, probably the middle of last year, because I think at the beginning of the pandemic, everyone expects to be back in the office within a few weeks. When we first started to work from home, I remember having conversations with people like " OK, see you back to the office in a month's time. Once this is all over, you will be back in the office by May of last year". And obviously, things have taken a lot longer to sort themselves out than any of us would have expected. So I think when people realized that this was going to be taking much longer to sort out than was hoped for. So I think for all sorts of reasons, not just the creativity, but for all sorts of reasons, p eople went through a little bit of a dip, as though there was a realization that this is going to take quite some time before we can all come back together. I think having come through that dip, probably in autumn of last year, I think people now have almost developed a new routine and a new way of working, and they've now got comfortable with that. So, it's not quite the same, but they can still do really great work and do really great jobs even in this virtual environment that we have. So I think it is a bit like the whole Kübler Ross change cycle where, at the beginning of the pandemic, there was almost an adrenaline rush because this is a new and exciting and you wasn't expecting this. And then there's a dip as the realization hits that, "OK, this is the new reality and this is day 35 of working from home and sat at the dining table doing another video call or another eight video calls in a day." And then people coming out of that type of thinking, "OK, I've now got a new routine". We now know how we're working together and so people can back up again. So I know things like Kübler Ross have been around for a long, long time, but human beings still behave and often the same kind of way.
00:25:38 Kerstin Nystedt	Yes it is. I don't know if you told me that already but where there certain periods where people have actually been able to be a little bit in the office? Or have you been completely remote. Wasn't it during summer?
00:25:51 Interviewee 9	We tried to reopen the office in September of last year because the government guidance was that people could start going back into the office. S we were going to reopen the office with about 10 percent of our people and then just slowly increase things. And we did have three days of a few people going back into the office and then the government guidance changed and we had to go back to remote working. So for most people, there's been no time in the office at all. And it's a real shame, we've spent money on the office in terms of Signage and plastic screens and all sorts of things to have it covid ready and we were just not be able to use it because the government guidance went back to work from home, if you can do.
00:26:38 Kerstin Nystedt	Yes, it is changing quickly so you never know.
00:26:41 Interviewee 9	Exactly.

00:26:42 Kerstin Nystedt	So you never experienced a situation where some people are actually in the office and some people are not in office? So any situation where, for example, a meeting is happening, where some people are on site and some people are off site?
00:26:58 Interviewee 9	No, we've not had that yet. But it's a really important discussion we're having at the moment as we decide what our working model is going to be after the pandemic. We fully expect to have a working model were for each employee, some people will work from home for a couple of days a week, and then will work the office for a couple of days a week. We definitely will not be going back to five days a week in the office, that definitely won't happen. But likewise, people don't want to be working five days a week from home either because that's too isolating. So, we are looking at the options at the moment. We will no doubt have a model whereby people will spend two or three days a week at home and two or three days a week in the office.
00:27:43 Kerstin Nystedt	That is interesting. And when you're planning this model right now, what learnings and challenges from this situation are informing your decisions about this?
00:27:56 Interviewee 9	I guess we'll look at some holistic things like "what's the impact going to be on the culture?" We have a culture that we're very proud of and we want to keep hold of. So if we move to a hybrid working model on a permanent basis, what does that mean for our culture? What's the upside? What's the downside? Because there has been some upside of working from home, like parents spending more time with their children, n o commuting, which gives people time back. Sometimes it has been a positive impact on work life balance. Sometimes there's been a negative impact on work life balance, and that partly depends on how each individual manages it and whether they're good at having boundaries or whether they get sucked into work whenever they've got any downtime or just sitting at home. So we're looking at, with a hybrid working model, what the impact on culture might be - good or bad. What the impact might be on things like collaboration and those creative meetings that I just mentioned. What are the benefits for our employees of having some time at home and not having to commute five days a week in terms of their health and wellbeing? What does that mean in terms of our physical office, in terms of hot desking - when several employees use a single physical work station during different times - and office requirements and floor space and those kind of things? If it's a hybrid model, should we ask everybody to go into the office on the same days or do we let people decide, which are office days and which are working from home days? So there's lots of permutations. I think, as often beeing said, the office will become more of a meeting space and a collaboration space, because I think people now think, "well, if I'm going into the office to spend eight hours on my laptop and in a couple of meetings, I can do that from home." So why would I spend an hour and a half commuting into London and then another hour to half going back home while I could do all that from home? And I think those people who were skeptical about remote working, obviously they now see that it can it can work, it can be successful. And therefore, if you're just having a series of normal meetings, t hen a lot of those can be done from home without having to be face to face with that person or other people. The challenge I know we have, because I've had to deal with this myself before covid. When hosting or facilitating a meeting where you've got some people in the meeting space and some people dialing in on a video call or even a phone call, trying to manage that team dynamic is really challenging. Often the people on the phone call the video call get forgotten about or they don't have a stronger voice. And I'm a very experienced facilitator and I find it quite challenging. So I know a lot of our managers who aren't as experienced, will find managing those meetings quite difficult. For me, managing a meeting to have successful outcomes, when everybody is in the room together - fine. When everybody is virtual - fine. But when it is a mix, it is really hard to make sure everyone has an equal voice, that you've got a nice team dynamic, that there's some great discussion. It's more clumsy and not as smooth because people are in different places and we, like every other organization, need to figure out how we're

