# Remote work and the influence on the demand of certain manager skills

**Gino Zandwijk**
*Master Universitario en Gestión de Empresas, Productos y Servicios,
Universitat Politècnica de València, València, Spain*

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# Abstract

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world and had a massive impact on organizations around the globe. It left companies with no choice but to adjust their offices' capacity to remain a safe working environment or close them completely. One of the consequences of this structural change was that it evoked a particular desire in employees, with this desire being to continue working remotely in the future (Buffer, 2023). Even though this desire did not arise solely for safety reasons, companies had no choice but to obey and fulfil the needs of their employees. This change affected businesses in more ways than initially visible. One of them is the often-overlooked effect it had on managers and the expanded skillset they need to effectively lead hybrid or fully remote teams (Henke et al., 2022). The work environment changed due to the pandemic, which demands a change in the managerial approach of today's managers. This study seeks to enhance our comprehension of individual contributors' viewpoints regarding remote work and its evolution since the onset of the pandemic. It explores the influence of managerial behaviour on the remote work experiences, performance, and productivity of individual contributors. Ultimately, the study aims to formulate a replicable formula for remote work success and provide recommendations for managers and organisations. This was achieved by conducting a literature review and qualitative research focusing on The Netherlands.

***Key words: remote work, manager behaviour, pandemic, effective manager, productivity***

# 1. Introduction and Goals

## 1.1. Introduction

In today's world, what do we think about when we think of an effective manager? Do we think about a sometimes-angry, bossy person who resembles authority and yells at his employees when something goes wrong? Or do we think about someone who is charismatic, empathic and who shows compassion when it does not go how it should go? Throughout the years, views on 'effective' leadership have changed drastically. A manager who was considered an effective leader 70 years ago could very well be seen as a misfit in present times. Literature has proven that what exact managerial skills can be considered effective leadership skills depends on the organisation's size and the management level in terms of hierarchy, for example (Katz, 1974). Apart from those factors, external factors are other important influences that may affect leadership effectiveness.

One external factor that recently affected effective leadership is the COVID-19 pandemic that started in 2020 (AlMazrouei, 2023). Besides its destructive impact on businesses and the global economy, it also led to drastic organisational changes as measures were taken. Organisations were forced to either close their offices or lower their office capacity to maintain a safe environment for their workers. In the Netherlands, these measures included the closure of schools, a shift to teleworking (working from home) whenever possible, and the closure of restaurants and bars (de Haas et al., 2020). Unlike lockdowns in countries such as France and Germany, people in this scenario were still permitted to go outside and move around. In summary, these measures significantly altered people's daily routines.

These changes were unexpected but impactful, as they shook up what was considered 'traditional' work environments. Nevertheless, the question may arise, 'How could employees still fulfil their daily tasks if offices were closed, or did businesses have to halt their activities?' The answer to the latter is no. The pandemic offset the biggest remote work revolution we have seen until this day, and many individuals started working 100% from their often-improvised home offices (Ng et al., 2021).

Even though it was the norm to go to the office and work from there, the circumstances showed us how ready our technology was for such a dramatic and abrupt change. Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet were suddenly the most used applications (Karl et al., 2022), and workers started to get used to talking to their screens. They had to learn the ins and outs of all these applications as quickly as possible, as they would have to start working with them daily. The pros and cons of remote work were soon beginning to show. However, the cons are what people were mainly talking about: employees could not walk into their bosses' offices anymore to ask a quick question, or chat at a colleague's desk or at the coffee machine for example (Tušl et al., 2021). No, this was all over, and although remote work had many advantages, the disadvantages had more impact.

This 180-degree switch/change to a fully remote environment did not only abruptly transform the lives of regular employees but also those of the managers. Many disadvantages that affected regular employees also affected managers. However, besides

the similarity in disadvantages for managers and regular employees, managers also experienced problems while working remotely that only affected them. One of those disadvantages is the inability to effectively monitor employees from home. After the start of the pandemic, in the span of one month, managers almost entirely lost the possibility to monitor their employees because of not being in the same place physically (Parker et al., 2020). Furthermore, productivity is harder to track, and collaboration between employees and managers is more challenging. Another disadvantage for managers is the increased security risk when employees work from home. Employees might have to connect to public Wi-Fi networks, which exposes them to potential breaches (Georgiadou et al., 2021).

A changed of environment calls for a change in approach. With more people working remotely than ever, employees' needs might change, and those needs need to be fulfilled by their managers. To be an effective manager in a remote environment, managers need to adapt.

### 1.2. Objectives

After the COVID-19 pandemic initiated the remote work era we now live in, researchers plunged into research concerning remote work. Many subjects rose to the attention of researchers during this period, as the sudden shift to 100% remote work brought numerous challenges. While extensive research has delved into subjects like work-life balance, social isolation, prospects for career advancement, and concentration while working remotely (e.g., Parker et al., 2020; Babapour Chafi et al., 2021; Baert et al., 2021; Holzwarth, 2021; Uru et al., 2022), there has been a noticeable gap in investigating the impact of managerial conduct on the remote work experience of individual contributors. Our study addresses a gap in the literature by considering the development of remote work since the start of the pandemic, the managers' capabilities to effectively manage remotely, the relationship between managers' capabilities and overall employee satisfaction with remote work, and how the managers' behaviours affected productivity and performance of the individual.

Remote work has increased in popularity, and a world where we would have to go to the office five days a week is a somewhat unrealistic and unthinkable one, as more and more people would not want a new job having the opportunity to work remotely (Buffer, 2023), (Owl Labs, 2022). Nevertheless, remote workers and their leaders and managers encounter various challenges that warrant a deeper understanding. This understanding is essential for crafting practical guidelines and recommendations to overcome these obstacles and promote remote work success. This study aims to get a better understanding of the individual contributors' perspectives on remote work, on their manager's behaviour and its impact on their performance and productivity when working remotely, and on the development of remote work since the start of the pandemic, with the ultimate goal of creating a replicable remote work success formula with recommendations for managers and organisations. This was done by conducting qualitative research to investigate the relationship between individuals' experiences and managers' behaviour in a remote environment.

## 1.3. Problem statement

The pandemic caused a problem in which the rapidly changing working environment demanded not only employees to quickly adapt, but also managers. Managers lost a part of their control by not physically being able to monitor what employees were doing, and there were no manuals about how an organization, or a group of people could be managed when every employee would be working from home. At this point there is a lack of understanding what expanded skillset and what manage behaviour is required to be a good remote manager and meet the expectations of the employees, and what the success formula is to create a remote work environment in which workers thrive.

# 2. Theoretical framework

In contrast to previous work-from-home scenarios, the shift from office-based work to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic was not a gradual process but a sudden and immediate change. This swift transition did not afford organizations much time to implement new protocols for effective communication among colleagues or to assist employees in setting up suitable home workspaces. As a result, employees had to quickly adapt to unfamiliar work conditions to ensure their productivity remained intact (Waizenegger et al., 2020).

## 2.1. Definitions of Remote Work

Historically, remote work referred to a work arrangement where employees did not commute to a central office location but instead conducted their job duties remotely (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). This traditional definition emphasizes the absence of a physical workspace.

In contemporary times, the concept of remote work has expanded to encompass a wider range of work arrangements. Beyond working from home, it includes virtual team collaborations, freelance work, and remote project participation. As Gajendran and Harrison (2007) noted, remote work can be broadly defined as "any form of paid work not performed at the employer's physical premises."

A significant distinction in recent years has emerged between temporary and permanent remote work. Temporary remote work occurs as a response to exceptional circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where employees work remotely to ensure business continuity. In contrast, permanent remote work reflects a deliberate organizational strategy to provide long-term remote work options for employees.

## 2.2. The Impact of COVID-19

The worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020 triggered an unparalleled surge in remote work adoption. Governments implemented lockdowns and social distancing measures, compelling organizations to swiftly transition to remote work to sustain operations. This global phenomenon led to millions of employees working remotely and necessitated a re-evaluation of conventional work structures (de Haas et al., 2020). The mass transition to remote work has initiated a profound cultural shift in the workplace. It has emphasized the importance of flexible work arrangements and focused on outcomes rather than physical presence in the office. This shift suggests that remote work is not merely a response to crises but represents a long-term transformation in how work is conducted (Golden & Gajendran, 2019).

## 2.3. The Effects of Remote Work

The sudden shift to remote work caused significant disruptions for both employers and employees worldwide. Employers faced the urgent task of providing necessary equipment and infrastructure to support their employees' work from home, while employees grappled with the challenge of creating a suitable home workspace and adjusting to family members being present around the clock (Anderson and Kelliher, 2020). The presence of children at home, had a significant impact on employee

engagement (Meyer et al., 2021). For those unfamiliar with remote work, this adjustment could be particularly challenging. Consequently, leader behaviours needed to be assessed within the broader context of an employee's work and personal life, as the boundaries between life, family, and work became blurred when employees transitioned to remote work from their homes (Bersin, 2021). This continuous access to work can make weekends feel like extended lunch breaks. Even before the pandemic, remote workers had reported experiencing burnout (Green et al., 2020). In such a scenario, a leader's constructive behaviour was found to enhance employee engagement, while destructive behaviours from leaders led to disengagement and burnout (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020).

Next to that, according to research conducted by Harvard Business Review in 2020, numerous managers faced challenges in their roles and could have greatly benefitted from additional support. This study also indicates that enhanced management quality could positively impact the well-being and performance of remote workers (Parker et al., 2020).

### 2.3.1. Micromanagement

Recent research indicates that destructive leadership behaviours, such as making excessive demands or engaging in unethical monitoring in remote work settings, have adverse effects on employee well-being and job satisfaction, thereby diminishing the positive aspects of remote work (Dolce et al., 2020). Moreover, an overreliance on electronic performance management can have unintended and detrimental consequences on employee motivation and perceptions. For instance, employees subjected to micromanagement may perceive an invasion of their privacy and a challenge to their autonomy. Excessive reliance on electronic performance management can convey the message that employees are not trusted to work diligently without constant monitoring (Dinh et al., 2021).

Past research indicated that managers often lacked confidence in their ability to effectively guide remote workers and coordinate remote teams, reflecting a deficiency in self-efficacy, which pertains to one's belief in their capacity to handle challenging situations (Parker et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). Intriguingly, this lack of confidence emerged during the early stages of the pandemic, coinciding with a prevalent presence of micromanagement. This possible correlation raises the intriguing question of whether manager confidence has risen, and micromanagement decreased since that specific study.

### 2.3.2. Productivity & Performance

The impact of teleworking on employee performance is a subject of extensive discussion, with varying perspectives in the literature. Some studies suggest a positive correlation between telework and job performance (Bloom et al., 2014; Allen, Golden, and Shockley, 2015), while others argue a negative link between working from home and job performance (Lippe and Lippényi, 2020; Farooq and Sultana, 2021). The challenges associated with remote work, such as social isolation and reduced managerial support, are cited as potential factors contributing to this negative relationship (Cooper and Kurland, 2002). According to an analysis conducted by McKinsey and Company (Lund

et al., 2020), over 20% of the workforce could work remotely for 3-5 days per week without causing substantial productivity declines for organizations.

## 2.4. Summary

Contemporary literature offers valuable insights into the advantages and challenges of remote work, and the effect on employees, including topics like boundary management and work-life balance. Nonetheless, there is still a noticeable gap in empirical literature concerning how manager behaviour effects employees while working in a remote work environment.

# 3. Methodology

## 3.1. Introduction

The goal of this study is to improve our understanding of how individual contributors view remote work, especially since the pandemic. It also explores how manager behaviour affect their experience, performance, and productivity while working remotely. The ultimate aim is to establish a formula for remote work success and provide practical recommendations that can be replicated. The participants of this study are Dutch individual contributors aged 25 to 53 who work in industries varying from health care to E-commerce. None of the participants had experience working remotely before the pandemic.

This methodology chapter will include the rationale on the chosen methods of research and analysis, alongside a detailed report on the research conducted for this thesis.

## 3.2. Qualitative research

### 3.2.1. What is Qualitative research?

Qualitative research offers a profound contextual comprehension of the phenomena under investigation, enabling researchers to delve into the 'what,' 'why,' and 'how' of events or behaviours within distinct social or cultural contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This depth of insight proves invaluable in informing policy development and facilitating decision-making (Patton, 2015). It allows for a more profound examination of the subjective understanding and decisions linked to a specific lived encounter (Cassell, 2009).

As stated in the thesis introduction, much quantitative research has been conducted on remote work, while more qualitative research needs to be done. As there is a lack of a more profound understanding of the 'how's' and the 'why's', a qualitative approach to this study was chosen.

### 3.2.2. Data collection method

As it was decided to conduct qualitative research, there were qualitative research methods that were suitable to the goal of this study. Prior to the research, there were pre-determined themes that were important to include in the research. These themes included questions on (1) micromanagement, (2) received support from the manager, (3) communication with the manager, (4) overall opinion of the manager, and (5) the satisfaction of the employee. For this research, different methods were taken into consideration to use as a method to collect the data.

### 3.2.3. Focus groups

Two of the considered methods that were suitable for the goals established at the beginning of this project were interviews and focus groups. Ultimately, even though it was a qualified option, obtaining data through focus groups was not chosen as the data collection method, as it requires training of the researcher, it is challenging to assemble the group at a specific time and date, and the researcher exercises limited influence over the data produced, among others (Freitas et al., 1998).

As available resources of this research were limited and the researcher, focus groups was not the most suitable option for this study.

### 3.2.4. Semi-structured interviews

Wilson (2014) defines a semi-structured interview as '*a cross between the structured interview and the unstructured interview that allows some standardization of questions and also the freedom to explore and add new questions as unexpected topics emerge.*'

With semi-structured interviews, the underlying idea is that interviewees are more likely to express their viewpoints in a relatively open-ended setting, as opposed to a standardized conversational format like questionnaires, where their perspectives may be constrained (Flick, 2006). While the structured interview adheres to a predefined and restricted set of questions, in contrast, the semi-structured interview offers flexibility, permitting the introduction of new questions based on the interviewees' responses during the interview (Wilson, 2014).

Considering the abovementioned advantages of semi-structured interviews, the three main disadvantages of research through a focus group that were stated before, and the desire of this research to cover specific themes together with the desire to be flexible and adjust our interview's structure to the interviewee's answer, conducting interviews in a semi-structured form was chosen as the most suitable method. Another important fact to consider was that the researcher had previous experience with conducting semi-structured interviews.

### 3.2.5. Analysis

Braun & Clarke (2006) define *thematic analysis* as '*a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail.*'

*Content analysis* is defined by Hsieh & Shannon (2005) as '*a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.*'

Thematic analysis entails exploring and recognising shared themes that traverse an entire interview or a series of interviews (DeSantis & Noel Ugarriza, 2000). If content analysis exclusively relies on code frequency counts to identify significant meanings within the text, there is a potential to overlook the contextual aspects (Morgan, 1993).

While content analysis typically zooms in on a finer-grained level, frequently supplying frequency counts (Wilkinson, 2000), it also facilitates the conversion of initially qualitative data into a form suitable for quantitative analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2000) (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As the data analysis method, a thematic analysis was chosen. This decision was made after comparing content analysis and thematic analysis with each other, and considering the fact that there were pre-determined themes established upon forming the research.

### 3.2.6. Inductive and deductive approach

In both content analysis and thematic analysis, the identification and grouping of themes, patterns, or codes can occur through two primary approaches: inductive or deductive methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Bingham & Witkowsky (2022) define the inductive approach to analysis being '*a more emergent strategy, where the researcher reads through the data and allows codes to emerge/names concepts as they emerge. It's more of a "bottom-up" analytic strategy.*'

The same Bingham & Witkowsky (2022) say the deductive approach '*generally means applying theory to the data to test the theory. It's a kind of "top-down" approach to data analysis*', thereby referring to using pre-determined codes.

A deductive approach proves valuable when the overarching objective of thematic analysis and content analysis is to assess an existing theory in a new context or to compare categories across distinct time frames (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

For this study, last mentioned two different forms of data analysis were combined: inductive thematic analysis and deductive thematic analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A combination of the inductive and deductive approach was taken to the thematic analysis of the data. There was decided to use a combination of the inductive and deductive approach, as there were common themes that were recognized and there were new themes that were not anticipated on.

### 3.2.7. Research process and Data treatment

In total, 7 participants were interviewed, and they worked in 5 different industries: E-commerce, HR consulting, accounting, banking, and health care. Their roles differed from stock manager to investment banker. As stated before, semi-structured interviews were conducted, and the interview consisted of 19 questions (see Appendix 1). All subjects were:

1. What is the manager doing well and what not,
2. The communication with the manager,
3. The support of the manager towards the employee,
4. Trust and micromanagement,
5. The influence of the manager on productivity and performance,
6. Informal and formal feedback,
7. The overall opinion on the manager as a manager and as a remote manager,
8. The overall satisfaction of remote work.

The interviews were conducted in August 2023, with a duration ranging from 20-35 minutes. All seven interviews used for this study were conducted online. They were conducted using the Apple MacBook application 'FaceTime' while the call was being recorded through the phone. After this, the transcripts were made, and the data was analysed through AtlasTI.

The decision was made not to reveal the names of the people interviewed, as interviewees were encouraged to give their opinions about their superiors. Their privacy was protected by not asking about their names in the interviews and not providing any names in the transcripts or the names of the audio files. To make sure the interviewees felt comfortable giving their personal opinions about their work environment, before the interview, they were told that all information provided would stay confidential and that their names would in no way or form be linked to their answers given. Lastly, as the participants were Dutch and were being asked to do the interview in English, they were given the possibility to use Dutch whenever necessary to better explain their experience and/or opinion. These Dutch words were then written down in the transcript and translated into English.

# 4. Results

## 4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a qualitative analysis of the data collected. The purpose of this study was to gain deeper insights into the viewpoints of individual contributors regarding remote work, the behaviour of their managers and its influence on the individual's performance and productivity in remote settings, and the evolution of remote work since the onset of the pandemic. This study was specifically focused on The Netherlands. The data was obtained by interviewing 7 participants who differed in age, gender, role, and industries that they worked in, but which had two things in common: they did not work remotely before the pandemic and now they do work remotely. Most of the participants were aged between 21-29, with one participant aged between 31-39 and another one aged between 50-59.

Interviewees were also asked to provide some demographic information, which is given in the table below. This table was made to provide extra information about the profile of each employee and their work environment, to contextualise their answers.

| Interviewee Nr. (gender) | Age | Industry | Job title | Team size | RW ratio: Before COVID | RW ratio: During COVID | RW ratio: Now |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (M) | 32 | E-commerce | Stock Management Boss | 7 | n/a | 80% from office | 40% from office |
| 2 (F) | 25 | E-commerce | Functional Application Manager | 10 | 100% from office | 0% from office | 0%/40% from office |
| 3 (M) | 53 | Consumer goods | Site Controller / Accountant | 12 | 100% from office | 0% from office | 40% from office |
| 4 (F) | 26 | HR services | Recruitment Consultant | 3 | 100% from office | 0% from office | 0%/40% from office |
| 5 (F) | 28 | Professional services | Accountant | - | 100% from office | 0% from office | 40% from office |
| 6 (F) | 28 | Health care | Financial Advisor | 5 | 100% from office | 0% from office | 40% from office |
| 7 (M) | 27 | Finance / banking | Assistant Client Advisor | 23 | 100% from office | 80% from office | 40% from office |

*Table 1: Demographic information of the interviewees*

The interview consisted of critical questions around how the interviewees think their managers are doing as managers, how they feel about the support they receive, how they feel about the communication of the manager towards them, if they feel micromanaged, if they feel that their performance and influence is being affected by their manager, if they have enough moments to give feedback, what they think of their manager as an office manager and remote manager, and if they are satisfied working remote (see Appendix 1). The interviewees were interviewed online, as the researcher was in a different location than the interviewees. The survey yielded intriguing insights into remote work dynamics during the pandemic.

## 4.2. Analysis of the interviews

After the interviews were conducted, the next step was analysing them. This could not be done before transcribing and coding them. The transcription of the interviews was done manually. This was a lengthy process but did give the possibility to re-read the interviews and get submerged in the obtained data. To code the transcripts, the qualitative data analysis tool AtlasTI was used. Sentences which were in line with the objectives of the research, or which were unexpected findings or variables that would be worthy of including were highlighted. While highlighting them, a code was formed to categorize the highlighted text. Codes were made up per theme, not per question. As the interviews were semi-structured, categorizing the codes per question would have caused confusion, as themes were often discussed more than once, also at other stages of the interview.

After all codes were made, the codes were grouped. 'Support – Negative – Lack of pro-active support' is an example of a used code. Here 'Lack of pro-active support' is an answer of negative nature and connected to the subtopic 'Support', which says something about the support the manager shows to the individual. Another example would be Communication – Negative – Lack of time/involvement. This would mean that the interviewee gave a negative response when asked about the communication of the manager towards him, with the nature of the answer being negative because the manager does not communicate well because of a lack of time or involvement.

| | Color | Groups | Quotations |
|---|---|---|---|
| Communication - How to improve | ● | Manage Groups + | 5 |
| Communication - Negative - Lack of communi | ● | Manage Groups + | 6 |
| Communication - Negative - Lack of time/invo | ● | Manage Groups + | 3 |
| Communication - Negative - No pro-activity | ● | Manage Groups + | 6 |
| Communication - Negative - Not showing up o | ● | Manage Groups + | 1 |
| Communication - Positive - Enough contact | ● | Manage Groups + | 4 |
| Communication - Positive - Good communicat | ● | Manage Groups + | 7 |
| Micromanagement - Development over time | ● | Manage Groups + | 3 |
| Micromanagement - Negative - Happening | ● | Manage Groups + | 19 |
| Micromanagement - Positive - Not happening | ● | Manage Groups + | 6 |
| Other - Downside of Remote Work - Not being | ● | Manage Groups + | 9 |
| Other - Downside of Remote Work - Social asp | ● | Manage Groups + | 8 |
| Other - Good manager or Remote work? | ● | Manage Groups + | 3 |
| Other - Interesting findings [Details] | ● | Manage Groups + | 42 |
| Other - Negative - Too much flexibility | ● | Manage Groups + | 2 |
| Other - Positive - Freedom/space | ● | Manage Groups + | 8 |
| Other - Positive - Trust | ● | Manage Groups + | 4 |
| Other - Variables to take into account | ● | Manage Groups + | 4 |
| Possibility for Feedback - Formal Feedback | ● | Manage Groups + | 7 |
| Possibility for Feedback - Informal Feedback | ● | Manage Groups + | 9 |
| Productivity & Performance - Affected by man: | ● | Manage Groups + | 3 |
| Productivity & Performance - Affected by Man: | ● | Manage Groups + | 9 |
| Productivity & Performance - How to improve | ● | Manage Groups + | 6 |

*Figure 1: The 38 used codes in AtlasTI (1/2)*

| | Color | Groups | Quotations |
|---|---|---|---|
| Other - Positive - Trust | ● | Manage Groups + | 4 |
| Other - Variables to take into account | ● | Manage Groups + | 4 |
| Possibility for Feedback - Formal Feedback | ● | Manage Groups + | 7 |
| Possibility for Feedback - Informal Feedback | ● | Manage Groups + | 9 |
| Productivity & Performance - Affected by man: | ● | Manage Groups + | 3 |
| Productivity & Performance - Affected by Man: | ● | Manage Groups + | 9 |
| Productivity & Performance - How to improve | ● | Manage Groups + | 6 |
| Satisfaction - Good Manager - Not sure | ● | Manage Groups + | 2 |
| Satisfaction - Good Manager? - Yes | ● | Manage Groups + | 10 |
| Satisfaction - Good Remote Manager - Yes | ● | Manage Groups + | 4 |
| Satisfaction - Good Remote Manager? - No | ● | Manage Groups + | 6 |
| Satisfaction - Manager's capabilities - Not sati: | ● | Manage Groups + | 2 |
| Satisfaction - Manager's capabilities - Satisfie | ● | Manage Groups + | 4 |
| Satisfaction - Remote Work - Satisfied | ● | Manage Groups + | 9 |
| Support - How to improve | ● | Manage Groups + | 3 |
| Support - Negative - Feeling forgotten | ● | Manage Groups + | 3 |
| Support - Negative - Lack of (pro-active) supp | ● | Manage Groups + | 19 |
| Support - Negative - Lack of positive feedback | ● | Manage Groups + | 2 |
| Support - Positive - Checking on y [ Details ] | ● | Manage Groups + | 4 |
| Support - Positive - Positive feedback | ● | Manage Groups + | 2 |
| Support - Positive - Pro-activity | ● | Manage Groups + | 3 |
| Team structure | ● | Manage Groups + | 4 |

*Figure 2: The 38 used codes in AtlasTI (2/2)*

### 4.3. Results

This part of chapter number 4 presents the results of the qualitative research. The results will be presented per theme derived from the interviews.