going to manage that. I know a colleague of mine who works for a different company altogether. They've just decided that, again, they're going to have a hybrid working model, but they're going to designate Tuesday and Thursday as office days. My initial reaction was that's very prescriptive. But actually they said that people have received it really well because for managers it takes a lot of the thinking out of it, rather than each manager deciding, which are office days, which are work from home days. I think managers and employees as well feel that by having e.g. Tuesday and Thursday is office days, it makes it easier to plan those meetings where you do want to be together, those important meetings, all those creative meetings. If we know that we're all going to be in the office on those two days. Because there is a danger that if we leave it down to everyone to decide themselves, lots of the questions are going to be when are you next in the office? And it's going to be lots of logistical considerations. Because again, I do think people will want to avoid having too many meetings were some people in the office and some people are on a video call or dialing in

00:33:06
Kerstin Nystedt

Yeah, exactly. We also read a lot of articles saying that that will also pose the risk of creating an in-office versus an out of office culture. Where people not being in the office as much won't feel as big of a part of the culture, which is kind of the same as what you talk about now.

00:33:28
Interviewee 9

Yes, and I know people are already thinking about, "well, if I don't spend as much time in the office, does that mean that my relationship will be damaged in some way or does that mean that when a promotion becomes available that I may not get?" Compared to colleagues who spent more time in the office, perhaps because they live closer, or because they find it easier to spend time in the office because of where they travel to. So there's lots of considerations and I guess for working from home, some of the questions we weren't able to fully answer until we actually start trying it and startexperiencing it. I think we're trying to anticipate as many of those things as we can do. But experience and trying these things - I'm a big fan of experimentation and prototyping. S o I think we'll try a few things, see what works best for us and our people and then make some firm decisions. But it's obviously a consideration of lots of businesses at the moment.

00:34:41
Kerstin Nystedt

Yes, that is super interesting. And everyone is, as you are saying, experimenting and don't really know how everything is going to play out, but also to try different options, to see how it is.

00:34:57
Interviewee 9

And just one thing to add again, because of my international role. I got a report actually yesterday from McKinsey, the consultancy group, and they've been looking at employees attitudes towards remote working. And what's really interesting is the geographical differences around the world, so the feelings of people in Asia about remote working and flexible working is very, very different to the guys in the US. So regardless of which company you work for, there are some cultural differences as well. And that's really interesting in terms of we've got our own company culture to think about. But we also need to think about the national cultures and what people are used to in different parts of the world. So try to get the right balance, which may mean that the way that Asia operates in XX may be slightly different to the way that XX operates in Europe because of the different needs of people. So, again, I guess it goes back to what we said at the very beginning of this call, global consistency, where it makes sense. But adapt to locally were the culture th at makes it better for us and our people.

00:36:09
Kerstin Nystedt

Yes, agree. I think that's going to be a success factor for companies and also because of the living situation, which can be really different from country to country.