The results of the research could be categorized in different themes:
1. Micro-management
2. Level of support
3. Quality of communication
4. Effect of manager's behaviour on productivity and performance
5. Formal and informal feedback
6. Satisfaction on remote work
7. Satisfaction on manager
8. Satisfaction on remote manager
9. Other findings

Answers on the interviewees' experiences were most of the time of positive or negative nature. Most of these answers given could be categorized in the first seven categories, and if not, they would be mark as 'other'.

### 4.3.1. Micromanagement and trust

Micromanagement and trust were one of the topics that kept coming back in previous research on remote work (e.g., Parker et al., 2020; Henke et al., 2022; Krishnamoorthy, 2022). This phenomenon was also highly present in this study, in good and in bad ways. Interviewee 1, 2, 3, and 4 stated that they felt like they were not being micromanaged from the start of the pandemic up until now. On the question if he felt like he was being micromanaged, interviewee 1 responded with *'No, not at all'* (see Appendix 2). Before being asked about micromanagement, when asked about what his manager is doing well for him, interviewee 1 stated *'He gives me enough space to do my work the way I wanted to do, and he still tried to interact with me on a daily basis by calling or by email, but not in a push way, not force, but more like in a general way. What are you working on? And just to know where I'm working on and not by controlling me or he wants to know what I'm doing, at a specific time.'*

Interviewee 2 also did not feel like she was being micromanaged, as she stated: *'Yeah. And she doesn't micromanage or something'* (see Appendix 3). She was talking about her current manager not micromanaging her when asked if she felt supported. Contradictorily enough, later in the interview, when asked about what her manager is not doing well, she responded by saying, *'Well, with my manager that I have now, I can't think of anything, but with my previous manager, he was more like checking if you were doing your work and if you were on time in meetings and that kind of stuff'* (see Appendix 3). She also briefly explained her feeling when asked if how micromanaging made her feel by saying *'A little bit, maybe because I was feeling checked sometimes, so sometimes I was a little bit stressed, like, oh, I have a meeting in an hour and I didn't update the slides'*. Interviewee 4 said this when asked if she was micromanaged *'No, not at all. Because she lets me free and I can do my thing. No, it's not micromanagement. No'*, and *'She gives me the feeling like she trusts me'* (see Appendix 5).

While interviewees 1, 2, and 3 were positive about their manager not micromanaging them, interviewees 4, 5, 6, and 7 all had a different experience. Interviewee 5 for example, had a rather unusual experience of her being micromanaged: *'I also had teams, and they wanted to sit all day with the camera on. Didn't really like because it felt like Big Brother. It was not that nice if you go to the toilet or something, it doesn't feel nice that your camera has to be on all the time. And other people were like, also with their sounds almost also annoying because then you hear them typing a lot or sneezing and doing things so that I didn't like for me personally, and I like to have a few checkpoints, but not during the day like ehm… that they are disturbing you the whole day'* (see Appendix 6). This participant had to be in a Microsoft Team Meeting all day long, with the camera on, and work together with their colleagues.

Interviewee 6 also felt micromanaged, but it happened in a different way compared to interviewee 5: *'… but we have what I said, Microsoft Teams as a tool to communicate with each other and it's basically we are all the time online and if we were not, they called us or something. In that opinion, they were controlling us if we work from remote'*, (see Appendix 7).

Interviewee 7 had a lot to say about micromanaging and being micromanaged during remote work after the pandemic. A part of his answer on a question about the support his manager was showing was '... *So he checked every morning and every afternoon at 16:00. So with the team, he called the team 23 people. So for what we're doing and what we did at that day. So in the beginning it was tough*', (see Appendix 8). Later he added that this was not the only way he felt micromanaged, but that the manager would send e-mails around 17:00 with strange requests: '*So did you did this today or could you send me an example today? And I think why now? Why 17:00? Yeah, just like strange emails.*'

From the participants that felt micromanaged, interviewees 2, 6, and 7 felt that the micromanagement was happening more when the pandemic started. Interviewee 6 says '*At the beginning of course they controlled us kind of, but later on they trusted us and we got a lot of freedom in that way*' (see Appendix 7). Interviewee 7 also felt more micromanaged in the beginning than now. Above he explains that he received weird e-mails and experienced this as a way of micromanaging. He also clearly stated about being micromanaged '*Yeah, in the beginning*' (see Appendix 8).

### 4.3.2. Level of support

Support was another topic that was covered in the interviews. To continue with the trend started above, the positive responses on the support the participants received from their manager will be mentioned first, followed by the negative responses.

In terms of positive support, interviewees 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 felt like they were check upon in a good way enough. An example of a positive answer on support was given by interviewee 4 '*I think it's good because she asks a lot of questions about my situations, like, does it work for you or are there things that are not working or yeah, I think the communication is good, and if there is a problem, I can always call her*' (see Appendix 5). Interviewee 2 is basically saying the same, while she adds in that she '*can always call her even outside business hours she's always eager to help with whatever you need*' (see Appendix 3).

Another positive answer in the area of support was given by interviewee 4. She explains that her manager checks on her since she is working 100% remote for a determined period, and is wondering how it is for her: '*I think it's good because she asks a lot of questions about my situations, like, does it work for you or are there things that are not working or yeah, I think the communication is good, and if there is a problem, I can always call her. So I think the communication is good. Yes*' (see Appendix 5).

While only interviewee 2 did not have any negative answer on the questions regarding support, all of the other interviewees felt some kind of lack in support, with a lack of pro-active support being the most common theme. An example was when interviewee 1 said '*Yeah most of the time when he calls me or emails me, he needs something from me, but he doesn't call me or email me, call me, like, okay, what are you doing? What are you working on? How can I help you with anything? So it's more like if he needs me, he will reach out to me*', and '*but not for example, I'm also manager to other people. He barely reached out to me to talk about that. How you're doing? What do you need for them? Are there certain problems we need to discuss? It's more work focused*' (see Appendix 2), or

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when interviewee 3 said '*Also like, okay, can we plan something? Maybe it's also something for my responsibility, but planning something with him from my side, but also from his side and I'm not doing it, but also he is not doing it'.* He later added '*Say it more several times to him, then he's going to feel the urgency, but it takes some time. I see, and sometimes it's not too late, but sometimes, in my opinion, I'm saying then, come on, I've waited two days and in that two days I was already finished, for example. Right, but it takes more than two days*' (see Appendix 4).' These cases were labelled as 'lack of pro-active support'. In both cases, the manager is not reaching out pro-actively to give his support on the formal part of the job (the tasks), while he is often supporting on an informal level, with small talk and informal communication (see Appendix 2 and 4).

There was clearly a lack of support for most participants. In some cases, team sizes seemed too big. When asked about a cause of the lack of support being team size, interviewee 3 said '*I think, yeah, absolutely. He's managing too many people*' (see Appendix 4). Interviewee 7 also spoke about his manager having a 'big' team: '*So he has a big team, 23 people for one manager and a lot of remote workers*', and added '*and then he need to be there and some colleagues are free or are sick, so he doesn't see everybody. Sorry. So I think you will miss the click (connection) with the team.*' Here team size is also mentioned, and missing a click (connection) with the team.

Another way in which support was lacking, was that some participants felt forgotten at times. Interviewee 4 describes this by saying '*I think one big thing is that she when we are in a meeting, all of them are at the office, and I'm the only one on the screen, so it's difficult for me to interrupt and say something. And I think she could manage that better, so I can be better involved in the meeting*' (see Appendix 5). As she is the only one working remotely, the manager does not facilitate the opportunity for her to let her be involved and be heard. For interviewee 7 there was also a moment when he felt forgotten: '*I was last week remote working in Austria, so he doesn't know that even that. But I sent him two, three emails, so, hey, Martin, I'm going to work from Austria because I'm on holiday so I worked every morning from six till 14:00 p.m. And then after that week, he called me. So how was your work week? I thought, okay... Do you know even know where I was?*'

Lastly, lack of support was also noticed in a way different from everything mentioned before. Interviewee 6 explained off the record how the lack of support of her manager, was resulting in one of her teammates neglecting the work he or she was doing. This affected the employees by causing them to have more tasks.

### 4.3.3. Quality of communication

Communication is the third topic covered in the interviews. Although there was no clear answer whether the participants were satisfied about their communication with their managers, all participants had something positive to say about it. When asked about what his manager is doing well, interviewee 3 responded saying '*What my manager is doing well. My manager is doing well, almost every day he's calling and he's asking how it's going. And for example, when we have something, what we must do all and what I mean, what we must do all is all the sites, all the R and D sites. Then he's going through or he's going to talk with you about that and what I'm thinking in that kind of things, he*

*has a good communication*' (see Appendix 4). Here interviewee 3 talks about informal communication with his manager, and how he considers his manager's communication as good. Interviewee 5 said about the communication with her manager '*I feel like I still got clear explanation from them about my tasks and what they expected from me. I think also because we had good communication and daily communication*' (see Appendix 6). The participant is talking about how she is explained what she must do, and there are clear expectations of her.

Besides the positive, the participants also gave negative responses on the communication with their managers. Interviewee 6 made the comparison of her new manager and her old manager, talking about pro-active communication, and stated '*Yeah, well, actually, before she... involved. Yeah. How do you say... She was more proactive, actually, but she was actually as involved as he is, but he was just quiet and more at the background. More a quiet person. I think maybe he let us more...*' (see Appendix 7). To this she added '*I think during COVID everyone was working remote full time. And I think it's good as a manager that from yourself, you start the conversation about how people feel from working remote because you do not see people or colleagues anymore. It's less personal and less socializing. And I think it's good if a manager from himself starts conversations with his employees and ask people how they feel about it, what do they need about working remote? And that's something that he didn't do, actually. So working remotely was new for us because before COVID we didn't work remote...*'

Another negative point about the manager's communication was mentioned by interviewee 1: '*Yeah, I'm more like a side project for him. He doesn't know stock management that well, so most of the time he doesn't have an opinion about my work in details and he's busy doing other things. There are more things important that he needs to focus on. So I'm more on the background and if I manage everything*' (see Appendix 2). Interviewee 1 mentions being a side project, as he feels that his manager does not know stock management that well, and he has different tasks to execute.

A self-managing team was also something that appeared in the research. Interviewee 4 and 6 stated that their team could be seen as 'self-managing'. Interviewee 4 said, when asked about if there is enough communication happening from the manager towards her '*Yes, because our team is partly self managing. So with our team, we check in every day, and she checks in up to me once in two weeks. For me, it's enough because we had a lot of contact with the other colleagues in the team*' (see Appendix 5). Interviewee 6 also said that she was part of a self-managing team, but this was said off the record, in a conversation we had after the interview.

Lastly, a downside of remote work is the lack of informal communication. This is also something that some interviewees experienced, including interviewee 7, he stated '*Yeah, but not every day, but yeah, it's always nice to have your colleagues around you and it's always just a social talk. That what I would miss sometimes*' (see Appendix 8). Not being able to socialise is disappointing for many people. Interviewee 2 confirms this by saying '*But I think you miss like, the little jokes and that kind of stuff*' and '*it's just more easier when you are next to each other and then you have informal moments like you said, and now it's really work only working*' (see Appendix 3). The last sentence, 'now it's really

only working', also refers to the 'always on culture', which is called like that because it is hard for remote employees to turn off and enjoy their private life, when they continue their day in their work-office.

As can be seen, there was substantial overlap in codes assigned to support and communication, and often quotes were coded with both a 'support' code, as a 'communication' code.

### 4.3.4. Informal and formal feedback

Feedback was another one of the topics in the interview. Feedback is an important element of learning and growing, and so it was essential to see in what way and how often employees get the opportunity to give feedback. The conducted research found that all participants had some sort of feedback moments with their managers, either formal and/or informal. Interviewee 6 said the following about the possibility of giving informal feedback '*Not really, but it maybe also relates to the fact that he is a bit at the background and so his personal ehm... who he was. But no, and I think that's something a manager should do, especially when people work remote because in my opinion, the type of managing is then different than when you work from location. So I think it's good that managers indirectly or like informal ask their employees what do they think about him or what they could do better, et cetera*' (see Appendix 7). Even though most of the participants have feedback moments, some of the participants (like interviewee 6) felt that managers could ask for more feedback. Interviewee 4 said that she feels 'the space to do that, but it is not necessary for now, but yeah, I think I could do that' (see Appendix 5).

**Effect of manager's behaviour on productivity and performance**

Productivity and performance are what run organizations. More productive employees often result in more productivity for the organization. Managers can influence productivity and performance in different ways, and this study wanted to get a deeper understanding of how managers influence them. Flexibility can influence productivity. This is what interviewee 4 stated when she said "*Yes, I think so, because I'm working with the feeling that she trusts me and she gives me the freedom again so I can do my thing. And that works for me. It's not working for everybody, but for me, yes. So it affects definitely, I think*' (see Appendix 5). Here she says productivity is positively influenced by the freedom given by the manager. Interviewee 2 said the exact opposite, stating that flexibility affects her productivity in a negative way '*Sometimes, sometimes it's maybe a bit too flexible, and then I think I will do it next week, or It's 16:00, I have weekend*' (see Appendix 3). For interviewee as an employee, flexibility can have a reverse effect on productivity, causing it to deteriorate due to procrastination.

About the level of support influencing the productivity, interviewee 3 says '*sometimes not let me wait for a few days, but make good appointments directly to solve a problem and not wait for a couple of days*', and added: '*make an appointment so that you can solve a problem within one or two days and not within three or four days, and then your productivity is going up because you can do more*' (see Appendix 4).

Interviewee 5 was the only participant that said her manager does not affect her productivity and performance, as she did not feel slowed down when there would be a lack of support. '*For me? Not because I had like a list of more items I could do. So I just laid one thing next to me until my question was answered and just went on to the other one*' (see Appendix 6). This was the contrary of the opinion of interviewee 3 about his manager's lack of support.

### 4.3.5. Satisfaction on manager

All participants were also asked if they thought their manager, was a good manager. The answers were one-sided, as all of them except for interviewee 3 found their manager a good manager. Interviewee 1 gave made commitments and providing freedom as the reasons for his manager being a good manager '*Yeah, he is. He's a good manager. And why is that? That's because the type of freedom he gives me. We have certain when we started working together, we said we have 'afspraken' (Dutch for 'we made commitments') to okay, I want you to do focus on this, I want you to do that. And for the last six months, seven months, he's committed to that and I am as well. So it's a good way of it's a nice relationship*' (see Appendix 2).

Next to interviewee 1, interviewee 2 was also positive about her manager. Her reasons for her manager being a good manager were '*she's always available, and when I really need her, like in difficult conversations or colleagues that are not working the way I want to do them, then she's always ready to help. Or you can say always with projects, you can say, I want to really do this project, or, I don't like this project, can maybe someone else pick it up? So, yeah, again, flexibility, I think*' (see Appendix 3).

But, as mentioned before, interviewee 3 was the only one that was not sure if his manager was a good manager, he said 'Ah, people manager. Yes, manager half', and then explained '*Sometimes he's a little bit like he's too busy with running the five different R and D centers in the world. That's why his job is the global site controller. And sometimes it's too much and then he forgets often also the important things, what can be locally in the Netherlands or UK or that kind of and it's not only for me, but it can be also for other site controllers, for R and D centers*' (see Appendix 4). The interviewee also insinuates here that his manager forgets things because it is too much, as he is the global site controller, and so he has people from different nationalities in his team, located in different time zones.

### 4.3.6. Satisfaction on remote manager

The next question in the interview was the question if the manager of the participant was considered a good remote manager by the participant.

Interviewee 2 and 4 both gave answers of positive nature when asked if their manager was a good remote manager. Interviewee 2 said '*Yeah, I think she also is a really good remote manager because I'm working remotely for five days now and my team is also at the office and I have extra check in moments with her, so Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday, and I always can call her when there's something or I just want to chitchat. I think she can do both*' (see Appendix 3), while interviewee 4 said '*For me, yes. Because of all the facts I told you before, she gave me the freedom. She is not micromanaging. That's*

*also an important thing. She also wants to celebrate success. So if you do something good, she tells you explicitly. That you are doing good. And I think that's an important thing. In my job, that's also working for me, so yeah*' (see Appendix 5). While both interviewees talked about support in their answers, Interviewee 2 talked mainly about availability and the extra moments she has with her manager now that she works 100% remote temporarily. In this answer, interviewee 4 mainly talks about the freedom, the absence of micromanagement, and the positive feedback she is having with her manager.

Interviewee 1 gave a brief but forceful answer and said '*No, I don't think so, but that's more because he's focusing on other categories and trying to improve that*' (see Appendix 2). Interviewee 1 has a negative opinion about his manager's ability to be a remote manager, because his focus does not lie on the interviewee's department. Not only interviewee 1 was negatively opinionized about his manager.

Interviewee 7 was also not convinced of his manager being a good remote manager. When asked about the reasoning behind his opinion that his manager was not a good manager, he said '*Because what I told in the beginning, he was micromanaging, and after that, he lost everything, like the control or with the employees and the trust. And I think he must be mixed it with a good office manager and a bad remote work manager. So I think he need to learn that or find some new ideas or ways to work with it.*' (see Appendix 8).

### 4.3.7. Satisfaction on remote work

Overall, all of the participants that were interviewed were positive about remote work. Waking up later (interviewee 1), not having to commute (interviewee 1 and 5), being more efficient with life besides work (interviewee 1), better concentration (Interviewee 1) and doing this and that whenever you want (interviewee 7). When asked about satisfaction on remote work, interviewee 4 said '*I love it. No, I think in my job I have to do a lot of calls, so it feels for me like it's different from someone who do only projects and only have to do tip it out or work on your own. And for me, it's the difference in the calls and talking to Dutch people the whole day. So it doesn't feel really like I'm working abroad. So for me, yeah, it works out*' (see Appendix 5).

Interviewees 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 all said they were highly satisfied, but missed the social aspect that they have when working at the office. An example was that interviewee 3 said '*But I miss the interactive on the site with people. And yeah, maybe it's also because my experience is also I'm working more than 30 years at Unilever. And that's why your feeling said it's more or less that working on the site going to people directly instead of calling them, or because, you know, also if you are calling them, they don't have time, but when they're on the office, you knock on the door and they make time*' (see Appendix 4). Interviewees 4 and 5 were also positive about remote work, but did not mention the social aspect.

### 4.3.8. Other findings

In this section you can find findings from the interviews that one could not categorize in the other categories and/or were not anticipated on. Some examples would be: 'Is a

good manager a good remote manager?', 'having freedom/space, or 'too much flexibility provided by the manager'.

Having freedom and space was something that many participants experienced. About this, interviewee 1 says '*Yeah. I need that kind of space to do just whatever I want to do or at least think I have a lot of freedom to do whatever I think is best to do at this time. Of course, there are certain things that we try to grow and try to develop and I'm focusing on, but besides that, every time I see something that I can improve, I don't need his approval to do it. He just says, okay, just do it and tell me afterwards what the impact is. Okay. All right. That's what I really like*' (see Appendix 2). He gets the space from his manager to do things his own way and has to report it when the impact is significant. Interviewee 1 feels like he needs this, and it stimulates his work ethic.

Another interesting finding was that of interviewee 3 and 5 stating that they did not feel that there was a difference between a manager and a remote manager. Interviewee 3 said '*I think it's the same. It's the same as what he did. There is no difference. I don't feel the difference. Maybe for other because you must see it like this. If I'm going to the office, I'm seeing him there. But not everyone from the other R D centers, like in the United States, in the UK, in India, in China, are seeing him. Right. And they only have him remote. I can't speak for them, but I'm not seeing the difference*' (see Appendix 4). Both interviewee 3 and 5 felt like there was not a real difference when comparing working remotely with working from the office. About this Interviewee 5 said '*I didn't really felt a big difference in the office or remote*', and added '*because I feel like I still got clear explanation from them about my tasks and what they expected from me. I think also because we had good communication and daily communication*' (see Appendix 6).

A slightly different area was flexibility. Interviewee 2 felt like she was receiving too much flexibility from her manager '*Yeah, I don't think it's less support, but well, it's my own responsibility to get the project done within the deadline, but when I say I can't make it to the deadline, she says, oh, next week is also fine, and then I don't feel pressured enough to get it done and work hard*' (see Appendix 3). She said that, with the flexibility that her manager provides, she does not feel pressured enough to finish an assignment.

Interviewee 1 also said something about motivation being inside him. When asked about if he would consider his manager a good remote manager, he stated '*So I said to myself, if I want to do this, I need to deliver, otherwise they will tell me, okay, why do you work from home? And maybe they tell me to come more to the office to improve my working so I don't need his approval or I don't need a good remote manager because I think the motivation is more inside me because I know what I want and I have to deliver to get what I want*' (see Appendix 2).