00:36:21 Interviewee 9	Yes, when I speak to my colleagues in Hong Kong and most of them are living in tiny, tiny apartments and living there is a challenge, but working and living from a tiny apartment is a real challenge. So they are very keen to get back into the offices as quickly as they can.
00:36:36 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, I also lived in Hong Kong for half a year and yes I shared my room with three other students, so I totally understand that.
00:36:44 Interviewee 9	The real estate and space over there is absolutely crazy. And when I have video calls with people and they give me a guided tour of where they live and like, "that is it", that's the space they have. Living there for sleeping and breakfast and dinner, t hat's fine. But working there as well is completely different.
00:37:07 Kerstin Nystedt	Great. It's been so interesting to hear about everything that we've been discussing. Rena, can you come into the call? Is it something that we missed to cover that you feel like?
00:37:23 Rena Riekenberg	No, I think we covered every every aspect, and it was really interesting to just listen and I also made lots of notes because I just ticked off our aspects we already had in our minds. I think it was really, really nice talking to you and really valuable answers we got now. So thank you!
00:37:42 Interviewee 9	No problem! As you start finishing your thesis, if there's any areas that you want to revisit or talk about in more detail then just let me know, we could do that on email or we can have another call, whatever makes most sense.
00:37:55 Kerstin Nystedt	That is so nice of you. Thank you, Is it anything that you feel like we haven't talked about, that you feel is very important around this topic that you would like to share?
00:38:12 Interviewee 9	No, I think... I do a lot of reading anyway, I used to be a consultant, so I'm signed up to all sorts of McKinsey's reports all that kind of stuff, because I'm always interested to know what the data is telling us. And I think what's really interesting at the moment is as companies try and decide what is the right model going forward, what's the right approach, because I do think that from a talent point of view, the working models that companies adopt will be a real differentiator in either attracting or retaining talent. So when you're recruiting people, people obviously ask about salary and flexibility and benefits and all of that. I think a big question going forward is that people will want to know what is your working model? How flexible is your working model? And that will be a key decision maker as to who people decide to work for. Because obviously, if companies are very flexible and some companies like Twitter have always said you can work from anywhere. That means that I can choose a very different lifestyle compared to being tied to the city where the office is. So obviously, a lot of people live in London, which is very expensive. Most people live in London because that's where they work and they're employed. But if you work for somebody going forward, where you do not need to go to the office very often, then I could live in any part of the UK almost - somewhere, which is less expensive or I may want to live in the countryside or I may want to live closer to my family who are in the north of the country. I do think whatever working models companies choose will be a really important factor, both for keeping existing employees but also attracting new people going forward. I think more than ever, work and life are merging together as one and if the work side of things allows me to live the lifestyle I want, then people may decide, even if it means a lower salary, " I'll take that job because it enables me to do lots of the things that I enjoy, like living by the coast and going surfing every weekend" or whatever hobbies and interests people have. So I do think it is an important decision that companies will make. But I also feel, as I mentioned a second ago, trying

to make these decisions permanently before we've even started to trial it, is quite difficult. I'm all for piloting things, because when you pilot things, it's lower risk. But also it then gives people a chance to give some honest feedback as to what's working and w hat isn't working. Whereas if you launch something like a big launch and say "this is it", people are less comfortable saying, "actually, I don't like this", whereas if you have pilots, it gives people permission to say what they like and what they don't like. So I think that's the route we will be going down to and then also they feel part of the decision making process as well.