Another interesting finding was the fact that interviewee 1 does not let his manager affect his experience of remote work. His answer when he was asked about if he found his manager a good remote manager was '*No. But is that impacting my remote work? And no, I don't think that because I like to work from home as well. My office moved to Utrecht. We were first working in Rotterdam. I'm living in Rotterdam and we (thecompany) moved to Utrecht. So if I go to the office, it costs me 2 hours extra. I prefer*

*to work from home or at the depots in Rotterdam because it's more nearby. So I said to myself, if I want to do this, I need to deliver, otherwise they will tell me, okay, why do you work from home? And maybe they tell me to come more to the office to improve my working so I don't need his approval or I don't need a good remote manager because I think the motivation is more inside me because I know what I want and I have to deliver to get what I want'* (see Appendix 2). His manager not being a good remote manager does not affect the interviewee. He says that he has the motivation to deliver.

Furthermore, Interviewee 2 was asked the question '*Do you feel like your manager being a good manager is affecting your experience on remote work?*', on which she gave the answer '*Yeah, I think so. Because when you have a manager and you're not feeling yeah, how do you say it? Yeah. Then I think you have another feeling than when everything goes well and you think you're trusted.*' (see Appendix 3). She says indirectly that her remote working experience would be different if she would not be trusted by her manager. The latter is what interviewee 4 confirms in her interview. She says '*In a good way yes. Because if she would micromanage me, I think that doesn't work for me.*'

The last interesting finding was that two participants were asked 'would you want a good manager, or remote work?' On this question, interviewee 5 answered '*Yes, because I like the working remote part, and if the manager is being good or bad, I will be like yeah, at the end, it's my issue, but I will do the best with the worst manager I can (she would make the best of it she meant)*' (see Appendix 5). This was the same for employee two. Interview 2 confirmed this by saying '*Yeah, because when you have a manager and you don't get along well, I still prefer to work remote then*' (see Appendix 3). They thereby stated that they found remote work more important than a good manager.

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# 5. Discussion

In this chapter, the findings will be interpreted and described and will be contextualized concerning existing research on the research problem. Next to that, any new insights that have arisen from this research will be explained. The most important themes that formed part of the discussion were: micromanagement, support, freedom, flexibility, productivity and performance, overall opinion on (remote) manager, and other findings.

There were some variables that had to be considered when interpretating the data collected through the interviews:

- Interviewee 1 – Manager has Stock Management, but also has a process manager, a fleet manager, and has people working in installation under his wing. The installation section (including the fleet manager) is more customer facing.
- Interviewee 2 – Works 100% remote for 3 months.
- Interviewee 3 – Manager is global site controller; he has a total of 12 subordinates in his team.
- Interviewee 4 – Interviewee is part of a self-managing team, has relatively little contact with manager. Also works 100% remote for 3 months.
- Interviewee 5 – Has changing (project managers), no direct contact with manager almost, only with team lead.
- Interviewee 6 – Interviewee is part of a self-managing team, has relatively little contact with manager.
- Interviewee 7 – Not a lot of direct contact with manager, as he is an assistant client advisor who works with 3 client advisors.

These variables were considered when interpretating the data as they could have influenced findings from the qualitative research. One example was the fact that interviewee 1 and 3 both had managers that had more than one team under their supervisory. They both found that there was a lack of pro-active support.

Remote employees and their leaders face many challenges that require more profound comprehension. This understanding is vital for formulating practical guidelines and recommendations to surmount these hurdles and foster success. The present study endeavours to gain enhanced insight into the perspectives of individual contributors regarding remote work, its evolution post-pandemic, and the various factors influencing their remote work experience, performance, and productivity.

## 5.1. Discussion of results

### 5.1.1. Micromanagement

As seen in the last chapter, micromanagement has been present while working remotely for the participants who participated in this research. The interviewees' answers show they experienced some rather peculiar ways of micromanaging.

As presented in the results chapter, interviewee 5 was obligated to be in a full-day Microsoft Teams call, with her camera on. She explained that this caused irritation, as she heard people sneezing, coughing, and the camera would be on when she would be

going to and coming back from the toilet. This is basically forcing people to be on camera and has been experienced in previous research as well (Teng-Calleja et al., 2023).

Next to that, interviewee 2 explained that she felt stressed when she was being micromanaged. She also explained how her former manager was constantly checking and calling if she finished something (see Appendix 3). In previous research after the pandemic started, micromanagement has had a lot of presence (Henke et al., 2022; Krishnamoorthy, 2022; Babapour Chafi et al., 2021).

The perceived stress shows the dangerous implications micromanaging can have. According to Collins & Hou (2002), micromanaging can cause serious health problems. It must have been extremely stressful for interviewee 5 as well, when she had to be in a virtual meeting for approximately 8 hours a day with her camera on, without any privacy. Research has shown that elevated stress stemming from micromanagement can ultimately culminate in burnout. Micromanaging individuals face an increased risk of experiencing burnout. Another negative result micromanaging entails is a decrease in productivity (Collins & Hou, 2002).

When looking solely at this study, the development of micromanagement has seen a positive change. From the four interviewees that suffered from micromanagement during the last three and a half years, interviewees 2, 6, and 7 stated that they noticed micromanagement decreasing over time. This could possibly be because managers are getting used to managing remote and are feeling more confident now than before. This contrasts with a previous study that stated that 40% of the managers did not feel ready to manage remote teams (Parker et al., 2020). While an over-time decrease in micromanaging cannot solely determine that managers now feel more confident about their abilities to manage remote, it does point in the right direction. The word confidence here is incredibly important, as micromanaging is often done when by managers that do not feel confident (White, 2010).

Stress and a loss of productivity are not the only consequences of a high presence of micromanagement; when there is a lack of autonomy and a high degree of micromanagement driven by managerial mistrust, the advantages of remote work are unlikely to manifest. Managers must establish appropriate work structures to support productive remote work (Parker et al., 2020).

These findings are related to the objectives because they helped us better understand how micromanagement affects the individual contributors, and how they see the development of remote work overtime. In this case they saw micromanagement change over time, which is a significant finding considering its absence in today's research about remote work.

### 5.1.2. Support

Another often recurring theme was the support received by the manager. Often, it was talked about because of the lack thereof. Interesting findings were explicitly the cases of interviewees 1, 3, and 7 and the lack of support they experienced. Each of these interviewees has his specific case. Interviewee 1 experienced a lack of support from his

manager in different ways. For example, the manager did not have time for him, the manager did not ask about work (only small talk), and the manager had a different focus. Interviewee 1 says that he does not feel supported well because of these elements. Context is needed to understand why the manager is not showing support. Interviewee 1 works in stock management in an E-commerce company. His team comprises four installers, one process manager, one stock management manager and one fleet manager. His manager does not have the technical knowledge to support him in stock management and has a focus on the operational side, as this side is customer-facing. As interviewee 1's manager must share his attention in between different departments within the team, interviewee 1 feels neglected, as he works in the department that is not involved in the KPI's of his manager. The assumption could be made that stock management is not in the KPI's of interviewee 1's manager as this is more of a 'requirement to operate', instead of something that will create new business for the organisation.

Interviewee 3 talked about appointments being missed and not proactively being re-scheduled, and not being able to solve problems and then redirecting the interviewee to someone else. On this topic, interviewee 3 said there was no pro-activity with setting up meetings when cancelling them, and he had to remember him multiple times to set up a new meeting (his manager) (see Appendix 4). Apparent frustration could be seen on the face of this interviewee during the interview, as he also ultimately believes that his manager is not a good remote manager.

Some context in the case of interviewee 1 is that he is part of a global team of 12 people from 5 countries. With team members from the United Kingdom (2), China (1), India (4), the United States (1), and The Netherlands (4), the team is operating in five or more time zones. The manager already has a big team, and it is also a global team. He also has to take different time zones into account. The team size and the fact that the team is global could be the reason for the lack of support. Research confirms that team size has an impact on performance. Productivity declines when employees perceive reduced team support as team size increases. Previous studies have shown that relational loss has a mediating role in the adverse correlation between team size and individual performance, even after considering factors like extrinsic motivation and perceived coordination challenges. This indicates that larger teams reduce perceptions of available support, which typically acts as a buffer against stressful situations and enhances productivity and performance (Mueller, 2012).

Global teams could also make it harder for a manager to manage. Empirical evidence suggests that hierarchical leadership tends to exhibit reduced effectiveness within geographically dispersed teams compared to co-located teams (Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014). Moreover, ensuring that the team's tasks receive priority from members poses greater challenges in geographically dispersed teams (Kayworth & Leidner, 2002).

An ultimate example of the lack of support experience was the case of interviewee 6. Off the record, she explained about a time when one of her co-workers did not do his work correctly, and it gave the other team members more work. She had an answer to why this was happening: the lack of support from the manager. In the interview, she stated

that the manager was not checking in on them frequently enough, as the team was considered 'self-managing'. This affected the team negatively in a way that caused the other teams to be stuck with an increased workload.

### 5.1.3. Productivity and performance

Another important topic was that of productivity and performance. As stated before, micromanagement and a lack of support are both negatively linked to productivity and performance. Freedom, flexibility, and informal communication, however, are possibly also connected to productivity.

As can be seen in the previous chapter, interviewee 4 feels like her productivity and performance are affected by her manager's behaviour, and that because of the freedom that she is provided with, she feels like she delivers better work. She also adds that 'it works' for her, referring to getting freedom. Contrarily, interviewee 2 cannot handle the freedom she is getting. She finds that the flexibility she is getting sometimes negatively influences her productivity. This is interesting and helps us to understand that every worker is different. Every person has a manager style that fits a tiny bit better than another one. Previous literature supports that variations in how much team members feel they have control over their work and life events are connected to higher team productivity (Kirkman & Shapiro, 2005).

There were also several interviewees that miss the informal communication. Interviewee 2 said she missed 'the jokes and stuff', and interviewee 7 said it is 'nice' to have your colleagues around. Research has proven it is not just 'nice' to have your co-workers around and socialise, it actually works in your favor to be physically in the same location and talk with them, as informal communication has a positive effect on the productivity of individuals. Not being at the same location physically reduces the capacity to exchange knowledge for workers (Gressgård, 2011). Informal interactions are key in building trust and awareness of critical tasks (Ågerfalk & Fitzgerald, 2005). Spontaneous and informal communication has been proven to enhance the sense of belonging to a cohesive team and facilitate the delivery of corrective feedback (Herbsleb & Mockus, 2003).

### 5.1.4. Satisfaction on (remote) manager

An interesting finding in the area of the satisfaction on the interviewees' managers was that stated by interviewee 3 and 5. They both did not see a difference in between the manager and the remote manager, as 'it is the same'. Interviewee 5's explanation of why for her there is no difference is '*Because I feel like I still got clear explanation from them about my tasks and what they expected from me. I think also because we had good communication and daily communication*' (see Appendix 6).

Is there an explanation that interviewees 3 and 5 share this opinion? When comparing the profiles of interviewee 3 and 5, there are similarities and differences. When looking at Table 1, there can be seen that they differ in gender, they differ in age, but they do have the same job title. Both interviewees are accountant and work in the financial department of an organization, and so they possibly have similar tasks. It could be that

the tasks in accounting are clearer, and that they can work on a more individual level, but no previous literature can be found to support any of the claims made.

Even though interviewee 1 says his manager is not a good remote manager, he does believe he is a good manager. Reasons for that opinion are mainly freedom and the commitments he and his manager made. They made commitments and set clear expectations and can now hold each other accountable when something does not go as planned. Employee commitment has many positive results, including increased job performance (Shaima & Kalaiselvi, 2023).

### 5.1.5. Other findings

In this last subsection the findings will be discussed that were categorised as 'other'. One of those findings was that of the importance of remote work to two employees. They were asked the question 'if you would have to choose, would you choose for a good manager or remote work?' Both of the employees said that they would go for remote work. Basically, they said they found it more important to work remotely than to be managed well. The fact that two out of two[1] participants say this emphasizes the importance of remote work for today's employees. A Buffer study found that when looking for a new job, 66% of remote workers expressed the importance of their new job having the possibility to be done from home (Buffer, 2023).

Another interesting finding was the fact that interviewee 1 does not let his manager affect his experience of remote work. When asked if he thought his manager was a good remote manager he said no, but that it does not have any effect on his remote work. His motivation to work remote outweighs the managers' disabilities to manage remotely, and so he has a strong intrinsic motivation to complement the debilities of his manager. This could very well be a unique case, and other employees could get affected by a poorly performing manager.

The ultimate insight was that all of the employees that did not believe their manager was a good remote manager, still had a great experience overall of remote work, as they feel like the benefits of remote work outweigh the impact of being managed by a bad manager. This is closely linked to interviewee 1's persistence to not let his manager affect his experience working remote, and to the two participants choosing remote work over a good manager. This really shows that remote work is here to stay, and that it will be the new standard.

These findings are related to the objectives because they helped us better understand what the challenges are that workers are experiencing while working remote, and how it affects them, and how they see the development of remote work overtime. The findings give us a more detailed insight of what managers are doing right and what they could do better and provides data that can be converted into recommendations to organisations with the goal to successfully implement remote work on a wider scale.

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[1] This question was not a written down interview question, but improvised on the spot, hence only two answers were gathered.

## 5.2. Limitations

Our research adds to the growing body of literature investigating the evolution and effects of manager behavior on remote work experiences since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We conducted a thorough qualitative analysis to ensure the authenticity of the themes derived from participants' experiences. However, it is essential to acknowledge that although our sample exhibited diversity in terms of gender, job title, industry, and team size, it lacked age diversity and consisted of participants from a single country. This limitation may impact the generalizability of our findings across various organizational settings and national cultural contexts.

It's important to acknowledge that COVID-19 had varying impacts on countries in terms of regulations and policies. Some nations implemented stricter policies regarding in-office work, leading to the evolution of remote work over time and resulting in differing remote work experiences.

Even though the goal here was to get a more general understanding of the development of remote work in The Netherlands, little can be said about specific industries or age groups. In this research, there was little presence of people aged between 31-39 and 51-59, and no presence of participants aged between 41-49 or 61-69. Next to that, there was only focused on getting a global understanding of the development of remote work, and so nothing can be said about the individual's experience of the development of remote work in a specific industry.

## 5.3. Future research

Considering the limitations and what could not be concluded from the interview, there are multiple directions in which future research could go. Future research could be similar, but with some slight alterations.

There could be chosen to focus on experiences on remote work, micromanagement, support provide, effect on productivity; (1) per industry, (2) per age group, and (3) per department of a company. An example of this could be 'The development of remote work and the impact of manager behaviour on the individuals: IT departments in France.'

Other subjects could be:
-   A study that delves deeper into the correlation between the behaviour of the managers and the productivity and performance of the employees.
-   A study that focuses on the expectations that individuals have from a remote manager, and how does this differ from the expectations they would have from a normal manager.
-   A study that focuses on the manager, and how he/she has changed their approach to managing a team in a remote environment when compared to an office environment?
-   What is the manager's point of view on the development of new skills to become an effective remote manager?
-   To conduct an almost identical study with slight alterations in about a year, to be able to compare the results of the future with the results of now.

# 6. Conclusion

After the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a swift increase in the number of people participating in remote work. Among these remote workers were many who were completely new to remote work arrangements. This group included individuals who might not have previously considered remote work or who may have been initially resistant to the idea.

The outcomes of this research have yielded intriguing insights into employees' perspectives on remote work since the beginning of the pandemic. Some findings from the conducted interviews of workers were unexpected and even challenged existing literature, while others confirmed expectations but still added an intriguing dimension to the study. The primary aim of this research was to critically examine the evolution of remote work since the pandemic's onset, particularly in the context of manager behaviour and its impact on the employee's remote work experience, productivity and performance in The Netherlands. This exploration was essential because much of the previous research on remote work could be seen as having a one-sided perspective.

The study delved into various facets of remote work through participant interviews. A recurring issue identified was micromanagement, exemplified by instances such as participants being required to endure full-day video calls, causing irritation. The stress arising from micromanagement was a significant concern, with previous research indicating potential links to burnout. Interestingly, some participants reported a decrease in micromanagement over time, suggesting a growing confidence among managers in remote management.

Another prevalent theme was the lack of support from managers. Several participants expressed feelings of neglect and the absence of proactive assistance. The size of teams and global team dynamics emerged as potential factors influencing the level of support received from managers.

Discussions revolved around productivity and performance, with varying opinions on the impact of freedom and flexibility. While some participants found increased freedom led to better performance, others faced challenges. According to previous literature, informal communication and physical presence in the workplace were not only 'nice to have', but also deemed advantageous for productivity. Participant satisfaction with remote managers showed a spectrum of responses, with some finding no significant difference between remote and in-person management, while others voiced concerns about remote management. The importance of clear commitments and expectations in fostering positive manager-employee relationships was highlighted.

These findings shed light on the complexities of remote work, its effects on employees, and its evolving nature. They offer valuable insights for organizations seeking to implement or enhance their remote work practices.

This study primarily focused on the perspectives of employees, but it is important to note that the views of employers should also be taken into consideration. The shift to remote work impacted not only employees but also leaders and managers. It's worth

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acknowledging that many managers may not have received adequate training in effectively overseeing remote teams. They bear the responsibility of supporting their employees and ensuring business productivity while experiencing the challenges of the pandemic themselves.

In summary, this study has highlighted both the positive and negative aspects of mandatory remote work. Remote work was examined through participant interviews, revealing recurring issues of micromanagement causing stress and irritation. Some noted a decrease in micromanagement over time, suggesting growing managerial confidence in remote work. Another theme was insufficient managerial support, often linked to team size and global dynamics. Productivity varied with freedom, and informal communication and physical presence were deemed advantageous. Participant satisfaction with remote managers varied, impacting overall experiences. Clear commitments and expectations were found crucial. While most participants in this study had no prior experience with remote work, the research suggests that, moving forward, many people prefer a flexible approach to work, potentially combining remote and on-site work. These insights illuminate remote work complexities, offering valuable guidance for organizations seeking to improve remote work practices.

# 7. Recommendations

This chapter aims to provide practical and rational recommendations for enhancing current remote work practices, drawing from the research findings presented in this study. While hints of these recommendations have been scattered throughout the research, they collectively address areas of improvement for both the organisation and its managers. These recommendations aim to foster success in remote work, encompassing both professional and personal aspects.

Based on the findings of the conducted research and on previous research, the following recommendations are proposed for organizations and their managers to optimize remote work:

1. **Reduce Micromanagement:** Minimize micromanagement practices to alleviate employee stress, prevent burnout, and enhance overall productivity. Existing research highlights that excessive micromanagement and limited autonomy can decrease productivity.

2. **Foster Proactive Support:** Encourage proactive support measures, such as regular check-ins with employees, inquiries about their well-being, and assistance addressing challenges they may encounter. This approach can prevent bottlenecks, maintain workflow efficiency, and prevent situations like those described by interviewee 6, where unattended workload issues arose due to lack of support.

3. **Review Team Size and Global Dynamics:** Organizations should critically evaluate their team sizes and the diversity of team members across different countries. This examination can help identify potential challenges and optimize team structures for remote work success. The decrease of productivity that comes with a team that is global and too big has to be considered, and if the team cannot be reduced, other measurements have to be taken to make sure there is no lack of support that results in a loss in productivity.

4. **Consider Team Localization:** Evaluate the feasibility of localizing teams where appropriate, in contrast to maintaining globally dispersed teams. This may streamline communication, facilitate trust, and enhance team dynamics.

5. **Encourage Informal Communication:** Promote informal communication channels within remote teams as they have been shown to boost productivity. Facilitating casual interactions and spontaneous exchanges among team members in a virtual environment can contribute to a cohesive working environment. Scheduling virtual coffee breaks is an example.

6. **Provide Managerial Training:** Ensure that managers receive training in best practices for remote work management. Equipping managers with the skills and knowledge needed to lead remote teams effectively can improve outcomes.

These recommendations form part of a replicable success formula on remote work, meant to ultimately increase the productivity of the team, and enhance the experience on remote work of employees.

# 8. Learning process

This part involves the learnings of the researcher. It is of the utmost importance to recognise mistakes being made as that will improve future research. These insights shed light on what went well, areas for improvement, and key takeaways that enriched the research journey.

## 8.1. What went well

During the interview process, a significant moment of triumph occurred when Interviewee 4 mentioned 'trust' before it could be introduced. This instance symbolized an authentic exchange of ideas, showcasing the interviewee's genuine thoughts. This alignment between the participant's expression and the researcher's intent was a commendable aspect of the interviews. It emphasized the importance of letting participants lead the conversation and not inadvertently putting words in their mouths.

Additionally, in one instance, an interviewee 37re-emptively brought up the topic of micromanagement before it was introduced by the researcher. This early mention underscored the interviewee's willingness to openly discuss their experiences, further contributing to the authenticity of the interview process.

## 8.2. Key Learnings and Takeaways

While several aspects of the interview process went well, there were valuable lessons to be gleaned from challenges encountered along the way:

- **Interplay of Communication and Support**: During the interviews it became evident that communication and support were closely related in the relation of manager-individual contributor. Interviewees frequently referred to good communication when discussing support, emphasizing their interconnectedness. This made it harder to decide what code to add to a quoted text.
- **Guidance without Leading**: An essential learning was the art of providing guidance in questions without leading participants toward predetermined responses. Balancing the need for direction with maintaining objectivity was crucial.
- **Subjective Framing for Objectivity**: When asking questions that might inadvertently guide responses, framing them more subjectively could mitigate this effect. For example, questions regarding changes in the remote work experience over time could be rephrased to allow participants greater subjectivity in their responses. An example was: 'Do you think micromanaging happened less when compared to a year ago / before?', could be said in a more subjective way by saying: 'When you take the pandemic as a starting point, would you say there a change over time in the amount or intensity of micromanaging?'

In conclusion, the journey of conducting remote work interviews brought forth invaluable insights and lessons. These learnings enriched the research process, contributing to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding remote work experiences.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Interview questions

**Interview questions**

1. How old are you?
2. What industry do you work in?
3. Can you briefly tell me your role and describe your responsibilities?
4. How much remote work do you do and how long have you been working remotely?
5. Did you work remotely before pandemic? If so, how often?
6. What does your team look like?

**Manager behaviour**

7. When you are working remotely, what is your manager doing **well**?
8. When you are working remotely, what is your manager **not doing well**?

*Specific topics* (if not answered in questions 7 and 8)

9. What do you think about the **communication** between your manager and you?
10. Do you feel like you are being **micro-managed** when working remote?
11. Do you feel like you get enough **support** while working remotely?