00:41:24 Kerstin Nystedt	Exactly. Yeah, definitely. And I think another challenge that we've also grasped from interviews is that it's going to be hard to meet everyone's personal preferences. Since some people have experienced that it's been super nice to be 100 percent away from the office, while some people just die to go back. So to know how much of the individual decision you're going to give to employees is also going to be a bit tricky. But I also to find that right balance, of course. B ecause otherwise, as you're saying, that you're afraid of your culture, because then what will be the outcome if you decide that everyone can just do whatever they want?
00:42:02 Interviewee 9	And hopefully one thing which works in our favor is that our culture anyway, is very much about discretion and local decision making. So, again, there's very few things that come out of New York, which is our global head office, and say "every country must do this". So I think, no doubt, we will give some guidelines and advice and things to consider to our different markets and offices and line managers and then allow them to work with their individual teams to work out what's the best solution. And if I've got a team of 10 people and I've got two people who have got young children and they want to have a particular working model because they've got children. And then I've got some younger people who are single and want to spend more time in the office. We will typically give people that discretion and decide locally what's going to work best, because again, it goes back to what we said at the beginning. We know that if our people are happy and engaged, they'll perform. So anything we can do to give them the conditions, the environment, the support they need. And for some people, it might be two days in the office, for other people who might be three days or four days. But again, I think we can adapt on a individual individual basis rather than trying to force the same model onto everybody, which again, would never work.
00:43:21 Kerstin Nystedt	Well, yeah, it's going to be so interesting to see the outcome of everything and how different it is going to be at every company. I think it's super interesting, it's a great time to do research.
00:43:31 Interviewee 9	Well, I was really interested the other day, I don't know if you saw this, but you've got some of the tech companies like Twitter say you can work anywhere 365 days a year. And then Google came out last week, saying that if you want to work more than 14 days a year from home, you need to have a conversation with your line manager, which for Google felt a bit weird. I would have expected that from an older company, you know, a very traditional company. Maybe if they talk to their line managers, they will have 200 days working from home, I don't know. But 14 days a year from home is very low. And for Google, being a tech company, competing with the likes of Twitter and Facebook and Amazon for talent, that seemed a very odd and old fashioned message for Google to send out. I was really surprised by that.
00:44:27 Kerstin Nystedt	Yes, I wonder what do they base that decision on? That they are now maybe hurt by people being away from the Google office in Silicon Valley or..?
00:44:38 Interviewee 9	Yeah, even the number 14 is such an odd number, not like twenty or fifty or it's like one day a month working from home, which even pre-pandemic, most of our people would spend at least one day a month working from home just because they might have somebody coming around like

to fix the heating or whatever it might be. People do work from home anyway just because it works for their personal situation. So, yeah, it's a very odd message from Google. I'd love to be a fly on the wall to understand what discussions took place and how they came to that. Because also from a PR point of view, I don't think it does them any favors. It just seemed very old fashioned for a company, which is obviously very future focused.

00:45:23 Kerstin Nystedt	Yeah, yeah, we also tried to reach a tech company, I don't remember the name, because we interviewed Spotify and they are they're going to be a very remotely and they've announced this publicly so I'm not saying anything secret. But they were in the Swedish news compared to another tech company who have done the exact opposite, saying that we're going to be an office first company after this pandemic. So we tried to approach the head of people t here, but she hasn't replied. It would be so interesting to hear since I believe that most people that we've interviewed are arguing, similar to you. But that was just a completely new insight to the problem.
00:46:14 Interviewee 9	And what's been surprising in the U.K., there's been a couple of companies come out with announcing what they're going to do. And a bit like Google, t here's been some companies who've said office based. I wasn't expecting that. I thought you were quite young, modern company, and that there's been some more traditional companies who've been around for many years. And they said "we are going to be more virtual" and I was like "OK, I wasn't expecting that either, because that's a very modern". So it's interesting. You have a perception of companies and this decision that we're all making at the moment, this throw up a few surprises that if you were to write down a list of companies you think would be more virtual based in which more office space, and sometimes you get it wrong because companies have changed and evolved or they've had lots of internal discussions and meetings and come to a different conclusion. But I think most companies will go to the hybrid model. I think most companies will have two or three days a week at home, two or three days a week in the office. I think the two extremes of five days in the office or five days at home, I think they're too extreme. You lose something by. So I wouldn't agree with Twitter being completely virtual. I don't know their culture, but I do think you lose something by not having some time at the office together in terms of that togetherness, that culture that you're learning from each other, particularly for new people coming on board. I think it's difficult to learn about a company, to learn from more experienced colleagues when you're just doing it all virtually. So, yeah, depending what stage of the career you're at, for more experienced people working from home five days a week, fine. But for younger people coming into their first career by not having the more experienced colleagues around you in the office, you do miss something. Learning becomes more difficult.
00:48:00 Kerstin Nystedt	And then that can also impact your professional career a little bit if you don't feel like....
00:48:09 Interviewee 9	Yes and it's harder. And when you're new and inexperienced, joining a company virtually is definitely more difficult to build your network outside of your immediate team. Not many people are brave enough to sort of you just dial or organise a video call with a senior leader they've never met, whereas if they bumped into them in the office or had a meeting with them about something else, they'd start to build that network in a very natural way. So, yes, I'm sure there'll be so many case studies and papers written about this in the future. About human behaviour and how we've changed and adapted and all those kind of things. Obviously that's part of what you're doing. So I'm sure that in years to come, lots of students will be studying the great pandemic of 2020/2021 and then I'm sure they will look into "why did that government make that decision?" But with the benefit of hindsight, obviously these things get much easier.