*Productivity & Performance*

12. Does your manager's behaviour affect your daily productivity and performance? If so, how?
13. What can your manager do overall to improve your productivity?
14. Are you given the possibility to give feedback to your manager on him as a manager of your team?

**Employee satisfaction**

Make sure to explain that we distinguish the manager from the remote manager.

15. Do you think your manager is a good manager?
16. Do you think your manager is a good **remote** manager?
17. Are you overall satisfied with your manager's capabilities to manage you remotely?
18. Are you overall satisfied working remotely?

19. **Bonus question**: Is there something you would like to add to the answers you have given, of which you think it could be valuable to the research?

## Appendix 2: Interview with Interviewee 1

**Interviewee 1:**
Age: 32
Industry: E-commerce
Company: Coolblue
Role: Stock management boss

Transcript:
**Interviewer (me)**
All right, so let's start. We already had a quick introduction, so first question. What is your age?

**Interviewee 1**
My age is 32.

**Interviewer (me)**
And what industry do you work in?

**Interviewee 1**
Currently working in the department for the installation of solar panels and charging points and energy contracts of a big Dutch e-commerce company.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right. And can you briefly tell me your role and describe your responsibilities?

**Interviewee 1**
My current position is stock management boss, and I am in control of the total stock of the solar charging station installations. And in general, I need to make sure that every product, every tool is at the right time, at the right position to make sure we can install our panels and charging stations. And besides that, I'm currently working on developing our it's called software for stock management.

**Interviewer (me)**
It's....

**Interviewee 1**
Warehouse management system. That's what's the word on warehouse management.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, all right. And how much remote work do you do and how long have you been working remotely?

**Interviewee 1**
I'm working three days from home and two days or either the office or one of our depots, but it's also, depending on a weekly basis, what type of work I need to do, sometimes to be at the depot, sometimes meetings at the office, but mostly I'm working three days from home. And the other question was?

**Interviewer (me)**
How long have you been working remotely?

**Interviewee 1**

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Oh, I started working here during COVID, and in the first three months, I couldn't work from home because I had to 'inwerken' (Dutch verb that means 'starting on your job', so in this case he needed to be at the office to learn how to do his new job, which was hard to do at home). And from then on, we need to work from home because of COVID And after COVID, the first year after COVID was two days working in the office, three days at home. And now currently is two or three days working in the office and two from home.

**Interviewer (me)**
And those days are mandatory?

**Interviewee 1**
Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
The office days? Okay, all right. And if I understood it correctly, so you did not work remotely before the pandemic?

**Interviewee 1**
No.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, all right. That's the first part. Basically, the basic details about you, about your role, what you do in the company, et cetera. So this is the second part of the interview. Here I will ask you some questions related to your manager's behavior in a remote environment. So I have a few questions that are very general and a few that are more specific. So I'll first start with one that's very general.

**Interviewer (me)**
When you are working remotely, what do you think your manager is doing well for you?

**Interviewee 1**
He gives me enough space to do my work the way I wanted to do, and he still tried to interact with me on a daily basis by calling or by email, but not in a push way, not force, but more like in a general way. What are you working on? And just to know where I'm working on and not by controlling me or he wants to know what I'm doing, at a specific time.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.There are a few things that I would like to dive deeper on, but I'll do it later. First, I would be interested in what is he not doing well?

**Interviewee 1**
Oh, most of the times during our meeting, either he doesn't show or he's always late, so that's the first thing. So it's hard with meetings. Sometimes he forgot our meeting or he's too busy. And that's quite frustrating because my agenda is really organized and I have a certain amount of time that I'm time to discuss things with him. (Siri was talking to him, so he said sorry)

**Interviewer (me)**
No worries.

**Interviewee 1**

So that's one of the things, the first thing that came up in my mind. Second, what is sometimes yeah, sometimes it's hard because he's at the depots most often and I'm not, and he's discussing things at depot without noticing me. So afterwards I hear things, what I should do or what they are planning to do, not from him, but from other people. And that's because of the distance most of the time.

**Interviewer (me)**
So you would say this is a result of maybe of remote work in this case. So his communication maybe not being good enough in a remote environment?

**Interviewee 1**
No. Yeah. There's a lack of communication because most of the time when you're sitting nearby your colleague and things pop in your mind, then it's easy to discuss this with colleagues. But when you're at home alone, then it's harder to have a discussion, an interaction, and then it's just you on your own and you have to think about this subject. But there's not a lot of people that you can easily go talk with and discuss certain matters.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. Yeah. And that gets us to the next question, which is a bit more specific on something you've just mentioned. What do you think about the communication between your manager and you?

**Interviewee 1**
It's very direct. It's an old Navy officer and he's pretty straightforward and that's also a way I like to communicate, but he's also like, okay, it's my opinion, I tell you what to do and that's it. So there's no space for real good discussion. And can you repeat the question once more?

**Interviewer (me)**
So what do you think about the communication between your manager and you?

**Interviewee 1**
Yeah, so it's quite really short, and especially when you don't see each other that often, you want to hear the whole story and have a bigger picture of it. When you talk really straightforward, it's 'beperkend' (Dutch word to say that its 'limiting' it limits them from getting deeper into the story/subject).

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, that's very interesting. And just a curiosity, how old is he or approximately?

**Interviewee 1**
That's a great question. I don't even know. I think he's 38, 40 maybe. Okay. He's a little bit older than me.

**Interviewer (me)**
And why do you think his communication towards you is like this? Is it because he is that busy that he doesn't have more time?

**Interviewee 1**
Yeah, I'm more like a side project for him. He doesn't know stock management that well, so most of the time he doesn't have an opinion about my work in details and he's busy doing other things. There are more things important that he needs to focus on. So I'm more on the background and if I manage everything. So if I have all the stock available at the right time, at the right position, he wouldn't call me

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or anything. So only when there's trouble, he needs me, then he will reach out to me, and otherwise he leaves me on my own, doing my job.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, but that's something that works very well for you, right?

**Interviewee 1**
Yeah. I need that kind of space to do just whatever I want to do or at least think I have a lot of freedom to do whatever I think is best to do at this time. Of course, there are certain things that we try to grow and try to develop and I'm focusing on, but besides that, every time I see something that I can improve, I don't need his approval to do it. He just says, okay, just do it and tell me afterwards what the impact is. Okay. All right. That's what I really like.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. That gets us to the next question, which is very much related. So do you feel like you're being micromanaged when working remote?

**Interviewee 1**
No, not at all.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 1**
And that's because of the communication, because when something pops in my head, I'm like, okay, I'm going to do this without asking for permission, or on smaller details. On bigger issues, of course I need to get approval. And certainly when there's a lot of costs, then, yeah, I need his approval. But with micromanaging? No, I don't think so.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, and do you think that this also has to do with the level of trust established or do you think just the curiosity, what weighs more, the level of trust or the lack of time for him?

**Interviewee 1**
Ooh that's a great question. I think both. Or he evaluates if he should put his time into these matters, and I think so maybe it's more time, but it's also trust because he knows that I won't do things that are not beneficial for the company or for him.

**Interviewer (me)**
Exactly, and otherwise he would probably invest time to micromanage you a bit more. Okay, yeah. And then you also mentioned it briefly. Do you feel like you get enough support while working remotely?

**Interviewee 1**
Ooooh, I don't. Yeah, because otherwise he would micromanage me. But I told him, okay, I need to have this kind of space where I can do kind of what I want to do, and he gives me that. So that's kind of support, okay, you do your thing and I'm okay with it. But it's not that he gives me compliments about my remote working and how efficient I am or get things done or things like that, so he doesn't mention it.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, so that's something you feel like you lack as well you would like to hear a bit more.

**Interviewee 1**
I don't need that confirmation. Yeah, but of course everyone wants to be not seen, but sometimes you need to get that confirmation to.

**Interviewer (me)**
Be productive. Motivated.

**Interviewee 1**
Yeah, motivated. That's the word I was looking for. Because for me, when you're not at the office sometimes, especially when it's a few days in a row, it doesn't really feel like you're working for a big company and the impact is quite big. But if you see the money I spent on buying, for example, those are serious numbers. So you need to really think, you need to consider these things. Yeah. Consider like, okay, now I'm spending, for example, not smaller amount, but like 20K or something. It's not like if it would be my own money, you really think about it and you really would know, is this the right decision? And now it's more like, okay, I just push enter and I send the quotation of purchase order. When you're in an environment like defense, I think that would feel a little bit more different.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, yeah. And you also briefly mentioned the support in terms of sending emails and sometimes calling, checking up on you. So if I understood it correctly, it's like half, half, basically, sometimes in that way, you feel the support. But sometimes...

**Interviewee 1**
Yeah most of the time when he calls me or emails me, he needs something from me, but he doesn't call me or email me, call me, like, okay, what are you doing? What are you working on? How can I help you with anything? So it's more like if he needs me, he will reach out to me, but not for example, I'm also manager to other people. He barely reached out to me to talk about that. How you're doing? What do you need for them? Are there certain problems we need to discuss? It's more work focused.

**Interviewer (me)**
So he manages you and you are managing two people. All right, then we go to the next question.

**Interviewer (me)**
Does your manager's behavior affect your daily productivity and performance?

**Interviewee 1**
I think so.

**Interviewer (me)**
How?

**Interviewee 1**
For example, he's now on holiday for three weeks and I have a lot more time to invest into things that I think is more important. And he will come back next week and I think he will have a lot of work for me waiting to work on. And so I think there's a big difference if he's around and if he's not. So I think that's yeah, your question was sorry?

**Interviewer (me)**

Yeah, I was wondering, I was looking at it more from the side of the behavior of your manager. So for example, in this case he is not, but does the lack of support, does the communication, that's not always well with your manager, does this affect your daily productivity and performance? And if so, why? So these little things that he does well or doesn't do well, do you feel like this is affecting your productivity or performance?

**Interviewee 1**

Yeah, I think so. For example, I had a discussion with one of my coworkers and in that time when he didn't really support me, I didn't feel like pushing all my energy into solving this problem. I was more like, okay, this is a problem for the whole of least not only mine, but for the whole company because his motivation was really low and he was chitchatting about everybody, especially at the depots. And my manager is the main responsible for all the depots, so he needs to manage this as well. But because he didn't really invested in it, I was more like after putting all my energy for a couple of months, I'm like, okay, if you don't think this is important, why should I? For example? And if he would be more... (says Dutch word 'Betrokken', which means involved)

**Interviewer (me)**

Involved.

**Interviewee 1**

Involved with it, I think I would be harder on trying to get him back on track or trying to improve his motivation. But after a couple of months I decided not to, or at least less than I did before and that was because of his interest in it, in this subject.

**Interviewer (me)**

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. This is actually something that I also am experiencing. So it's funny that you say that the involvement plays such a big part in your productivity and your will to basically produce more in less time.

**Interviewee 1**

Yeah, exactly. For example, sometimes there are really important things you have to solve. For example, I'm now trying to get some of the stock to our warehouse instead of directly to our depots because we have a quite big warehouse where we can... (says Dutch verb 'opslaan' which means save/stock)

**Interviewer (me)**

Where we can stock up.

**Interviewee 1**

Yeah, our stock. But you need to manage a lot of things with a lot of different companies. And he's not around. So I'm doing this all by my own, but I know I need to finish this project before the deadline, and I can't wait for his approval or for his blessing. So I still have to do my work. And so my motivation doesn't go down when he's not around. These types of regulation. But that's more like I think motivation is people is different than doing other things. Like, for example, get certain amount of purchasing or getting in contact with new (says Dutch word 'distributeurs', which means suppliers).

**Interviewer (me)**

Suppliers.

**Interviewee 1**

Suppliers, yeah. So it's depending on the type of work as well.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. All right. And do you feel like you're giving the possibility to give feedback to your manager on him as a manager of your team?

**Interviewee 1**

Once a year, he has a (says Dutch word 'functioneringsgesprek, which is performance review), performance review, so two meetings about his behavior as a manager. And I can give my opinion about him, but not on a weekly basis. So it's not really common to give him feedback every week.

**Interviewer (me)**

And does he informally/formally ask you for feedback often, or also not?

**Interviewee 1**

No.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, clear. All right. Then we are at part three, which is employee satisfaction. These are also a bit more general questions, and if needed, I'll dive in more deeply. Do you think your manager is a good manager? Okay. And wait, sorry. Do you think your manager is a good manager? There are two here. You have a good manager and a good remote manager. So the first question is, do you think your manager is a good manager overall?

**Interviewee 1**

Focus only on me or other people?

**Interviewer (me)**

Well, your experience, of course, is most important here because it's the most tangible, because you live it, basically. But also in general, if you have something to add, that will be good. So do you think your manager is a good manager?

**Interviewee 1**

Yeah, he is. He's a good manager. And why is that? That's because the type of freedom he gives me. We have certain when we started working together, we said we have 'afspraken' (Dutch for 'we made commitments') to okay, I want you to do focus on this, I want you to do that. And for the last six months, seven months, he's committed to that and I am as well. So it's a good way of it's a nice relationship. And on remote work? No, I don't think so, but that's more because he's focusing on other categories and trying to improve that. But that's more also like, you have your KPIs and none of his KPIs is focusing on stock. So it's not that he really needs to focus on it, it's more like have most efficient installation teams, increase the amount of installation, things like that.

**Interviewer (me)**

So it's also a bit of a more specific case, more like a hybrid model, basically.

**Interviewee 1**

Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, so you would not say he's a good remote manager at this point?

**Interviewee 1**

No. But is that impacting my remote work? And no, I don't think that because I like to work from home as well. My office moved to Utrecht. We were first working in Rotterdam. I'm living in Rotterdam and we (the company) moved to Utrecht. So if I go to the office, it costs me 2 hours extra. I prefer to work from home or at the depots in Rotterdam because it's more nearby. So I said to myself, if I want to do this, I need to deliver, otherwise they will tell me, okay, why do you work from home? And maybe they tell me to come more to the office to improve my working so I don't need his approval or I don't need a good remote manager because I think the motivation is more inside me because I know what I want and I have to deliver to get what I want.

**Interviewer (me)**

Clear. Okay, so you don't really depend on your manager, you feel...

**Interviewee 1**

No.

**Interviewer (me)**

And are you overall satisfied with your manager's capabilities to manage you remotely?

**Interviewee 1**

No. Otherwise would say so earlier? No, he could communicate better, faster, and only not when he needs me, but also when he just wants to check in on me on the way I'm working or my coworkers. So, no, it could be better.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. Yeah, you already mentioned it a couple of times, so I think I had a clear understanding already, but good to hear it again. And would you say you're overall satisfied working remotely?

**Interviewee 1**

Yeah, working home, I can more focus on my work. There's no, um 'geen ruis' (in Dutch, 'ruis' means noise/distraction).

**Interviewer (me)**

No noise, no distractions.

**Interviewee 1**

No no. Nobody can interact with me without focusing on my work. And most of my colleagues work from home as well, so it's not like I'm the only one not working from home. So it's common for everybody. And of course, the benefits are I'm more efficient with my life besides work. So I can do laundry, I can go shopping during my lunch break, afterwards, I have more time off to do things I want to do.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, so you can kind of organize your day more efficiently also with private stuff.

**Interviewee 1**

Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewee 1**

And also, if somebody needs me at 07:00, I will be there at 07:00. If somebody reach out to me at 07:00, A.m., I will pick up my phone. So I'm not really (says Dutch word 'verbonden', which means connected) at the nine to five schedule, I'm more like, now I need to deliver, so I will do my work till I'm finished. And if I'm finished at five, that's okay. If I'm finished at eight, that's also okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

Makes sense. So you're very flexible, you would say, in that way?

**Interviewee 1**

Yeah

**Interviewer (me)**

All right, well, I think I got a good view of your experiences, of your remote experience, basically, and yeah, as a bonus question, is there something you would like to add to the answers you've given? Something you might have missed or something you think could be valuable to the researcher? Maybe an experience or something that has happened to you? An example or something that you think I didn't ask a question about, but something that could be valuable?

**Interviewee 1**

No. What I think is also quite interesting is how am I committed to the company without being at the office or when I'm at depots? Because some of my colleagues are installers are they wear clothes of our brand. They are in a car. They are representing our satisfaction at our clients. For me, that's really different, because I'm just behind my desktop making Excel files, doing other types of stuff. If I compare my... I believe in our brand. I think the way we are, our strategy towards clients is really what I want it to be to my clients. It's also really informal, so I can be in my jersey and somebody is sitting across me, and we still are talking about the same things without he's judging me on the way I look, for example. And I really appreciate that, but in my opinion, what I really heard at depots so for the installers, they're always complaining about things, about things that they don't like. I'm not focusing on that. I'm more focusing on how can I improve what I do like about my work? And I think that because when you're with a lot of people around, it's easier to talk trash about things than when you're on your own. So it's also like focusing your perspective is way different than those kind of situations.

**Interviewee 1**

And on the downside, I don't see my colleagues that often. We started in COVID, but there was a certain time that we could come to the office. We had a lot of drinks at the office. You see each other more often, you know more what's on their mind. And nowadays, it's more like, okay, I know you. We work together, but I don't really feel like I know the people I'm working with. So that's the downside.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. All right, then. That was it. So thanks a lot for participating in my research.

**Interviewee 1**

You're welcome.

**Interviewer (me)**
I'll stop the audio here.

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# Appendix 3: Interview with Interviewee 2

**Interviewee 2:**
Age: 25
Industry: E-commerce
Company: Bol.com
Role: Functional application manager

Transcript:
**Interviewer (me)**
All right. Okay. What is your age?

**Interviewee 2**
25.

**Interviewer (me)**
And what industry do you work in?

**Interviewee 2**
Ecommerce.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right. Can you briefly tell me your role and describe your responsibilities?

**Interviewee 2**
My role is functional application manager, so I manage a couple of applications within an operational team.

**Interviewer (me)**
And what does it exactly look like to manage applications?

**Interviewee 2**
Well, it's mostly technical, so when the user of the application has a problem or a question or a suggestion to make it better, they come to me. I will make a business case if needed, and then I will go to the It team with a business case to pitch it. And if they think it's going to help everyone who's working with application, they will implement it.

**Interviewer (me)**
So you're basically kind of like a stop in between the individual contributors and the It team to make sure they work how they want to work basically?

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah and they can do their work easily, the best easily with the applications they need to use.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And how much remote work do you do and how long have you been working remotely?

**Interviewee 2**
I've been working remotely since the start of the Pandemic. So that's now for, what is it, three years? And now I'm working fully remotely. And when I'm in the Netherlands, I work, I think, three days at home and two days at the office.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay Yeah. Because now you work from here, from Barcelona, so completely remote. Okay.

**Interviewee 2**

Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
And did you work remotely before the Pandemic? If so, how often?

**Interviewee 2**
No, always at the office.

**Interviewer (me)**
Five days?

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And what does your team look like?

**Interviewee 2**
Well, my team has functional application managers and business analysts. And then you have a team manager and a functional application manager's lead. And I think we're with ten or eleven people

**Interviewer (me)**
And that's functional application managers and business analysts included or only...?

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
And how many functional application managers do you have and how many business analysts?

**Interviewee 2**
We have four functional application managers and six business analysts and one team manager.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. All right. Clear.

**Interviewer (me)**
And you told me briefly you had a different manager before.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah. So when I started in this team almost two years ago, I think we had one manager, just only the team manager for the functional application managers as well as for the business analysts. But he couldn't manage all those people next to his work. So now we have a functional application lead, so that is now my manager.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And the business analysts have a separate team lead manager now.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. All right. And this is basically the second part of the interview here. I will ask you some questions related to your manager's behavior in a remote environment.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

When you're working remotely, what is your manager doing well for you? What do you like?

**Interviewee 2**

Well, I think she is checking in enough. So as well, personal as how it does it go with your work. And I can always call her even outside business hours she's always eager to help with whatever you need.

**Interviewer (me)**

So in terms of support, you feel very well supported?

**Interviewee 2**

Yeah. And she doesn't micromanage or something.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. You don't feel checked upon in a bad way?

**Interviewee 2**

No. And when I want to grab a lunch with my mom or go to the gym, that's also.Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, so you have a lot of flexibility. I see. Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

And when you're working remotely, what is your manager not doing well, in your opinion?

**Interviewee 2**

Well, with my manager that I have now, I can't think of anything, but with my previous manager, he was more like checking if you were doing your work and if you were on time in meetings and that kind of stuff. And on the other hand, yeah, it may be good, but sometimes a little bit much.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, so he was micromanaging a lot?

**Interviewee 2**

Yeah, more than my manager now.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. I'll get into that in more detail later as well.

**Interviewer (me)**

And what do you think about the communication between your manager and you?

**Interviewee 2**

Yeah, goes well. We don't have struggles or something. She's always on point, she always helps when I need her, so communication is good.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. And any improvements? Did you think this specific thing could improve in terms of communication?

**Interviewee 2**

No, I don't think so.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, that's also an answer.

**Interviewer (me)**

And do you feel like you're being micromanaged when working remote, you already said.

**Interviewee 2**

Yeah, with my previous manager sometimes, but with my manager now not, but it was more when we were fully working at home. So now we go to the office two or three days, but in the pandemic we were at home, like the whole week and then it was more.

**Interviewer (me)**

And how did you notice this? In what way was he...?

**Interviewee 2**

Yeah, in the pandemic, he was like more checking in and calling, oh, did you do that or did you already answer the email or stuff like that. And now you see each other at the office and then it goes more 'organisch' (Dutch word for naturally, in a natural way).

**Interviewer (me)**

More in a natural way?

**Interviewee 2**

Yeah. So not a checking anymore.

**Interviewer (me)**

And how did this make you feel? How did this impact your work, the micromanaging? In a bad way?

**Interviewee 2**

A little bit, maybe because I was feeling checked sometimes, so sometimes I was a little bit stressed, like, oh, I have a meeting in an hour and I didn't update the slides.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewee 2**

What he's going to say or what he's going to think of it?

**Interviewer (me)**

So it made you feel stressed mostly?

**Interviewee 2**

Sometimes, yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

For example, did it affect your performance or productivity?

**Interviewee 2**

No, I don't think so.

**Interviewer (me)**

Mostly how you feel?

**Interviewee 2**

Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

Yeah. Can you tell me a little bit more about the support you're receiving right.

**Interviewee 2**
Now from my manager?

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. How do you feel supported?

**Interviewee 2**
Well, there's a lot of flexibility, so when you want to start at nine or at ten, it's always fine. And when you want to leave at four or at five or at six also fine. And we have, like, one day. You need to be there at the office on Thursday and the rest of the day you can just check in and say, I'm coming, or I'm coming not, and my manager is working four days, so she's not available on Friday. And, yeah, it's very easy going with her. She's also young, so yeah, we can level good with each other.