00:49:03 Kerstin Nystedt	Definitely, yeah. It's super exciting to see how. OK, this has been super, super nice talking to you and to hear more about XX and your thoughts about everything, it was so interesting. And also, before we end the conversation, we want to ask you about if you want to be anonymous in the paper that we're writing, both your role and name as well as XX as a company?
00:49:35 Interviewee 9	In terms of this sort of circulation, is it just within the sort of business school and obviously yourselves and..?
00:49:41 Kerstin Nystedt	Yes, it is only for this academic purpose, but it's going to be uploaded to CBS's research site. So people will be able to read it.
00:49:53 Interviewee 9	OK. Could I see a final version before just so I can see any comments or anything attributed to me? Could I have a look at that before it goes on to any kind of system?
00:50:07 Kerstin Nystedt	Of course, of course, because we also if we want to use quotes, even if you were anonymous, we would still send you quotes from you to ask for your approval. But I think that maybe everything in our thesis will be anonymous either way. But we'll see. Yeah, probably. It's easier if we decide that it is anonymous since our deadline is going to be quite tight.
00:50:34 Interviewee 9	OK, yes, that's fine. Anonymous is fine with me and then you can just use whichever quotes and insights are most useful to you.
00:50:46 Kerstin Nystedt	That is so nice - thank you so much. This was super interesting interview. Definitely. So I think that was everything for us, right Rena?
00:50:58 Rena Riekenberg	Yes. I think we are done.
00:51:02 Interviewee 9	Well, very best of luck with that. Pleasure to meet both of you. And if you need anything else in the future, then just let me know. We can take you from there.
00:51:09 Kerstin Nystedt	That's so nice of you. Thank you so much. bye!

Interview 10

1. Rena Riekenberg: What is your role at XX?

2. Interviewee 10: Workplace manager. Responsible for all offices, employees within EMEA. everything from real estate expansion, operations, health & safety and now remote experience. That's under me.

3. Rena Riekenberg: OK. How many employees are working at XX?

4. Interviewee 10: in total 4500. Have to double check. Growing like crazy. lost count. within EMEA its 450 people.

5. Rena Riekenberg: Now, how much remote work did you? Where you completely remote?

6. Interviewee 10: Pre to covid we were fully on-site. Everybody had an assigned desk. 5 days a week. Didn't do hybrid or remote working.

7. Rena Riekenberg: and now?

8. Interviewee 10: Everyone is home. Offices are closed globally. returning to work strategy. Nothing confirmed yet. Very cautios American company.

9. Rena Riekenberg: How has the employee experience been impacted?

10. Interviewee 10: Difficult. Depends on different regions. Demographic. Age wise it varies. the past few months. Young people, between 25 and 30 they don't have families. Sharing places, small places. That is the main issues. people with families. Kids running at home, pets running on the screens. Everyone got used to it. We adapt really quickly as humans.

Surveys how people are. Based on these, not many who want to go back to the office full-time. We got used to the flexibility between personal and professional life. Don't know yet how to come back, still evaluating everything still.

11. Rena Riekenberg: Did you do anything specific? any initiatives to improve the employee experience?

12. Interviewee 10: In terms of, make sure all the employees has a good place to work. Equipment and tools to employees. Make sure in terms of communication. Good leadership. not only about being technically connected, you need to feel connected as well. Need to make sure enough communication, collaboration tools and social event. Organized and planned a lot of events. Social events. Like the rest of the world. That's the main things.