**Interviewer (me)**
And yeah. Do you feel that the flexibility she's giving you affects your productivity?

**Interviewee 2**
Sometimes, sometimes it's maybe a bit too flexible, and then I think I will do it next week, or It's 16:00, I have weekend.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And do you reach the deadlines, basically, or does it affect it in a really negative way?

**Interviewee 2**
No, because I can perform good under pressure. So when I need to get something done within three weeks, I will do it the last week before the deadline.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. Yeah. Okay. So then what can your manager overall do to improve your productivity?

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah, maybe on some projects, check in a little bit more, because when she isn't asking about it and I didn't do anything, I'm not going to tell something about it or say, oh, I didn't do anything because of whatever reason. So maybe check in a little bit more or yeah, I don't know. I think that's it.

**Interviewer (me)**
So that will be on specific projects?

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Would you categorize this as involvement, that she could be more involved in those projects? Because you did tell me she's checking in of you in general, is it on specific projects that you feel less support?

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah, I don't think it's less support, but well, it's my own responsibility to get the project done within the deadline, but when I say I can't make it to the deadline, she says, oh, next week is also fine, and then I don't feel pressured enough to get it done and work hard.

**Interviewer (me)**
So we come back to the flexibility, basically, that she might be a bit too flexible.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah, I think so. For me.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah, exactly. Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
Anything else you would say?

**Interviewee 2**
No, I can't think of anything else right now.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right.

**Interviewer (me)**
And are you given the possibility to give feedback to your manager?

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
How often?

**Interviewee 2**
Well, I think she asks feedback every I think two times a year. So then you can fill in feedback.

**Interviewer (me)**
So that's the formal feedback.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah. And also sometimes she sends a mail or something or just in a conversation.

**Interviewer (me)**
So in like more of an informal way.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah or in a meeting. We also have a slide on the team meeting that says, does any one need feedback? Every team meeting again.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah, that's good. Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
So, yeah, it's good to know that she does it also more often than the formal talks, 'functioneringsgesprekken' (Dutch word for 'performance reviews') et cetera.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 2**
And also when I want to give feedback and she's not asking, it's also fine. I can just say to her, do you have, like, five minutes?

**Interviewer (me)**
So she creates, like, a very healthy environment.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah, very safe, where you can say whatever you want.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 2**
And that's in the whole team for everyone. Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Also between employees, or more that she creates this for...?

**Interviewee 2**
Both also between employees.

**Interviewer (me)**
And is this always taken positively because of this environment?

**Interviewee 2**
Not always. So yeah, depends on the person you're giving feedback to.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 2**
But it's like a normal topic to talk about within the team.

**Interviewer (me)**
MMM, okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. And then part three, employee satisfaction. Here we basically distinguish two types of managers. We have the traditional manager, so the office manager, who you're going to be with five days a week or three days a week, but as long as it is in the office, and the remote manager. So, first question, do you think your manager is a good manager in general?

**Interviewee 2**
Well, she is new in her job, but so far I think she's a good manager.

**Interviewer (me)**
And why is she a good manager for you?

**Interviewee 2**
Well, she's always available, and when I really need her, like in difficult conversations or colleagues that are not working the way I want to do them, then she's always ready to help. Or you can say always with projects, you can say, I want to really do this project, or, I don't like this project, can maybe someone else pick it up? So, yeah, again, flexibility, I think.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

And do you think your manager is a good remote manager? So purely focused on being remote, not being physically next to each other in the office?

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah, I think she also is a really good remote manager because I'm working remotely for five days now and my team is also at the office and I have extra check in moments with her, so Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday, and I always can call her when there's something or I just want to chitchat. I think she can do both.

**Interviewer (me)**
And do you feel forgotten sometimes because you're the only one?

**Interviewee 2**
No. Not even in meetings when everyone's at the office and I'm the only one online, it is difficult sometimes because you can't always hear the conversations, like in the meeting room when you're the only one online, but they're always asking, what do you think? What's your opinion? Do you have something to say? So it goes really well.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 2**
But I think you miss like, the little jokes and that kind of stuff.

**Interviewer (me)**
Informal.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
And are you overall satisfied with your manager's capabilities to manage you remotely?

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah, I think so. Yeah. I'm just working like, two months remotely now. And I didn't have her as a manager when we were remotely working in the pandemic. Then I had Job, and now I have Sabrina. But, yeah, she's really flexible and kind and very easy to work with.

**Interviewer (me)**
So working remotely, she's a good manager.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah, but I think it's easier when you also work at the office.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. Because you're next to each other, the communication doesn't go like this, it's not asymmetrical, but symmetrical.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah.

**Interviewee 2**
And now when you're working remotely, when you have a question or something, you need to call someone or give a chat or anything, and when you're working together at the same floor, then you can

just go to the person, say, hey, I have a question, can you look to this? And now you always need to call someone, takes more time.

**Interviewer (me)**
And are you overall satisfied working remotely for your overall experience?

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah, but I think I prefer to work remotely and also work like one or two days at the office instead of working remotely for five days a week.

**Interviewer (me)**
So hybrid.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah.

**Interviewee 2**
Because it's just more easier when you are next to each other and then you have informal moments like you said, and now it's really work only working.

**Interviewer (me)**
And does the fact that you're satisfied with your manager being a good manager, does this affect your experience on working remotely?

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah, I think so. Because when you have a manager and you're not feeling yeah, how do you say it? (She says in Dutch: 'Als je niet het vertrouwen krijgt?', which means 'if you don't get someone's trust?')

**Interviewer (me)**
Trust.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
If you don't feel trusted...

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah. Then I think you have another feeling than when everything goes well and you think you're trusted.

**Interviewer (me)**
And what weighs more for you, the flexibility you get from working remotely or your manager being a good manager and that's why you like remote work?

**Interviewee 2**
I think the first so the flexibility to work remotely, that's more important.

**Interviewer (me)**
So let's say an hypothesis. When you work remotely, the flexibility, if you don't have a manager that you like, you don't think he's a good manager or she, and it's kind of frustrating still the flexibility would weigh more for you.

**Interviewee 2**
Yeah, because when you have a manager and you don't get along well, I still prefer to work remote then.

**Interviewer (me)**
Makes sense.

**Interviewer (me)**

All right, then we have a bonus question after. It's always hard when you get a very open question in the beginning and you don't really talk about the subjects to pick up on something that's completely random from what we've talked about. So is there something you would like to add to the answers you've given of which you think it could be valuable to the research?

**Interviewee 2**

Yeah, I think the company I work for is like a really big ecommerce company, so there are a lot of people and it's always very open and flexible. So when you want to do sports in business hours, it's okay. When you, I don't know, want to work at home instead of working at the office also. Okay. We can work remotely now because of the pandemic and before that wasn't possible. So yeah, I think also depends on the company you're working with you're working in. When you work for a really small company, then maybe you need to be at the office like the whole week. Yeah, I really like it.

**Interviewer (me)**

So it does have to do with the size of the company?

**Interviewee 2**

Yeah, I think so. I don't know because I only worked for this company, but I think it's.

**Interviewer (me)**

Easier and the culture, maybe.

**Interviewee 2**

Yeah.

**Interviewee 2**

But other I don't know.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

# Appendix 4: Interview with Interviewee 3

**Interviewee 3:**
Age: 53
Industry: Consumer goods
Company: Unilever (Unilever Innovation Center Wageningen, The Netherlands)
Role: Finance site controller (accountant)

Transcript:
**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, so let's start. What is your age?

**Interviewee 3**
My age is 53.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.And what industry do you work in?

**Interviewee 3**
In the consumer industry? It's like it's unilever and it's for foods and home personal care.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And can you briefly tell me your role and describe your responsibility?

**Interviewee 3**
I have a split role, and my role is site controller of Unilever Innovation Center Wageningen B.V. and financial business partner for operations within Unilever Innovation Center Wageningen B.V..

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And you're an accountant, right?

**Interviewee 3**
Yes, financial accountant.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And how much remote work do you do and how long have you been working remotely?

**Interviewee 3**
I think with the COVID. Before the COVID I work five days on the office, and after the COVID I'm working two days at the office and three days at home.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And do all your colleagues do the same?

**Interviewee 3**
Most of them, yes, indeed.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And let's see. So three days from home, you said, and two days from the office. And before COVID you never work remotely?

**Interviewee 3**
Almost never. Sometimes one day, but almost I went every time to the office.

**Interviewer (me)**
The standard was going to the office.

**Interviewee 3**

The standard was going to the office, indeed. Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, and what does your team look like?

**Interviewee 3**

My team look like we have several business groups, like what I said, home personal care and nutrition and also health and wellness and that kind of things. And I think my group was like five, six, and now it's because we split it more in business groups, what I said, like nutrition and home personal care. And now we are only with three.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. And those three people have one manager.

**Interviewee 3**

Those two people have one manager.

**Interviewer (me)**

So you together with somebody else yeah.

**Interviewee 3**

Together with somebody else are reporting to a manager.

**Interviewer (me)**

And that's for your category, basically?

**Interviewee 3**

It's not all a category because it's a laboratory, right? It's like an R and D center. And it's more or less like we have like five big R and D centers and also within the R D centers now we are going more to business groups. Like in America we have a lot of PC personal care and also in India and in UK, we have also a lot of home care and personal care and health care, that kind of things. Where I'm in is more or less like R and D, like General. It means the site, what I'm doing is your site is also, like what I said earlier, an operations. And it means we make a lot of costs like depreciation, like maintenance on the site. And we have also a balance sheet with a P&L for a company, and that company is Unilever Innovation Center Wageningen B.V.. And that's where I'm site controller of.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, and your boss is only the manager of you and your colleague?

**Interviewee 3**

Or does he also my boss is Global Site controller. It means he is the manager. He is the boss of all the. R & D sites,

**Interviewer (me)**

Also in the US then?

**Interviewee 3**

Also in the US. For finance.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewee 3**

Finance, R D.

**Interviewer (me)**

He basically has little groups. So you and your colleague, maybe three others that are in another group, and you all basically interact together, right?

**Interviewee 3**

Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewee 3**

Indeed.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, perfect. Then we come to the second part of the interview. Here I will ask you some questions related to your manager's behavior in a remote environment. So when you're working remotely, what is your manager doing well?

**Interviewee 3**

What my manager is doing well. My manager is doing well, almost every day he's calling and he's asking how it's going. And for example, when we have something, what we must do all and what I mean, what we must do all is all the sites, all the R and D sites. Then he's going through or he's going to talk with you about that and what I'm thinking in that kind of things, he has a good communication.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, so he communicates well in terms of checking up upon you?

**Interviewee 3**

Yeah. Absolutely.

**Interviewer (me)**

And would you say this is also, like, in terms of support? So he's showing support.

**Interviewee 3**

It's more or less like how do you say it? It's more or less that he's calling you. How do you say it... ('Hoe het met je gaat' which means how its going with you.)

**Interviewer (me)**

How you're doing?

**Interviewee 3**

Yeah how you're doing. But sometimes when you have something, then sometimes it's worse. I mean, that the communication is worse. I don't know. It's difficult to explain in English, maybe, but he's good in communication. How are you in that kind of things? But sometimes when you have a problem, then... (says 'dan is het moeilijker' in Dutch, which means then it gets more difficult.

**Interviewer (me)**

Then it gets more difficult.

**Interviewee 3**

Then it gets more difficult. And sometimes he doesn't know it also, and he must first he must have a look at it or and then, yeah, it's it's difficult to to tell.

**Interviewer (me)**

So it's more like he he doesn't possess the technical knowledge or that he he doesn't really have the time to have a look at it.

**Interviewee 3**
I think the time yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah, absolutely.

**Interviewer (me)**
Would you say this is because he's maybe managing too many people?

**Interviewee 3**
I think, yeah, absolutely. He's managing too many people. And that's why I'm telling you he's more or less more like how are you and that kind of things. How do you say it in English? That he...

**Interviewer (me)**
Small talk. Small talk?

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah, small talk. More and less for the small talk than if you have a problem.

**Interviewer (me)**
So maybe like a people manager, maybe.

**Interviewee 3**
Absolutely. That's what I want to say. Indeed.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And do you have other things that he's doing well that pops up to your mind?

**Interviewee 3**
Um, no, not no, I don't think so. No. That's more or less in two. There are two things for him. The first, what I told you, and the second, that sometimes you need more backup from him, and he doesn't give you that backup.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 3**
And you can say also okay, you must do your own job and you must ask other people and that's also what I'm doing. But sometimes you ask him things and if he doesn't know it, then he said, yeah, you must go to someone else to ask how do you say that? Then your feeling with him is like okay, I'm going to do it, but I hoped you would have helped me with it, right, you would have helped me.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, yeah, okay. And how do you think he can improve it?

**Interviewee 3**
I think, because what you say is very people manager, but with small talks, but maybe more listening and maybe take some more time for you. I think that's the best way, listening and more time and creating more time for you, because most of the time he doesn't have time. And he said, I must go to another meeting, and then you are maybe five or ten minutes talking with him, and then he must go to another meeting. And it's like planning. Also like, okay, can we plan something? Maybe it's also something for my responsibility, but planning something with him from my side, but also from his side and I'm not doing it, but also he is not doing it. It's a little bit like between right?

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah, nobody takes the responsibility to ...

**Interviewee 3**
Absolutely.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
So we already basically discussed it. What he's not doing well... Do you have anything to add or do you think you've mentioned

**Interviewee 3**
I've mentioned it, if I'm honest, because yes, he's a good people manager with the small talks, how are you? And that kind of things. And if there's something, he explains it, but with work related things, sometimes you must push him because he's very busy with all kind of things and he doesn't have time and that kind of stuff, you must push him and you must make yeah, it's also my responsibility, but also his responsibility because he's your boss, right. He can help you also with it if you have questions.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, all right, what do you think about the communication between your manager and you?

**Interviewee 3**
I think the communication is going well, but what I said earlier, maybe also from my side is also a weakness that I must more ask him or make some appointments with him so that I'm coming in his agenda. Right? And from his side and that's where we are talking about from his side. It's also that he must make more time or that he say to me okay, but I don't have time now because I must go to another meeting but I'm going to call you tomorrow morning at nine, for example and then we can have a talk about it.

**Interviewer (me)**
He also doesn't really feel the urge or the necessity of no, you must.

**Interviewee 3**
Say it more several times to him, then he's going to feel the urgency, but it takes some time. I see, and sometimes it's not too late, but sometimes, in my opinion, I'm saying then, come on, I've waited two days and in that two days I was already finished, for example. Right, but it takes more than two days.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. So what can he do to improve the communication? You would say you've mentioned it a few times.

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah, more or less. Say, okay, Martino, if he has no time, if he must go to a meeting, what I said earlier, say to me, Martino, I'm going to call you tomorrow morning at nine. Do you have time? Then we plan something and then we go through it.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 3**
Through the problem or what else?

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah, okay, clear. Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

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And then something completely different. Do you feel like you're being micromanaged when you're working remote?

**Interviewee 3**
No, I'm honest in that kind of things, it's not micromanagement.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, so when he checks up on you, it's genuine and he wants to see how it goes or about the status.

**Interviewee 3**
And sometimes he's calling only to have what you were saying also to have a small talk, and it's not micromanagement from him, but because he's not saying what are you doing now? And the kind of things but no, I'm honest to that there is no micromanagement.

**Interviewer (me)**
And why do you think...

**Interviewee 3**
With my boss now is not micromanagement? Sorry?

**Interviewer (me)**
And why do you think he is not micromanaging? You?

**Interviewee 3**
Because he is not every time calling me and ask me what to do and also say you must do this, this and this, because I know what to do and he's knowing also what I'm doing.

**Interviewer (me)**
So you would say this maybe it's already working well.

**Interviewee 3**
It's working well, absolutely. It's like an example that I had to do statutory reporting. And if I'm honest, I did it very well because he said it also. Martino, my expectation, I was very glad with it because you did it very well and that's why also how do you say it in a Dutch word like 'vertrouwen' (Dutch word for trust)?

**Interviewer (me)**
Trust.

**Interviewee 3**
Trust, yeah. There is a trust between him and me. If I'm telling him I must do this, this and this that, I'm going to do it also within some time, not always directly, but within time where I must do it.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
We basically discussed this one already as well, but do you get enough support while working remotely? So you basically mentioned that yes, you get enough support, but what do I want to say? But he is not really getting into the problem, so he doesn't really always have a solution for it.

**Interviewee 3**
But the thing is also he tried also to push a little bit, like okay, when I can't help you, do you have someone else who can? And what I want to say is I know a lot of people also and also a lot of people in other unilever finance and also with a lot of knowledge. And what he's saying to me then also, Martino, if you have a question, go and ask him. Sometimes I'm doing it by myself and then I'm saying, okay, boss, I'm going to someone else. I think he knows it and then he can help me. That kind of things. And how do you

say it? He's also pushing a little bit like, okay, ask your network. It's a network, right? Because you know a lot of people also with finance knowledge, and if you don't know something, go to your network and ask them within unilever it's what I mean?

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, but even though he cannot always solve it, you do feel the support.

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah, am, that's true. If he can't help me right away, then I feel the support that he's going to ask it maybe to another one or that we are doing it together and ask someone that's. Absolutely. Sometimes he's a little bit like how do you say 'eigenwijs'? Stubborn. Yeah, stubborn. But I'm also stubborn. He said it also to me. Yeah, you are also stubborn. But okay, never mind. But maybe it's also good that you are a little bit stubborn.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah, I think so. My opinion, yes. Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
And does your manager's behavior affect your daily productivity and performance?

**Interviewee 3**
No, absolutely not.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And why not?

**Interviewee 3**
That's what I'm saying earlier. If he can't help me and it's something difficult, then I know where to go to and if I'm coming back to him and push him. For example, I've asked some people, but they don't know. Boss, do you know some people? Let's ask them and then he's helping me, but first I'm trying to do myself.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, clear. And what can your manager do overall to improve your productivity?

**Interviewee 3**
Whoa. Yeah, that's a difficult one, to raise my productivity, but to yes, something what I said earlier, sometimes not let me wait for a few days, but make good appointments directly to solve a problem and not wait for a couple of days. That's a good one. It's more and less what I told you earlier, directly to each other. Make an appointment so that you can solve a problem within one or two days and not within three or four days, and then your productivity is going up because you can do more.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, so it's like a bottleneck, basically.

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah, kind of.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, all right. And are you given the possibility to give feedback to your manager on him as a manager of your team?

**Interviewee 3**
If I'm giving him feedback?

**Interviewer (me)**
Are you given the possibility to give feedback to your manager?

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah, absolutely.

**Interviewer (me)**
When? How often?

**Interviewee 3**
Not so often, but sometimes I'm saying it also to him, but because he's a very busy person and he has like five different R and D centers and there are also people, finance people. That's why sometimes you say it to him, but yeah, maybe it's going in and out (so the boss doesn't listen), or maybe he said, okay, thank you very much and I'm going to do something with it. But that's difficult for me. He's trying it. That's what I'm thinking. He's trying to do it.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, so sometimes he asks for feedback.

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah, sometimes he asks Feedback Martino, how's going? And he does it also to the other groups.

**Interviewer (me)**
And do you have formal feedback moments as well, like functioneringsgesprekken (Dutch word for performance reviews)?

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah, but it's two times in a year. It's one time in the whole year and one time at the end of the year. But most of the times at the end of the year, you are going to write down your own story and it means what did you do last year and how did you think it went well or not? Or what went wrong, what can we do better? And that kind of things. And in the half year is most of the times, okay, the second half year, there is coming a project. Do you want to come in that project? Because we need you, for example, or you can help me with it and that kind of things. And that's most of the time, the half year project of the half year. Feedback. Feedback.

**Interviewee 3**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right. Then we're at part three, which is employee satisfaction. Important side note, I'm going to talk about the manager and the remote manager. So, first question, do you think your manager is a good manager?

**Interviewee 3**
Ah, people manager. Yes, manager half.

**Interviewer (me)**
Why?

**Interviewee 3**
That's what I also mentioned earlier. Sometimes he's a little bit like he's too busy with running the five different R and D centers in the world. That's why his job is the global site controller. And sometimes it's too much and then he forgets often also the important things, what can be locally in the Netherlands or UK or that kind of and it's not only for me, but it can be also for other site controllers, for R and D centers.

**Interviewer (me)**
So you would say a lack of time is undermining him being a good manager.

**Interviewee 3**

Yeah, but not only a lack of time, but I'm thinking also but that's difficult to say and it's difficult. But what I'm thinking, it's also that it's like what you said earlier, like a manager, he asks a lot, how are you going? And that kind of things, instead of the work related things.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, clear.

**Interviewer (me)**
And just as a side note, the manager you have now, did you have him before COVID as well?

**Interviewee 3**
No, I didn't have him before COVID. There was another one.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 3**
Most of the times that kind of jobs are like two years, three years, and then they must go for another job.

**Interviewer (me)**
Then they go higher up...

**Interviewee 3**
Higher up, or maybe, how do you say, 'ze functioneren niet goed' (Dutch for they dont do well in the job)?

**Interviewer (me)**
They don't do well on the job.

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah, okay. Absolutely. That kind of things.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. Yeah, that was just a curiosity. And do you think your manager is a good remote manager?

**Interviewee 3**
I think it's the same. It's the same as what he did. There is no difference for you. I don't feel the difference. Maybe for other because you must see it like this. If I'm going to the office, I'm seeing him there. But not everyone from the other R D centers, like in the United States, in the UK, in India, in China, are seeing him. Right. And they only have him remote. I can't speak for them, but I'm not seeing the difference.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah, that makes a lot of sense.

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Because you're there with him. But at the same time, are you working a lot? When you are at the Wageningen facility, are you working a lot from the office or are you also walking around and working from other places?

**Interviewee 3**
I have two sides. I'm working from Wageningen and I'm working from the Weena (Rotterdam office).

**Interviewer (me)**

Yes, I know, but I mean, let's say you're working in Wageningen today. Are you working from one office or are you moving around to see other people as well?

**Interviewee 3**
I'm half-half. I'm also seeing other people because I'm also the business partner of the operations manager.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And that might also be a reason why for you there's no difference.

**Interviewee 3**
No, indeed.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. Yeah, that's clear.

**Interviewee 3**
It's not a 100% function for me, for site controlling and its also a function... the site controller function is also a function that you can do a lot on experience. Right. And only the new things, what you must learn or the new things that are coming, that's something where you need sometimes your global site controller. And that's why I'm telling you it's like between yeah. For me, there is no difference. Absolutely.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay and are you overall satisfied with your manager's capabilities to manage you remotely?

**Interviewee 3**
Yes, but the only thing what I said earlier, that sometimes that he can make more time for you.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, clear.

**Interviewee 3**
But for the rest, he's intellectual enough.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
And are you overall satisfied working remotely?

**Interviewee 3**
Yes and no. No, because you don't see a lot of your colleagues often anymore, and everything you must ask by teams like video. And sometimes it's better to have a meeting directly on the location than that's what I'm feeling in a video meeting. Right. But for the rest, if I'm honest, it goes well, but my feeling is more or less like I'm sitting liever... (Duth word for 'rather') rather in the office than at home and working HL.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right, so the overall experience is good, but you rather work from home, from the office.

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. All right. Well, then we've come to the last question. This is basically a bonus question. Is there something you would like to add to the answers you've given of which you think could be valuable to the research?

**Interviewee 3**
Um.

**Interviewer (me)**
Could be something something related to remote work in general. It could be related to one of the subtopics basically we discussed.

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah, but I think I gave all the answers, and I don't think I can add directly one to it because what I'm saying earlier, from your boss perspective, but also from the HR perspective, is more or less that agile working is nice, remote working. But I miss the interactive on the site with people. And yeah, maybe it's also because my experience is also I'm working more than 30 years at Unilever. And that's why your feeling said it's more or less that working on the site going to people directly instead of calling them, or because, you know, also if you are calling them, they don't have time, but when they're on the office, you knock on the door and they make time. And that's a little bit. Maybe that's something to add, but I don't know if that's something you can add in your report.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah, no, absolutely. That's basically it has to do with asymmetrical communication, because you send somebody a message with a question and you don't know if the person is going to respond, either right now in five minutes or in an hour.

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah, if I'm talking with a lot of people, and most of the people, like 80% is telling the same thing.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. Yeah, perfect.

**Interviewer (me)**
Well, thanks a lot.

**Interviewee 3**
You're welcome. Bye.

Transcript part 2:

**Interviewer (me)**

All right, so there was one important question I forgot to ask. So that's why I'm doing it now. We discussed micromanaging, and we discussed that you are not feeling that you're being micromanaged. How was this for you during the pandemic? So the first really, like, the first period. So the first few weeks, the first few months, um.

**Interviewee 3**
It seems yeah, it's a little bit strange, but in the beginning, it it was a little bit weird, right? Because then at the beginning, you had a lot of contact, and you had also a lot of meetings, but more and less the meetings went about, how is it because we have several countries, right? Like what I told you. Like China, like America. And then we had a lot of discussions, or not discussions, but how are you and how is it in the US, and how is the pandemic, and how is it going? Can you go back to your office already? And that kind of things. More or less. It's not micromanagement, but it's more like what I said to you in Dutch, like, 'hoe gaat het met je, en hoe gaat het in jullie land' (which is Dutch for 'how are you, how are things going in your country') and that kind of things. And not only about work, but more the personal questions.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right, but did you feel like the work you were doing that you were being checked upon? Because now you don't feel so did you feel this during COVID So in really, like, the first phase of full remote working?

**Interviewee 3**
No, not really. No. Absolute no. Absolutely not. No. What I told you, it was more like after a while, the personal stuff was a little bit too much. Right. It was not the micromanagement the same as now. There was no micromanagement. Also the beginning of the pandemic? No, absolutely not.

**Interviewer (me)**
So your boss wasn't checking on you if you were really working?

**Interviewee 3**
No. no.

**Interviewer (me)**
Not at all. So there was already they already trusted you?

**Interviewee 3**
Yeah, they already trusted us, indeed. Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, well, then that's it already that was the only question.

**Interviewee 3**
Okay, perfect. Thank you.

## Appendix 5: Interview with Interviewee 4

**Interviewee 4:**
Age: 26
Industry: HR services
Company: Rvdb
Role: Recruitment consultant

Transcript:
**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. How old are you?

**Interviewee 4**
I am 26 years old.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And what industry do you work in?

**Interviewee 4**
In HR? Human Resources.

**Interviewer (me)**
And what does your company exactly do?

**Interviewee 4**
We... We have interim professionals, and we do the mediation for different companies and place them at the company.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. All right, perfect. And can you briefly tell me your role and describe your responsibilities?

**Interviewee 4**
Yes, I am a recruitment consultant, so I am responsible for the mediation of our own interim professionals to place them at different companies. So I have contact with all the companies and with the candidates, with our own interim professionals. And yeah, that's my role.

**Interviewer (me)**
And how much remote work do you do and how long have you been working remotely?

**Interviewee 4**
How much?

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah, how much?

**Interviewee 4**
How much? 100% for now, and I'm working now for two months remotely in Barcelona.

**Interviewer (me)**
So this is temporarily, right?

**Interviewee 4**
Yes, for only three months.

**Interviewer (me)**
And before this, did you work completely from the office?

**Interviewee 4**

No, in the Netherlands, I work hybrid, so it's like 60% from home and 40% at the office.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. And how long have you been doing this? So the hybrid model.

**Interviewee 4**

For now in the Netherlands for three months and the other three months from Barcelona. So remotely.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. And did you work remotely before the pandemic?

**Interviewee 4**

No, never.

**Interviewer (me)**

Not at all?

**Interviewee 4**

Not at all.

**Interviewer (me)**

Zero.

**Interviewee 4**

Okay. Hybrid. I work hybrid before the pandemic, also hybrid. Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

So also sometimes from home. And was it at a different employer, different company?

**Interviewee 4**

Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. So you do have experience working hybrid also before COVID Yeah, but not so.

**Interviewee 4**

Much as I have now.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, but you did work from home before?

**Interviewee 4**

Sometimes.

**Interviewer (me)**

And how often? Was it sporadically, or was it every week, like, two days?

**Interviewee 4**

It was once in a month, I think, so it was not that much, but sometimes.

**Interviewer (me)**

And why did they do this?

**Interviewee 4**

Actually? Yeah, they give the opportunity to do it, so yeah, I take that opportunity.

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**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, that's cool.

**Interviewee 4**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, and what does your team look like?

**Interviewee 4**
My team looks like... We are with three persons, and the other two persons are working from the Netherlands, and I'm the only one that works remotely.

**Interviewer (me)**
And those have the exact same job title. So both recruitment consultants.

**Interviewee 4**
Consultants, yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
And then you have one manager that manages you.

**Interviewee 4**
One manager yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. All right, so this is the second part, basically, here I will ask you some questions related to your manager's behavior in a remote environment. When you're working remotely, what is your manager doing well?

**Interviewee 4**
Doing well... I think the most thing that she is doing well is speak to me like, every two weeks. She plans a meeting every two weeks and checks in like, Are you okay? Are there things that doesn't work? Or ask me some questions about that. And I think that's the thing I prefer the most about her acting as a manager.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, so she checks in upon you every two weeks. And is this enough for you?

**Interviewee 4**
Yes, because our team is partly self managing. So with our team, we check in every day, and she checks in up to me once in two weeks. For me, it's enough because we had a lot of contact with the other colleagues in the team.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, so the contact between you and your direct colleagues is more than with your manager.

**Interviewee 4**
Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. Other things that she's doing well.

**Interviewee 4**

Yes. I think another thing is that she gives me freedom to do my thing, and for me, that works well, because I don't like if she controls me or checks me every minute or every hour, and I think, yeah, she's doing well about that.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewee 4**

She gives me the feeling like she trusts me.

**Interviewer (me)**

Exactly. There's a lot of trust. And she lets you do your thing because she knows you do it well.

**Interviewee 4**

Yes

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

And when you're working remotely, what is your manager not doing well, or what can she improve?

**Interviewee 4**

I think one big thing is that she when we are in a meeting, all of them are at the office, and I'm the only one on the screen, so it's difficult for me to interrupt and say something. And I think she could manage that better, so I can be better involved in the meeting. And I think that's a thing she ehm... 'dat heeft ze niet door' (which is Dutch for 'she is not aware').

**Interviewer (me)**

She's not aware.

**Interviewee 4**

Yeah, she's not aware. Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, so you think the challenge you basically face because you're here, she could manage it, she could help you, support you a bit more in the challenge.

**Interviewee 4**

Yeah, I think so.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. Yeah. And then we go a little more specific. What do you think about the communication between your manager and you?

**Interviewee 4**

I think it's good because she asks a lot of questions about my situations, like, does it work for you or are there things that are not working or yeah, I think the communication is good, and if there is a problem, I can always call her. So I think the communication is good. Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. Would there be something that you could improve even, or are you satisfied?

**Interviewee 4**

No, I think I'm satisfied. Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**

All right. And do you feel like you're being micromanaged when working remote? You already mentioned it.

**Interviewee 4**

No, not at all. Because she lets me free and I can do my thing. No, it's not micromanagement. No.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewee 4**

Not at all.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. And do you feel like you get enough support while working remotely? You also basically mentioned it.

**Interviewee 4**

Yes. For most of the time. Yes. But the thing that I mentioned about what she could do better, the thing in meetings, I think she could manage that better, like, give me the opportunities to say something or more involve me in the conversation. I think that's the only thing I can...

**Interviewer (me)**

Think of.

**Interviewee 4**

Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, so nothing else in terms of support?

**Interviewee 4**

Not at all. No. I think the rest is fine.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. And do you feel like your manager's behavior affects your daily productivity and performance?

**Interviewee 4**

Yes, I think so, because I'm working with the feeling that she trusts me and she gives me the freedom again so I can do my thing. And that works for me. It's not working for everybody, but for me, yes. So it affects definitely, I think.

**Interviewer (me)**

It affects it in a good way.

**Interviewee 4**

In a good way yes. Because if she would micromanage me, I think that doesn't work for me.

**Interviewer (me)**

No, okay, yeah, that's clear. And could there be something your manager can do to improve your productivity, for example?

**Interviewee 4**

Wow difficult question. I don't know. I think the way we are working, it works for me. And yeah. Do you have an example of what do you mean? Do you mean like she checks in more or she gave me...

**Interviewer (me)**

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Yeah, it could be something in this case, I wouldn't say micromanaging less because it's not happening. No, but it could be more support or better communication or something else like this. But maybe you already feel like your productivity is on a very high level.

**Interviewee 4**
Yeah, it is, I think, and it's also because of my team and we checked in by each other every day. Like if there's something happening at the day, they can call me and we help each other. So we are really self managing. Not at all, but partly and yeah, I think that's fine and working.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay yeah, no it makes sense. Like, when you have problems, you rather go now you first go to your colleague and then you go to the manager.

**Interviewee 4**
If it is a big problem and we can't solve it within the team, then we go to the manager. Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And are you given the possibility to give feedback to your manager on her as a manager of your team?

**Interviewee 4**
I give her feedback?

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah.

**Interviewee 4**
If I feel that?

**Interviewer (me)**
Are you given the possibility?

**Interviewee 4**
Poeh. I think so. If there is something, it doesn't work for me, I could tell her, yes, she gave me the opportunity. Yes, I think it doesn't happen.

**Interviewer (me)**
Hasn't happened yet.

**Interviewee 4**
Hasn't happened yet.

**Interviewer (me)**
But are there certain, like maybe two times a year you have a 'functioneringsgesprek' (Dutch for performance review) , for example, or do you have something like this, or is it more informal? Does she ask you about feedback, for example?

**Interviewee 4**
Yes, it's informal because when I came here before that she tells me, okay, send me when there is a problem or something else, call me, tell me. So I feel the space to do that, but it is not necessary for now, but yeah, I think I could do that.

**Interviewer (me)**
And does she also actively ask for feedback?

**Interviewee 4**
No not directly, no.

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**Interviewer (me)**

So it's more like the environment is a trusted one and you feel like you could give her feedback.

**Interviewee 4**

Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. Yeah. Then we come to employee satisfaction. Here I'm just going to ask you if you're satisfied with certain stuff. Small side note here, I distinguish manager from a remote manager. So because you experience your manager both from the office and now completely remote, I will be curious to see what you think.

**Interviewee 4**

Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

So do you think your manager is a good manager? So a traditional manager in the office?

**Interviewee 4**

I think that is a difficult question because I told you about the self managing team and I think that is the future in every company. So I think she is a good manager, but yeah, it's in another form.

**Interviewer (me)**

Because of the self managing.

**Interviewee 4**

Yeah. I don't know if that is an answer on your question.

**Interviewer (me)**

And purely if you take the self managing team away from your manager, if you purely look on how your manager is acting, on her behavior, on how she's helping you, et cetera, would you say she's a good manager?

**Interviewee 4**

Yes, I think so, because it's really informal and it's very low key. So I can ask her everything, tell her everything. She's not acting like she's my manager. It's like she is a colleague. And I think that's really working for me. Yeah. So I think for me, she's a really good manager. Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. And would you say she is a good remote manager?

**Interviewee 4**

Um, yeah. For me, yes. Because of all the facts I told you before, she gave me the freedom. She is not micromanaging. That's also an important thing. She also wants to celebrate success. So if you do something good, she tells you explicitly. That you are doing good. And I think that's an important thing. In my job, that's also working for me, so yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. So that way she gives you the acknowledgment. You also need the confirmation.

**Interviewee 4**

Yeah. I think that's also part of a managing job, that you yeah... 'je belicht ook de successen' (Dutch for 'you shine light on the successes as well')

**Interviewer (me)**

Not only what goes wrong.

**Interviewee 4**

Yeah, right. I think a lot of managers do that wrong. They only tell you when you're doing something not good.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. That makes sense.

**Interviewee 4**

Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

And okay. This question was basically answered. Are you overall satisfied working remotely?

**Interviewee 4**

I love it. No, I think in my job I have to do a lot of calls, so it feels for me like it's different from someone who do only projects and only have to do tip it out or work on your own. And for me, it's the difference in the calls and talking to Dutch people the whole day. So it doesn't feel really like I'm working abroad. So for me, yeah, it works out.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. Then I have a bonus question. Is there something you would like to add to the answers you've given of which you think it could be valuable to the research?

**Interviewee 4**

Yes, there's one thing. I think what works for me is not working for everybody. So for me works freedom and trust. And I'm not working fine at micromanaging, but another one is different and maybe works good when they control you or just check in every day. Like, then you're feeling the....

**Interviewer (me)**

Pressure.

**Interviewee 4**

Pressure. So that's the thing I would give you for your 'onderzoek (which means research) research. Sorry. Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

Perfect. It was perfect. All right, well, thanks a lot.

**Interviewee 5:**
Age: 28
Industry: Professional services
Company: E&Y (accounting firm)
Role: Staff audit member

Transcript:

**Interviewer (me)**
All right, let's start. What is your age?

**Interviewee 5**
I'm 28 years old.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. What industry do you work in?

**Interviewee 5**
I work in accounting.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right.

**Interviewer (me)**
And can you briefly tell me your role and describe your responsibilities?

**Interviewee 5**
Yes, I am a staff audit member. In a big team, we always work in different teams, depending on the client and the assignment at the moment. So sometimes you work in a team for eight weeks, sometimes shorter or longer. So that depends. So you constantly change who you work with. And my job is to how do you say that? The control of the accounting of other firms. So other firms hire us to do the control.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
So make sure that everything is correct and that there are no mistakes.

**Interviewee 5**
Yeah like more the 'uitvoerende' (Dutch for 'operational') task

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. The operating side of it. Okay.

**Interviewee 5**
Like, the first one that checks everything and then a second level checks, third level. So I'm more detail checker. And it's getting more and more macro.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. You're on the details, and then it gets....

**Interviewee 5**
Yes less details, but more helicopter view.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. All right, clear. And how much remote work do you do and how long have you been working remotely?

**Interviewee 5**
Before COVID I never worked remote, and then COVID started, it was 100%, of course, in 2020. Since I think 21, 22, we went more to the office, like, sometimes one day a week, sometimes two days a week. It depended also on your team. Not in every team everyone wanted to come. So that was also really different with who you are working, but still some days at home.

**Interviewer (me)**
So the first period was fully remote, and then it went to 60, 80% from home. Basically three, four days.

**Interviewee 5**
Mmm mmm (confirms what I said).

**Interviewer (me)**
All right. This question is already answered. You did not work remotely before the pandemic, and what did your team look like?

**Interviewee 5**
Yes, like I said before, the teams were always different. Sometimes I was working in a team for only four people, but with big assignments, we had, like, teams of more than 20. So it was really different per assignment. So I can't say a specific number on that.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, clear. And how did it work? Who managed you? For example, did you have a different manager every time?

**Interviewee 5**
Yes, per assignment, different one.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 5**
Because staff audit and you have, like, a senior and above the senior, you have, like, a manager and also as a senior manager. So when you have a smaller team, then you're also in direct contact with the manager a lot with the big teams, more with the senior, and the senior collaborates with the manager.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. So the bigger the team, the higher the chance you get a senior to get in contact with.

**Interviewee 5**
And small teams, you only are, like, with three people and a partner. So, like, four people, then the three of you always do a lot of discussion together. Or sometimes it's bigger groups. You do, like, subgroups at subgroup that controls only, like, the cash of the company, then you're for a week, probably doing that with only three people of 20.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 5**
So you totally fight (?) between the group sometimes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, then we'll take that into consideration because if I understand it correctly, you had a lot of changes of managers basically.

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**Interviewee 5**

Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**

You have more, like project managers than a definite manager.

**Interviewee 5**

Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**

Right. Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

All right. So when you are working remotely, what were your managers doing? Well, I know it's a bit more difficult because you had a lot of different managers, but when you, for example, compare the first phase so the first phase of the pandemic to let's take 2020 until the half. First half? Yeah, until the first half of 2021. What did they do?

**Interviewee 5**

Well, what I like to do was to kick off every morning and then just discuss on, okay, where are we standing? What are we going to do today? And then I liked it when they left you alone and be like, okay, I'm available for questions. So not that you're constantly in contact. So I like just a kickoff of the day or maybe like, on the end of the day that you discuss, okay, this is what I did. This I couldn't do yet because I didn't have the time. Took a little bit longer or something like that, because, for example, I also had teams, and they wanted to sit all day with the camera on. Didn't really like because it felt like Big Brother. It was not that nice if you go to the toilet or something, it doesn't feel nice that your camera has to be on all the time. And other people were like, also with their sounds almost also annoying because then you hear them typing a lot or sneezing and doing things so that I didn't like for me personally, and I like to have a few checkpoints, but not during the day like ehm... that they are disturbing you the whole day.

**Interviewer (me)**

Yeah. So it was nice that when you had a feeling of being independent, that's what you like to start with team.

**Interviewee 5**

And discuss, okay, you're going to do this today. You're going to do this. I think that's a good thing. So everyone is on the same page and you know where everyone stands. But you can also do it a little bit too extreme because when you're in the office, you're also not standing over someone's shoulder the whole time.

**Interviewer (me)**

Yeah. And yeah, that comes to what did you think your managers didn't do well? So can you explain a little bit further what wasn't nice for you? A part of the part of the zoom sessions or team sessions?

**Interviewee 5**

Yeah, I can't really think of a good example right now. Yeah, not like something really specific during the day or something. The only thing that really was annoying was to have a call all day long.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewee 5**

Yeah, that was the only thing for me.

**Interviewer (me)**

You had a call all day long? (didnt completely understand what she had said before about the call, so now I understood)

**Interviewee 5**
Oh, yes. Some teams wanted that that you were constantly like this, like, how we are now (video calling). Whoa, that was really annoying. So people kept their sound on, then you heard them sneeze and typing, and you feel like, obligated just to go pee. Always on.

**Interviewer (me)**
I think you also briefly mentioned it. Did you say that they were checking on you?

**Interviewee 5**
Yeah, it feels like you're checked because otherwise you would want that.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah, exactly.

**Interviewee 5**
People are like, oh, yeah. Then you still have the feeling that you're together, but it feels like being controlled the whole time for me.

**Interviewer (me)**
And who initiated this initiative? Who started it?

**Interviewee 5**
The senior initiated it so that it.

**Interviewer (me)**
Was basically the manager.

**Interviewee 5**
Yeah, but maybe the manager told him to do that or I don't know how it really went. That can also be the case.

**Interviewer (me)**
And that was the first phase, I suppose.

**Interviewee 5**
No, much later, because in the first, I was only in this team, I think, in 2021. So already when COVID was getting better okay. Like, one team that did that.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. Yeah, it was only with one of the teams, so a certain period, certain project. Okay.

**Interviewee 5**
Most of the other teams did, like, a morning kick off or, like, end of the day 'samenvatting' (Dutch for 'summary', meeting at the end of the day to tell what you did today).

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah, I see, like, a summary, basically. What did you guys do today? What did you finish?

**Interviewee 5**
Yeah like if we needed any help, or okay, if you have problems, then you did like, a zoom call. I'm like, okay, let's check it out right now, because you can share the screen and everything. And that was convenient for me.

**Interviewer (me)**

Yeah. And did you see a change over time? So gradually, the fact that you basically had COVID started fully remote all of a sudden, and then slowly going towards going to the office again, people being used to working remote, managers getting used to working remote. Did you see a change in the manager's behavior?

**Interviewee 5**
I think the biggest change was before COVID people were really stubborn about working at home only if you had a really specific exception, and now it's more common and more understandable, and people keep doing it, like, 50 50. So I think that's the big shift that now people see that it can work and it's not a bad thing to work from home.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. Okay. And did you also notice while working remote, did you see a difference, like, gradually like? Did your manager's behavior change when you compare, for example, you working remotely in 2020 to you working remotely at the end of 2021?

**Interviewee 5**
Yeah, I think there was, like, a change that people scheduled maybe their time differently, like go sporting in the afternoon, and then after that work again, and then work a little bit longer because they went sport like that. But not really. Not anything else, I think.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. All right.

**Interviewee 5**
Easier to manage your own time. If you want to do something in the afternoon, it's okay. If you just make sure you compensate it later that day.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. So they give you more freedom and flexibility.

**Interviewee 5**
Yes. If you let them know, okay. These hours I'm not available because I'm away, and then it was fine.

**Interviewer (me)**
And did they do this from the beginning or later?

**Interviewee 5**
I think later, because also in the beginning, it was not like anything was really open, so people were just at home.

**Interviewer (me)**
Makes sense yeah. Okay.

**Interviewee 5**
And maybe get more used to it and you see the advantages that it has.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. Okay. All right. And then I come to some questions that are a little more specific. So yeah. What do you think about the communication between your manager and you and your manager being the managers you've had, were there certain things you liked and disliked?

**Interviewee 5**
No, for me, the communication was well, because I think it also helped that there was not like, how do you say that? New on the job. So I knew everyone. I think maybe when you're new, it's a little bit harder to reach out, but for me, it wasn't a problem. I felt comfortable doing that, so yeah, for me, the communication went well.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 5**
I can imagine if you're just new on the job, you don't know everyone so good that you feel more obligated, maybe, about it.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. You feel like you're hesitating to reach out, basically.

**Interviewee 5**
Yeah and for me, it was like, I'm just going to call or send a message to ask them, call me when you have time.

**Interviewer (me)**
And was there something they could do to improve the communication? Was there something that you were like, yeah, I wish this would have been better?