13. Rena Riekenberg: The most difficult aspect to transfer?

14. Interviewee 10: the human connection. Can provide many tools, but that is the hardest part. Looking at all employees, it has been hardest on new hires. This group. They don't have the opportunity to live the culture of the company. Feel for the organizational culture. That is the hardest on them.

Did you implement, or examples what you did, to ensure that for new ones?

15. Interviewee 10: We always had an extensive onboarding. Moved this online. We spend a lot of time on this.. Made sure they had an assigned buddy who mentored them. Fully extended outline, who and when they have to meet and do. Breakfast. So that they can also meet. So many new hires every month. Make sure they also connect with each other. Not cross-functional, don't meet normally, but to make sure they connect.

16. Rena Riekenberg: would you say that you usually have used the office to show the culture – understand what you stand for. How do you ensure they understand this to ensure a positive remote employee experience?

17. Interviewee 10: The communication. More people operate. Their role is to make sure people are aware and can live the company culture. Every employee is responsible to transfer the culture to each hire. Difficult now. In the office you can just have a coffee or lunch together and live the culture. Now it's difficult. And also to say what impact this year of being remote has on our culture.

18. Rena Riekenberg: Probably too early to say?

19. Rena Riekenberg: And you were also talking about equipping employees when at home. Could you give an example of that?

20. Interviewee 10: Monitors, laptops, laptop stands, furniture, ergo-chairs, stand desk. build office at home.

21. Rena Riekenberg: Did you also implement tools?

22. Interviewee 10: We have one collaboration tools. don't need other collaboration tools. everything use it for. People didn't have to get equitant with the technology. Already knew it. Not a big change. Other companies who had to get those tool and make sure they are good. For us it was just usual.

23. Rena Riekenberg: Only working digitally, did you noticed anything that, ways of working and routines is changing a bit which affect employee experience?

24. Interviewee 10: From my own, not people experience, don't want to give you miss-leading information. People experience, not really my place.

25. Rena Riekenberg: Ok. but you said that you are involved in health and safety – did you do any new things in that sense?

26. Interviewee 10: Mostly about the ergonomics. Having fully equipped offices with local regulations in mind. Different countries have different regulations. France have extended programs to what employees really need. So they all have to have stand and sit desk. ergo-chair, monitors, monitor stand, mouse, keyboard. So health and safety about home-equipment.

27. Rena Riekenberg: So physical? Not anything with mental health? T

28. Interviewee 10: No mental is not mine. that is more HR? Not my core.

29. Rena Riekenberg: Then I think we already went through. Kerstin any question?

"**Kerstin Nystedt** asked question about if they as a company realized/understood wheatear or not the office is important in order to create a positive employee experience."

30. Interviewee 10: Definitely. Again very much depending on generations. Generation Baby Boomers for example, do not bother to come to the office. Want to work at home, have balance. The generation Z and millennials, all dying to come back. But only the social aspect. chat, have a drink, collaborate. Social is a huge factor why people want to come back.

31. Rena Riekenberg: Are you planning for how you are going to reimagine the workplace?

32. Interviewee 10: We are planning – preparing and changing and adjusting. We have strategy- not live yet so I cannot share this with you. Following lead of other big tech companies. Everyone is going hybrid, that is where we are going as well. But what does that mean? have to define it. Important, doing it for the employees. Beautiful ideas. for the employees.

33. Rena Riekenberg: Exiting times ahead of us.

34. Interviewee 10: The office will change so much now. Before it was a place you had to be in, now it's a place you should want to be at and come to. Make sure they want to come.

35. Rena Riekenberg: Sometimes mention that the office is going to be a social hub for collaborating and things. What do you think?

36. Interviewee 10: 100 %. That is what we are going to be about. Work in peace at home. Many people who want to come here will be to collaborate come up with creative ideas, have lunch.

… Small talk about Covid. not about interview. Did not take notes…

37. Rena Riekenberg: Keep anonymous? Send quotes for approval?

38. Interviewee 10: Yes, want to be anonymous. Strict regulations. Send it for approval. if you have other question – send it over and then I can ask.