**Interviewee 5**
No yes. Some managers are really busy, so they don't really have the time to call back soon. But in the office, it was also like that sometimes that they had a lot of meetings, so not really available to talk. For me, it's not that disturbing. I was like, yeah, just call me when you have time. I don't mind. I can do something else in the meantime.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And when they didn't have time, for example, did this affect your productivity and performance?

**Interviewee 5**
For me? Not because I had like a list of more items I could do. So I just laid one thing next to me until my question was answered and just went on to the other one.

**Interviewer (me)**
Clear. Okay. All right. And do you feel like you were being micromanaged when working remote?

**Interviewee 5**
Yes, I think... Yes. It also depended on the team, because some teams really have, like, a specific planning with everything detailed out, and then you have to update it every day. So that was really like, micro, and otherwise we're more loose. And then you have to update every time what the progress was of that step, like in progress done, available for second review.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. So it depended on the projects.

**Interviewee 5**
Yes at some projects, it was really micro. Other projects, maybe that you were involved a lot of years already, it was more loose okay. And maybe the big projects, the big clients, it was more micro because otherwise you might miss also steps that you don't really have an overview from who's doing what.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, so it was a bit close. Yeah. They monitored it close so that it had to go well, basically.

**Interviewee 5**
Yeah. So that we don't miss or skip a step or find out in the end that we missed a whole account.

**Interviewer (me)**
I see. Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. And for example, if you compare the projects you had in the beginning of the pandemic, basically, and towards the end, did you see a change in micromanaging? Was there a period that they micromanaged you more?

**Interviewee 5**
No, I don't feel like... No.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. So you wouldn't say that, for example, beginning of the pandemic, they micromanaged you more and then later it got less?

**Interviewer (me)**
No maybe in the beginning they more to find their own ways and stuff of what is a good thing to do, but not that they did it more like finding our ways in working from home.

**Interviewer (me)**
So they were finding their style of managing.

**Interviewee 5**
Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 5**
Also, like what is the best thing to do it? But not like that they controlled (very directly translated (Dutch to English) to say that someone is checking / micro-managing you) me more. Not like that.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. It was just their approach. They tried to change it.

**Interviewee 5**
Yes. What is the best approach for them?

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And did you feel like you got enough support while working remotely?

**Interviewee 5**
Yeah. From the managers, yes. But from E&Y (Employer), I felt like the support came late with equipment, like screens and that kind of stuff.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 5**
But that's not really something a manager can do about no.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And purely from the manager's perspective?

**Interviewee 5**
Yeah, that was good.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. Always when you had questions, they were available.

**Interviewee 5**
Yeah

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. Clear.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. At that time, what could your manager do to overall improve your productivity?

**Interviewee 5**
Maybe check in a lot that you don't get distracted. But I think it's also work the other way around that you get annoyed and maybe work less hard. So, for me, I don't mind sitting alone and being alone. Yeah. For me, it works fine. I think maybe at home I'm even more productive because at work, I'm going to chat a lot and we had, like, a ping pong table, so I went there for an hour every day. So maybe for me, it was even more productive because I was really focusing at work with no distractions. So yeah, for me, personally, it went well.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. So there weren't really things that they except for checking up upon you.

**Interviewee 5**
No

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. All right. And were you given the possibility to give feedback to your manager?

**Interviewee 5**
Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
And how often?

**Interviewee 5**
I think like, every four months or something.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
Every four months it was a formal type of feedback?

**Interviewee 5**
Yes we worked with 360 reviews. So they review me and I review them.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah...

**Interviewee 5**
And if you want to, or if someone asks you.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And did they also ask you, like, informally sometimes?

**Interviewee 5**
Yes, sometimes yes. They ask on what do you think we could do better? Or do you like how it's going now?

**Interviewer (me)**

And this was per project or...?

**Interviewee 5**

I think most of the people did that.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. Most of the managers during okay, clear. All right.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. Then we arrived to part three employee satisfaction. Here there's something that's very important. It's distinguishing a manager from a remote manager. A normal manager, a traditional manager, is obviously the office manager. So the manager you have at the office and that same person can also be a remote manager. And that's basically what happened in the pandemic. Do you think it's a bit harder because you didn't really have a manager and you had managers per project, but do you think most of the managers in general were good managers, traditional managers?

**Interviewee 5**

Yes, I think they were.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. And do you think they were ready to be a good remote manager?

**Interviewee 5**

Of course not ready because they didn't know it was happening, but when they had to be one, they did it good.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. Except for the things you already mentioned. But in general.

**Interviewee 5**

But I feel like the... Sorry, I had a call (got called during the interview). I feel like the managers did good, but I feel like the layer between the seniors did less good, but that's more like a personal thing, I think. But the managers managed really well for.

**Interviewer (me)**

Me, so the seniors didn't but the managers did?

**Interviewee 5**

They're not like they did bad, but I felt like the managers did better.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. Okay, makes sense. And why didn't the seniors perform well enough?

**Interviewee 5**

Basically yeah, I can't really explain why, but just the feeling I have, I felt like they were struggling more or having more, bigger workload. I don't know why.

**Interviewer (me)**

Because of working remote?

**Interviewee 5**

Yes. But also having more projects going on at once, maybe. And managers are more macro and the seniors more micro, so maybe that was also more of a struggle for them, that they had a lot of projects going on at the same time and they had to...

**Interviewer (me)**
To know all the details...

**Interviewee 5**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And were you overall satisfied with your manager's capabilities to work remotely?

**Interviewee 5**
Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 5**
I didn't really felt a big difference in the office or remote.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And why do you think is that?

**Interviewee 5**
Because I feel like I still got clear explanation from them about my tasks and what they expected from me. I think also because we had good communication and daily communication.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. So that basically caused you to be positive about have a positive overall experience... Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
And yeah. Are you overall satisfied working remotely? You basically said it a couple of times already but...?

**Interviewee 5**
Yes. I especially like that when I wake up, I'm already at the office. I don't have to get there with traffic and that's what I really like. And still I speak to my colleagues even when I'm at home daily, so I don't feel lonely. But other people might have. Yeah. I like the time advantage you have because when you're done. You're really done. And you're at home. You don't have to travel for another hour. That's what I like about it.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. Yeah, it makes sense.

**Interviewee 5**
Thats a big advantage in my eyes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Sorry? (Could not hear her well at that moment)

**Interviewee 5**
The biggest advantage for me, I think, almost 2 hours a day.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. And if you look at how would your experience look like, how satisfied would you be if your manager wouldn't be good enough of a manager? So if the communication wouldn't be that good, would you still be as satisfied to work remotely?

**Interviewee 5**

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Yes, because I like the working remote part, and if the manager is being good or bad, I will be like yeah, at the end, it's my issue, but I will do the best with the worst manager I can (she would make the best of it she meant).

**Interviewer (me)**
All right.

**Interviewee 5**
If the manager is worse remote, I think it will probably also be bad in real life.

**Interviewer (me)**
So you think if a manager is a bad remote manager, it's probably going to be a bad manager in general?

**Interviewee 5**
That's what I think.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right. Well, that's the end, basically. I have one bonus question. This is basically a question, a very broad one. Is there something you would like to add to the answers you've given that maybe you think at some point I thought about this, of which you think it could be valuable to the research?

**Interviewee 5**
It's not that I can think of right now, but if I think of anything, I will let you know.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right, sounds good.

**Interviewer (me)**
Well, thanks a lot then.

**Interviewee 6:**
Age: 28
Industry: Health care
Company: Maasstad Ziekenhuis (hospital)
Role: financial/insurance advisor

Transcript:
**Interviewer (me)**
All right. Yes. Let's start. Okay, so how old are you?

**Interviewee 6**
28 years old.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right. And what industry do you work in?

**Interviewee 6**
Healthcare. I work in a hospital.

**Interviewer (me)**
Clear. And can you briefly tell me your role and describe your responsibilities?

**Interviewee 6**
Yes, I'm working at the financial department of my hospital. I'm an advisor, advisor for nurses, doctors, et cetera. And actually I advise about how to register health care for patients to get the right bills to the insurance companies. So if a patient comes to the hospital and with a specific health care question, of course, everything needs to be register. Like consultations? Well, for example, yeah, everything needs to be register to get the right bills to the healthcare insurance. And it's a very complicated system in the Netherlands, the financial part of hospitals. And that's why we have advisors to help doctors to register all the right codes. And yeah, it's a Dutch system, so it's a bit complicated to explain for other countries and in English. But the Dutch system for healthcare registration is quite difficult and because it's not very easy for doctors to know everything, all the rules about it, we have advisors so they can help doctors, nurses, et cetera, to help register everything.

**Interviewer (me)**
So there are different types of advisors, probably legal advisors, et cetera. And you are a financial advisor, right?

**Interviewee 6**
Yes, I'm a financial advisor, yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 6**
And I'm specific based on (she means 'working on') the registration of healthcare people get, to get the right bill to send them to the healthcare insurances.

**Interviewer (me)**
So it's basically people's profiles, checking it and linking it with the right, just very briefly described. You try to link the profiles to the type of insurances as well and to make sure they get the right one?

**Interviewee 6**

Yeah, also but also, for example, if a patient comes to the hospital, the patient has a diagnosis and a treatment. And treatment can be a consultation, another consultation, telephone consultation, or maybe a surgery or something. And all that treatment together belongs to one diagnosis, and that is one package with a price. And that package needs to go to the healthcare insurance. And if someone comes to the hospital with another diagnosis, there is another package. And so there are a lot of healthcare packages with a lot of different prices. And actually, I advise doctors to registrate the right package of healthcare treatment so the right bills will be sent to the healthcare insurance. It's very complicated, but it's a specific Dutch system and yeah, people from other countries have no idea about it because it's so specific in our country and it's very hard to explain how it works, actually.

**Interviewer (me)**
No, I kind of get it. You basically work directly with the doctors to make sure the right bills get sent to the insurance companies, right?

**Interviewee 6**
Yes, exactly. The name of the Dutch healthcare system were actually the payments of a hospital system that called 'DBC'. Diagnosis... 'Diagnose-Behandel Combinatie', you say in Dutch. And this is 'diagnosis-treatment combination'. So the combination between the diagnosis and the treatment and that combination has a price. There are a lot of combination, a lot of prices. And yeah, I'm kind of an advisor to get the right combination and the right prices before we can send the bill to the health insurances.

**Interviewer (me)**
Clear. Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
And how much remote work do you do and how long have you been working remotely?

**Interviewee 6**
During COVID I was working remote full time, so all the time. And now after COVID, or actually there is still COVID, but we work like 50 50. So half of the time I work remote and half of the time I'm just working at location.

**Interviewer (me)**
So you can basically choose if you want three days at home or two days at home.

**Interviewee 6**
Yes. And if it's so that in one week I work fully from home, that's also fine.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, so you're completely free and flexible to do whatever you want basically.

**Interviewee 6**
Yeah, it's quite flexible actually. And because of COVID we work remote full time and after COVID, they permanently removed all the desks sorry,  half of the desks and the computers from the department. So also in the future we can't work full time at location anymore, so remote will stay at my work.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
Let's see. So you said now you work completely remote, basically, or 50 50. During COVID it was also like this 100%. And before COVID you were used to working completely from the office?

**Interviewee 6**
Yes, completely from the office. I never worked remote before.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewee 6**
Yeah, it was very hard if you want to work from home. So actually it was only working from location.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, and what does your team exactly look like?

**Interviewee 6**
We are with five, five advisors with one manager.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 6**
This is only my team and the whole department. There are different teams and my manager is not only my manager, but also the manager of the other teams of my department, but my team. So my colleagues who have exactly the same function are five include me.

**Interviewee 6**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
And so there are different departments, so different types of advisors. Your department has a team lead and that's the guy or girl that responds reports to the manager, right?

**Interviewee 6**
Exactly, yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, perfect.

**Interviewer (me)**
Well, those were the first questions, just your basic, the details, your role, what you do exactly in the company, et cetera. This is the second part of the interview and here I'll ask you some questions related to your manager's behavior in a remote environment.

**Interviewee 6**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
So when you are working remotely, what is your manager doing?

**Interviewee 6**
Well, every week we have a team conversation and the manager will also be there always. So he stays in the picture and tried to get contact us when we are in a meeting, but also by mail or by phone. So yeah, he tries to keep in contact with us all the time.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, and that's the manager, not the team lead right?

**Interviewee 6**
Oh, sorry, I mean, the team lead.

**Interviewer (me)**
Oh, this is the team lead. Okay.

**Interviewee 6**
Yeah. We have a manager. The manager is the manager from the team lead as well, but we do not have very much contact with the manager, so barely, actually. Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
So your manager is basically your team lead, right?

**Interviewee 6**
Yes, that's why I'm talking about my team lead.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yes. No, that's perfect. I just wanted to clarify it.

**Interviewee 6**
Yeah, well, it's my team lead, but I call them my manager, let's say that.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. Okay, clear.

**Interviewer (me)**
And is that the only thing you like about him as a manager or her? Is it him or her? Is it him?

**Interviewee 6**
Its a him.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 6**
Yeah. Yes. If I say this, it looks like if I'm not happy with him, but yeah, actually, that's I think the only thing that he that he does good. Yes. Because we cannot have very much contact with him. Yeah. Every week we see him in our meeting. Online meeting. We saw him in the online meeting during COVID I mean, and sometimes when you have a question, you can call him or email him, but it was not that he contacts us from himself all the time ('he contacts us from himself' is a very Dutch way to say 'he waits for us to contact him'). Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
He doesn't have time for this or?

**Interviewee 6**
Yeah. He's quite a bit in the background, actually. And it was also before COVID I had another manager, that was a woman and yeah, it was quite different. Sorry. She was quite different than him. She was all the time texting us and do everything and he's quite on the background. Yes. So we didn't have much contact with him, actually.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, and what do you like more?

**Interviewee 6**
Actually... before it was better, in my opinion. So when someone will manage you is more at the front. Yeah, I like that more. Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
And why? Because it felt like the person was more involved?

**Interviewee 6**

Yeah, well, actually, before she... involved. Yeah. How do you say... She was more proactive, actually, but she was actually as involved as he is, but he was just quiet and more at the background. More a quiet person. I think maybe he let us more...

**Interviewer (me)**
He gave you more freedom?

**Interviewee 6**
More freedom, more responsibility. And that's also fine with us, with our team, because we have actually a lot of responsibility and freedom is good for us. But still, in my opinion, a manager needs to be at the front and not at the background.

**Interviewer (me)**
Clear. So your current manager can be a little more proactive instead of reactive?

**Interviewee 6**
Yes, actually, in my opinion, yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. So that's basically something you think he's not doing well at the moment when working remotely and yeah. Purely looking at remote work as well. What do you think is another thing that he's not doing well?

**Interviewee 6**
Good question. I think during COVID everyone was working remote full time. And I think it's good as a manager that from yourself, you start the conversation about how people feel from working remote because you do not see people or colleagues anymore. It's less personal and less socializing. And I think it's good if a manager from himself starts conversations with his employees and ask people how they feel about it, what do they need about working remote? And that's something that he didn't do, actually. So working remotely was new for us because before COVID we didn't work remote. And I think it's good if a manager asks his employees how the employees feel about it and what they need actually.

**Interviewer (me)**
So you feel like you did not really get enough support from him?

**Interviewee 6**
No, actually not and it was all okay but because it was new for us, I think it was good if he supports us more and asks what we need or if we are fine, et cetera and that's something that I missed. Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And do you think this was mainly because it was remote work or was it more of his personality?

**Interviewee 6**
I think both. It's also his personality. And maybe remote working was also new for him. So I can understand that it's also a bit difficult for him. But he's the manager and we are his employees. So I think when you are a manager, you need to have the skills to do that with your employees. But it's also his personality for sure, because he's a quiet person. Otherwise he has good trust as well. Because he trusted that we do our job and that we are fine. But a bit of more support was eh... Should be good, I think.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, and what do you think about the communication between your manager and you? It's kind of connected in a way with the support you have received. Yes but what do you think overall of the communication?

**Interviewee 6**
Well, if you work remote the communication is by email or by phone or maybe like video call and that's it. So that's of course less personal than the physical contact but actually the number of video calls we

have was actually quite low so I think he could be more invest in communication between him and his employees.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, clear. Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. So you basically said it as well already like he could have been more involved and more video calls. Yes, this is what he could have done more?

**Interviewee 6**
Yes. The number of video calls we had in the time of COVID which was like one year or I think maybe five or something so very little. We had a lot of contact by Microsoft Teams chat and that's a chat so in my opinion it's not really personal and yeah, that could be better in my opinion.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.And this is basically the other side of it. Do you feel like you were being micromanaged when working remote.

**Interviewer (me)**
So that you were checked upon a lot?

**Interviewee 6**
Well actually they trusted us so we got a lot of freedom also by working remote but we have what I said, Microsoft Teams as a tool to communicate with each other and it's basically we are all the time online and if we were not, they called us or something. In that opinion, they were controlling us if we work from remote. Yes. Is that an answer to your question?

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. So if I understand it right, they did kind of check on you in the beginning?

**Interviewee 6**
Yeah, mainly at the beginning. And it's also my work is something that when I do not do my job, let's say I have a problem myself because I'm responsible for specific departments of the hospital and it's only me. So if I do not do my job, the amount of work will be increased by myself for the next time. So actually the person who has a problem by not working am I. At the beginning of course they controlled us kind of, but later on they trusted us and we got a lot of freedom in that way.

**Interviewer (me)**
And were there other ways you saw that they were kind of micromanaging you in the beginning... than teams and then looking if you were away?

**Interviewee 6**
Well, also part of our function is that we are advisors for the doctors and the nurses and when we are working at location, we're not working only from the office, but we also go to the doctors and the nurses. And during COVID when we work totally remote, we were not able to go to the doctors and the nurses, but it was still important that we kept in contact with them, so calling them, et cetera. So what they also did was my manager asking the doctors, et cetera, if they got enough contact with us. So that's also a way of controlling? There was also a way of controlling, but further no, not really. Actually, I think that's it, yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
And this is also something you saw gradually changing basically over time?

**Interviewee 6**
I think at the beginning the control was a bit more than later on, actually yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, clear.

**Interviewer (me)**
And does your manager's behavior affect your daily productivity and performance? And if so, how?

**Interviewee 6**
I do not think so. What I already said, my manager is a person who is a bit at the background, which is not really good for a manager, but that's why it's a bit hard to say if his behavior affects us actually, so no, I do not think so. Yeah, maybe only when because he didn't ask us very often if we are okay with working remote or what we need, et cetera, our behavior will be then that we get more freedom by ourselves, I guess. So we will ask less and just choose ourselves if we want to do something. So maybe indirectly, because it was at the background, we started to behave more by ourselves, so to make more decisions by ourselves, et cetera.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 6**
Directly but maybe indirectly.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, so an indirect influence on the productivity and performance?

**Interviewee 6**
Yeah, I think so.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, yeah. And what can your manager overall do to improve your productivity? Is there something specific that you think that would be good for me, that would help a lot? Or if he stops doing this...?

**Interviewee 6**
I think by working remote, it's good if a manager, for example, plans meetings every two weeks or every month, and just for asking the employee, if working remote still works for them or what they miss, what they need, et cetera, and maybe setting deadlines, that would be good. I guess. So more controlling, actually. We had a lot of freedom, which works, actually. But I think it's good if a manager controls more and also tries to keep in contact.

**Interviewer (me)**
So it basically comes back to the proactive support...

**Interviewee 6**
Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 6**
I think that when people work remote, it is more important for managers to be proactive because it's still less personal than working from location. And yeah, I think it's good that managers are more proactive to kind of be... How do you say, to get more personal with the employees.

**Interviewer (me)**
To get closer.

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**Interviewee 6**
To get closer, yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And do you hesitate when contacting him because he's not really proactively, showing you support?

**Interviewee 6**
Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
So you sometimes hesitate?

**Interviewee 6**
Yes. And I think that's an advantage of working from location. When he's sitting at this behind his desk, you ask him easier something. And when you work remote, it's kind of a barrier to ask something, especially when someone is at the background and shows you that he's not really open for questions, then it's even more hard for the employees to ask something. Yes. So I think managers who are more proactive show that they are more open for questions.

**Interviewer (me)**
So it felt like because he wasn't very proactive, it felt like you couldn't really approach him?

**Interviewee 6**
Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 6**
Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right.

**Interviewer (me)**
And are you given the possibility to give feedback to your manager?

**Interviewee 6**
Yes, but not that much. Actually, one time of a year, we have a...

**Interviewer (me)**
'Functioneringsgesprek' (Dutch word for performance review)?, performance review.

**Interviewee 6**
Performance review. Sorry, a performance review. And that's a moment where the manager can give feedback to you, but also you are able to give feedback to your manager. But it was only once a year, and after you give that feedback on the paper and it was actually not a moment to discuss the paper. And before COVID when we worked totally from location, we had and now we have as well. But during COVID there was not a... I don't know why, but not a conversation about the feedback. So we were able to give the manager feedback, but just put it on paper and that's it. So not discuss it anymore. And also only that time of the year. So not really next to that. Yeah. Of course, from yourself, you can text your manager or email your manager about your thoughts about him, but we not get the... how do you say...?

**Interviewer (me)**
The formal opportunity.

**Interviewee 6**
Yes, exactly.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. So basically only once a year there was a formal opportunity to get feedback.

**Interviewee 6**
Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And in terms of informal feedback, did he ask about feedback or...?

**Interviewee 6**
Not really, but it maybe also relates to the fact that he is a bit at the background and so his personal ehm... who he was. But no, and I think that's something a manager should do, especially when people work remote because in my opinion, the type of managing is then different than when you work from location. So I think it's good that managers indirectly or like informal ask their employees what do they think about him or what they could do better, et cetera.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah, exactly. Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right. That answers all the questions of that part then. The last part is basically about employee satisfaction. An important thing here is that we basically distinguish the manager from the remote manager. So the office manager, you being in the office five days a week, and the remote manager, it could be hybrid, it could be completely remote. But take into account that with the remote manager, I mean, how your manager manages you when working remote. So, first question, do you think your manager is a good manager?

**Interviewee 6**
Yeah. You mean right now, because now we're working from location as well, or you mean during COVID when we work totally remote?

**Interviewer (me)**
No, in general. Do you think in general, is he a good manager?

**Interviewee 6**
Yeah, but could be better. I had another manager before what I told you, and in my opinion, she is a better manager, so yeah, it was quite good, but not the best manager I've got.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, let's say that. Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
And do you think your manager is a good remote manager?

**Interviewee 6**
No, not really. And that's the part that I think that could be better with him. So at location, he's quite a good manager, but I think he could be a better manager when he manages remote.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, so you would definitely say he's a better manager in the office than remote.

**Interviewee 6**
Yes, exactly.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 6**
And I think that working remote is something that really works, in my opinion, so that has a lot of advantages. But it's very important that a manager manages well, in that case, yeah, it's important thing.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. Yeah. It makes a lot of sense. And you gave all the reasons before already.

**Interviewee 6**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
And you basically said it as well. Are you overall satisfied with your manager's capabilities to manage you remotely?

**Interviewee 6**
No, not really. It was not that bad, but I think it could be a lot better than he did during COVID Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 6**
I think it's more important it's important that my manager manages more from the front instead of the background. Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
So the productivity again.

**Interviewee 6**
Yes, exactly, the productivity.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
And are you overall satisfied working remotely?

**Interviewee 6**
Yes, I have to say right now I'm working like 50 50. So half of the week I work remote, half of to week I work from location (the office/hospital). And in my opinion, that's better than working totally remote, but also better than working totally from location because working from home has its own advantage, but also a few disadvantages. For example, it is less personal, you do not see colleagues, et cetera. And I think that combination works the best for me.

**Interviewer (me)**
Clear. Okay, perfect.

**Interviewer (me)**
And then I basically have one bonus question.

**Interviewee 6**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

It's just pointed at my research itself. Is there something you would like to add to the answers you've given of which you think it could be valuable to the research?

**Interviewee 6**
No, I think the last thing I just told you is for me very important that working remote really works, but in combination with working from location, in my opinion, then so if also in the future, I think that's good that companies, of course, where it is possible both work let employees work remotely and working from location. Yes, and I think that's it. Yes. And also what I told you during the interview, that in my opinion, when people work remote, it's very important that the manager is very proactive, more proactive than when he managed or he or she managed from the office. So, like when people were working from location. So if a company decides that employees can work from home as well as work from location, I think it's good that the managers are getting used with that and be more proactive. That's very important, in my opinion. And I think that's it.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, perfect. Well, thanks a lot.

**Interviewee 6**
Yes, you're welcome.

**Interviewer (me)**
I'll cut it here.

# Appendix 8: Interview with Interviewee 7

**Interviewee 7:**
Age: 27
Industry: Finance / banking
Company: ABN Amro
Role: Assistant client advisor


Transcript:
**Interviewer (me)**
All right, so first I'm going to just ask you some questions about basic details who you are, what your role is, et cetera.

**Interviewee 7**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
So how old are you?

**Interviewee 7**
So I am 27 years old.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right.

**Interviewer (me)**
And what industry do you work in?

**Interviewee 7**
I work in the finance industry.

**Interviewer (me)**
You work for bank, right?

**Interviewee 7**
Yes, I work at ABN Amro Bank in Holland. And there at the investment department.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. So can you briefly tell me your role and describe your responsibilities?

**Interviewee 7**
Yes, of course. I work there now for three years, and I am responsible together with three client advisors. So I make analyses and discuss with clients or with my advisors what kind of investments they will do for their clients. And that's between €500,000 till 25 million. So we have a lot of discussions and make the best analyses for our clients.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, and for how long have you been doing this role?

**Interviewee 7**
This role is now for three years, and therefore I will already work for ABN Amro, but it was for two and a half years in Amsterdam, and it was at the operations side of investments. There's more operations than client advice.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, all right. And how much remote work do you do and how long have you been working remotely?

**Interviewee 7**
In the beginning, it was tough because of the coronavirus and it was not not very heard of, remote working. So in the beginning it was a discussion with the managers and our colleagues, so how will we work? And the phone and et cetera. So in the beginning, we started with one day remote working, and then after two years, it was just come one day or two days to the office and the rest you can work from home or somewhere else where you want. But it was a tough time because everything has changed the systems, the programs, the phones, so yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
So in the beginning when COVID started, did you go completely remote or you said you worked only one day remote?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, one day remote.

**Interviewer (me)**
So you still went to the office?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, we still need to go to the office for three or four days because in the beginning, the remote work was not so famous at office, and they don't like it because we cannot do the work. A few programs will not work at home.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, so you had to be there.

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, indeed.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
So in the beginning... What is the exact timeline? So 2020, COVID started for how long did you work one day remote and four days from the office?

**Interviewee 7**
In the beginning it was around six months. So they will check and rules from the government will be changed. We have a lockdown over here. So in the beginning it was not good. So one day for six months for remote work, and after that, after the lockdown, they say, okay, we can work remote. So they say, yeah, you can go for two days remote working two days at office. And at the end of 2022, beginning 23, we go for one day at office and three days, four days remote, so everything was already fixed by (in regards to) the systems.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, clear. Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
And did you work remotely before the pandemic?

**Interviewee 7**
No, it was totally a no-go for the ABN Amro.

**Interviewer (me)**
It was always at the office?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, always.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
And what does your team look like?

**Interviewee 7**
My team? It's a little old team. All the colleagues are above the 40, 50 years old because of their careers they have had at the bank. But the last time we have three or four young people. So just like me and a few guys and yeah, it's okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, and those are all investment advisors?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, indeed. Every investment advisor, we work one on three, so one assistant client advisor, so that's me. And then these couple to three client advisors, so we work one on three. So we had five assistant client advisors and 18 client advisors by themselves.

**Interviewer (me)**
And that's the whole team?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, that's the whole team. With one manager.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. Only one manager?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
So, yeah, then this is the second part of the interview here I will ask you some questions related to your manager's behavior in a remote environment. So only when working remote? Basically, yeah. So when you are working remotely, what is your manager doing well?

**Interviewee 7**
What he's doing well is that he doesn't check if I'm working or if something happened or something else. And what he also does very well is that he's always contactable. So when I need something or something else, I can always call him and I can still call him or text him by message or by email and he will always fix it. So it doesn't matter if I am at the office or working remote. So that's a good part.

**Interviewer (me)**
So he doesn't really check you. And he's very supportive...

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, indeed, indeed, supportive.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, clear.

**Interviewer (me)**
And was this always like this or was it different in the beginning...?

**Interviewee 7**
No, in the beginning it was tough because we cannot contact him because he was very checking on what is he doing. In the beginning it was weird because he doesn't know what his employees are going to do. He didn't know how it works, he didnt' know what we will fix or if he would still have contact with our clients or with our client advisors. So he checked every morning and every afternoon at 16:00. So with the team, he called the team 23 people. So for what we're doing and what we did at that day. So in the beginning it was tough.

**Interviewer (me)**
So did you feel like in the beginning they were really checking on you?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, indeed.

**Interviewer (me)**
So micromanaging, basically.

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. Yeah and how did this make you feel?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, in the beginning I didn't like it because it was just like, okay, Mehmet, do your work, but are you doing your work or else what are you doing the whole day while working remote? Yeah, I didn't like it, but after three, four months after he got used to it, he didn't call at 16:00 in the afternoon, but he would always call in the morning. So what are we going to do today and what are the analyses and what will we buy or sell? We are still doing that in the morning and that's fine.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
And would you say you saw a change over time?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And how did you notice?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, because of more trust to his employees. That's what I feel and what I saw in his management, towards us. So I feel more trust and more... he trusted his employees more.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
So you felt like you were trusted more?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, indeed.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
Yeah. And when you are working remotely, what is your manager not doing well?

**Interviewee 7**
Um.

**Interviewer (me)**
I guess the micromanaging is a part of this because you said that already. Do you have more examples?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, an example is with remote working, we don't see each other a lot of time. It's always on the laptop or the camera. So you miss... In the beginning, I felt not so much trust and then it was be changed for more trust, but after that he let it go more. So a few colleagues come in around 11/12 o'clock to start and go home at 15:00. So it was too free to do what you do at the day. And then I thought, you can check that better. So he had not a mix of his micromanaging. It was all or it was nothing.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, so now it's basically nothing.

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
And before...

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, I can now log on at 15:00 in the afternoon and I can say I did everything today, but he doesn't know or we don't have to click (connection) anymore.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 7**
He didn't really show a lot of interest or involvement or how do you see it?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, I think interest in the employees. So he has a big team, 23 people for one manager and a lot of remote workers, and of course working with the client and so yeah, and one day in the week and then he need to be there and some colleagues are free or are sick, so he doesn't see everybody. Sorry. So I think you will miss the click (connection) with the team.

**Interviewee 7**
Makes sense.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. All right. And what do you think about the communication between your manager and you?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, that's very good. So I can talk about everything with him work, private, soccer. That's fine.

**Interviewer (me)**
No negative sides?

**Interviewee 7**
No, not on the first...

**Interviewer (me)**
Do you feel like he could do something to improve the communication between him and you and each individual of your team?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, on the one day at the office workday, so we can then be there when the most of the employees will be there. And then he can do something with the lunch or just two minutes talk with each other to make sure the trust and the click (connection) will be better with every employee.

**Interviewer (me)**
So one day that would be obligated, basically.

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
Makes sense. And you already said it, basically. But do you feel like you're being micromanaged when working remote?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, in the beginning.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 7**
In the beginning of the remote working.

**Interviewer (me)**
And in what exact ways did you notice this? So you already said the first meeting and the last meeting and that they checked. What did you do today? Are there other ways you notice this?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, by strange emails. They send emails at 17:00 or 17:10 or just like that.

**Interviewer (me)**
What kind of emails?

**Interviewee 7**
So did you did this today or could you send me an example today? And I think why now? Why 17:00? Yeah, just like strange emails.

**Interviewer (me)**
So they kind of wanted you to deliver something at the end of the day?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, indeed.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 7**

And most of the times I did not...

**Interviewer (me)**

You did not realize...?

**Interviewee 7**

Yeah. No no no, I did not send anything back so...

**Interviewer (me)**

Ah okay.

**Interviewee 7**

It doesn't matter to me if you don't trust me, so don't work with me.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

And do you feel like you get enough support while working remotely?

**Interviewee 7**

Yeah. After the micromanaging? Yes, because we do a lot of more work at home by remote working than at the office.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

And do you feel like when working at home, you feel enough support?

**Interviewee 7**

Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

And do you have examples on how you feel supported?

**Interviewee 7**

When I've called with one of my client advisors, they say, yeah, you did a good job, or so you can also work remotely. So I still do my jobs and my notes to do. So they always tell, yeah, you can do it everywhere until you do it and you fix it. So that's the little support. It's not a support, but a little.

**Interviewer (me)**

And in terms of when you have questions, et cetera.

**Interviewee 7**

That's difficult because we need to call each other because we cannot go over the floor (go to someone's desk) and say, hey, can you help me? That's not possible because you're working remotely. Yeah. Then we need to call each other and we don't know if my colleague or my advisor is in a meeting or doing something else by remote working. So then we will call two or three times till we had contact.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. So it takes a little longer?

**Interviewee 7**

Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. And for example, with your manager, do you feel like you get proactive support or do you always have to ask him?

**Interviewee 7**

I ask.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewee 7**

Its not a proactive guy.

**Interviewer (me)**

So would you say you miss pro-activity?

**Interviewee 7**

Yeah. From the manager? Yes.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay... I'm just making an extra note (I was taking my time to make some notes) .

**Interviewee 7**

Yes, of course.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

Yeah. And would you say that your manager's behavior affects your daily productivity and performance?

**Interviewee 7**

Could you repeat, please?

**Interviewer (me)**

Would you say that your manager's behavior would affect your daily productivity and performance?

**Interviewee 7**

No, I don't have a lot of checks or control with my manager. I need to deliver my work to my advisors. So when I deliver good work to my advisors, they just don't check anything, and they just go to the meeting with the client, and they can do everything. So my manager don't do anything to me. My advisor is more my manager than my manager. You understand me?

**Interviewer (me)**

Yeah. Okay.

**Interviewee 7**

Because my manager doesn't see my work. He knows my work from the client advisors. Why? Assistant.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay, so you report basically to the client advisors, and the client advisors report to the manager.

**Interviewee 7**

Yeah, because they have the clients and yeah, I have also client contact, but the client advisors are the last who they speak to.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. clear, would you say with certain actions they do they affect your productivity or performance or you just do your work and you don't feel interrupted or...?

**Interviewee 7**
No, they do, they do. One client advisor gave me two or three clients to my own investments with them. So that's what I feel like, trust. And so, Mehmet, you got it. You got this and you know your analyses and you know what you're doing. So he gave me two or three from his clients, and now I am now then a client advisor, but I'm still assistant, but he gave me the trust and he checked my work before I go to the meeting with the clients. So, yeah, he helped me very well.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay yeah, that sounds nice. And what can your manager do to overall improve your productivity? What could they do to even increase your productivity even more?

**Interviewee 7**
Also, with growing in my career, I think he can give me then not one on three so... I'm the assistant and three client advisors. Then he can give me two client advisors. Then I will start my own clients. So then I'm a  assistant client advisor and a client advisor in one. And then he can support me then and give me more IDs or more learnings/e-learnings to grow in my career. That's what he can do.

**Interviewer (me)**
So more responsibility basically...?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. All right. Then a question about feedback. Are you given the possibility to give feedback to your manager on him or her as a manager of your team?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, always. When we have a 'bila' so a meeting one on one with my manager, I always ask at the end of the meeting, so do you have any feedback or what I did well, or not.

**Interviewer (me)**
But does your manager ask for feedback from you?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, but not always.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And do you have performance reviews? So 'functioneeringsgesprekken' (Dutch for performance reviews)?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
And how often that was?

**Interviewee 7**
Let me think. Every five or six months. Six months.

**Interviewer (me)**
So basically every half year, twice a year.

**Interviewee 7**

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Twice a year yes.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And does your manager ask for informal feedback? So more like off the record. So not only in the performance reviews?

**Interviewee 7**
Wait I think informal and formal. So we had a very... We talk about everything. So it's informal and formal feedback. So about private, on remote working about my tasks that I have to do.

**Interviewer (me)**
So he also does this besides the 'functioneeringgesprekken' (Dutch for performance review)?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. And how often do you think approximately he asks this, is it every meeting you have with him...?

**Interviewee 7**
When he's in a good mood... Yeah. Last time he did not have lunch, so he said, Come, we go get some lunch, and then we take a seat and he's going to have lunch before... In my head, I thought, yeah, are we going to talk or we're just eating, and it was just eating and yeah. Do we have any problems? No. Okay. So we go. I thought what is this?

**Interviewer (me)**
He converted a lunch into a one to one... Or the other way around. Sorry.

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, one to one to a lunch. Yeah. It was totally straight. I didn't understand anything, so I told him, I say, So what are we going to do now? He said, yeah, if we have no problems, then we go. It's already fine. I will speak you about over six months. So I thought okay, what is this?

**Interviewer (me)**
And that was the performance review, the official one?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay.

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, the official one.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. All right yeah. That's a bit strange.

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah. So I thought, okay.

**Interviewer (me)**
All right. Then we arrive to part three, which is employee satisfaction here. It's very important that we see your manager as an office manager. We distinguish it from your manager as a remote manager.

**Interviewee 7**
Okay.

**Interviewer (me)**

So do you think your manager is a good manager? So office manager?

**Interviewee 7**

Yeah. At the office manager? Yes, absolutely, yes.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. And why?

**Interviewee 7**

Well he is always at the floor, so when he has a meeting, he just do the meeting at the floor and not in a room. So he's always at the floor, and if we have something happened or we have some problems with the system or at the floor or with the client he directly fixes for us or has directly tips or tops or IDs to contact somebody else when he's on the floor, and that's at the office? Always.

**Interviewer (me)**

Yeah. Okay. And do you think your manager is a good remote manager?

**Interviewee 7**

No.

**Interviewer (me)**

And why not?

**Interviewee 7**

Yeah. Because what I told in the beginning, he was micromanaging, and after that, he lost everything, like the control or with the employees and the trust. And I think he must be mixed it with a good office manager and a bad remote work manager. So I think he need to learn that or find some new ideas or ways to work with it.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. And the things he did in the office, he didn't do them as a remote manager?

**Interviewee 7**

Yeah. He doesn't do it because when we... What I told you that the office manager, he did the meetings at the office, at the floor and not in rooms. So when we had something, so we wave and then, hey, Martin, could you help us or could you check here? With remote working, we cannot do that. We need to call him, and he's always in a meeting, so then we cannot come to contact him sometimes.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. So that's more a result of the remote work...

**Interviewee 7**

Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewee 7**

Yeah, correct.

**Interviewer (me)**

And do you have something that's specific about him that doesn't really make him a good manager? You know what I mean? Is there something specific about your manager himself that you think that's why he's not a good remote manager?

**Interviewee 7**

He's a very social guy in face to face. With the camera or by laptop or by email he's not so social as he is by face to face. I think when he talk or he say something by face to face, his emotion shows better than by email or text... or with camera or that's how I feel it. That's maybe also a reason.

**Interviewer (me)**

Yeah. And for example, do you feel forgotten?

**Interviewee 7**

Yeah, yeah. By the manager? Absolutely, yes.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay.

**Interviewee 7**

I was last week remote working in Austria, so he doesn't know that even that. But I sent him two, three emails, so, hey, Martin, I'm going to work from Austria because I'm on holiday so I worked every morning from six till 14:00 p.m. And then after that week, he called me. So how was your work week? I thought, okay... Do you know even know where I was?

**Interviewer (me)**

So he wasn't really interested. Involved, yeah.

**Interviewee 7**

So sometimes he's not interested.

**Interviewer (me)**

Okay. And this is quite a similar question, but are you overall satisfied with your manager's capabilities to manage you remotely?

**Interviewee 7**

I don't know how to... A little bit, yes. It's good times and it's bad times. So yeah. At the office everything is fine, but remote yeah, with remote working, I don't know. I don't know how to manage.

**Interviewer (me)**

What do you mean?

**Interviewee 7**

With remote work? How he will do that... How he will manage that with remote working. So I don't know how.

**Interviewer (me)**

What do you miss? What do you feel like you miss?

**Interviewee 7**

That, you know, that I am working or that, you know, I am doing my job.

**Interviewer (me)**

So it's basically he's not micromanaging at all, but that also makes him not check on you?

**Interviewee 7**

Yeah, but sometimes he can come and how is everything going? Or do you miss something from me or your client advisor? Do you have some problems or anything? Just a little call for once in two weeks or three weeks or so. It's not every day, because then it's my comment that I don't like it, but yeah...

**Interviewer (me)**

Every once in a while.

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. All right. And are you overall satisfied working remotely?

**Interviewee 7**
Um, yeah, not always. I think I have times that I will work remote and sometimes at office. Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
So you like going to the office as well?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, but not every day, but yeah, it's always nice to have your colleagues around you and it's always just a social talk. That what I would miss sometimes. But I do like remote working.

**Interviewer (me)**
So overall, would you say you're satisfied or not?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay. All right. Okay. So that was basically the interview. I have one last bonus question. Is there something you would like to add to the answers you've given of which you think it could be valuable to the research now?

**Interviewee 7**
Yes. So I will tell you... Remote working is very good and very well for everybody. So when I work remote, I can do everything at home but the social contact, what I told at the last question. It's very important for my socials to know my colleagues how they doing and what kind of questions or problems I can come by my (very Dutch direct translation, he means 'address to my') colleagues. So that's an important thing with remote working. Yeah, definitely. I very like remote working. I can do everything at my own time, at my own thing, when I want. But it must be one or two days in the week that you go to the office. That's just important for your team building and for your social (the social part). So that's the last thing what I will note.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, so, like a hybrid?

**Interviewee 7**
Yeah, the hybrid life. So that's totally fine.

**Interviewer (me)**
Okay, perfect.

**Interviewer (me)**
Then that's it.

**Interviewee 7**
Thank you.

**Interviewer (me)**
So thanks a lot. Bye.

# Appendix 9: ODS/SDG

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**ANEXO I. RELACIÓN DEL TRABAJO CON LOS OBJETIVOS DE DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE DE LA AGENDA 2030**

**Anexo al Trabajo de Fin de Grado y Trabajo de Fin de Máster: Relación del trabajo con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible de la agenda 2030.**

Grado de relación del trabajo con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS).

| Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenibles | Alto | Medio | Bajo | No Procede |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ODS 1.    Fin de la pobreza. | | | | x |
| ODS 2.    Hambre cero. | | | | x |
| ODS 3.    Salud y bienestar. | x | | | |
| ODS 4.    Educación de calidad. | | | x | |
| ODS 5.    Igualdad de género. | | | | x |
| ODS 6.    Agua limpia y saneamiento. | | | | x |
| ODS 7.    Energía asequible y no contaminante. | | | | x |
| ODS 8.    Trabajo decente y crecimiento económico. | | x | | |
| ODS 9.    Industria, innovación e infraestructuras. | | | | x |
| ODS 10.   Reducción de las desigualdades. | | | | x |
| ODS 11.   Ciudades y comunidades sostenibles. | | | | x |
| ODS 12.   Producción y consumo responsables. | | | | x |
| ODS 13.   Acción por el clima. | | | | x |
| ODS 14.   Vida submarina. | | | | x |
| ODS 15.   Vida de ecosistemas terrestres. | | | | x |
| ODS 16.   Paz, justicia e instituciones sólidas. | | | | x |
| ODS 17.   Alianzas para lograr objetivos. | | | | x |

Descripción de la alineación del TFG/TFM con los ODS con un grado de relación más alto.

***Utilice tantas páginas como sea necesario.

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**Anexo al Trabajo de Fin de Grado y Trabajo de Fin de Máster: Relación del trabajo con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible de la agenda 2030.** (Numere la página)

ODS3 Salud y bienestar: The well-being of the employee is of incredible importance in remote work and the possibility to work remotely, and so this thesis has a strong relation to this ODS/SDG. Giving the possibility to work remotely is see as flexibility, and it creates opportunity for men and women to manage their private lives better. An example is that women can watch the children at home, while being able to work simultaneously. Also, when working remotely, needs of employees are met, and they are given the tools to comfrotabely work at home, for example, the possibility to buy (1) a desk, (2) a proper chair for your desk, among others. There are more reasons

ODS4 Educacion de calidad: this thesis has a relation to this SDG, but it is a weak relation. The relation is there, as this thesis is closely connected to remote work, and remote work is a quite new way of working, which demands managers to adapt and learn new skills, and enhance already existing skills. Management subjects in schools and universities should accordingly be adapted to the change of desired and demanded manager skills because of the change of the global work environment that the pandemic stimulated.

ODS8 Trabajo decente y crecemiento economico: This thesis has a moderate relation to this SDG. Remote work can be seen as decent work for a number of reasons. There is often a possibility to choose how you would want your week to look like (100% remote, hybrid, or completely from the office), the company and your manager show flexibility towards you as a remote worker because they know you can't be at your desk 8 hours a day, etc. Next to that, remote work incorporates economic growth as (1) productivity of remote workers has been proved to be higher than that of people that go to the office, (2) less office space is being used, (3) more work is being created in the industry of tools to make remote work easier: project management tools, communication tools, etc.