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Analysing the Internal Communication in Organisation in the Context of Hybrid Model Working from Perspectives of Leaders and Followers

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic kept the world closed for a long time, and its effects affected everyone. Even large organisations could not escape these changes, but it was mandatory for them to come up with new ways, how the working conditions that prevail in offices can be transferred to people's homes, so that remote working would be possible. Leadership is already a challenging job and it is not suitable for everyone, of course people can also learn and grow to be a leader and the longer you have experience in leadership, the more likely you will be better at it, provided that the leader also has a constant desire to learn and move forward and not just stick to old patterns. One of the challenges of today's leadership is hybrid working and especially the days when one's team work from home. This paper studies how leaders and followers have experienced internal communication in the organisation in the context of hybrid work. This paper has been done in cooperation with a large organisation operating in the Finnish media sector, and their leaders and followers have been interviewed to obtain results to the questions. Communication has been more affected by external factors, such as, for example, on remote days, the lack of face-to-face conversations, challenges to read and understand the body language and general atmosphere of followers, the abundance of communication platforms and the resulting confusion of information, and simply the lack of social moment have caused the most challenges in hybrid work, especially on remote days. Positive aspects have also been found, such as, more free time, working is more independent and most of times more efficient, and the importance of office days belonging to the hybrid model has increased and going to the office 1-2 times a week feels more meaningful.

Key words: Hybrid model working, Internal communication, Formal communication, Informal communication Leaders, Followers

Introduction

This chapter introduces the topic of this paper and tells why this topic is interesting and important to study. This chapter also goes through the background of the topic and purpose. Based on the introduction, the research question has been made.

Background

Previous studies have shown that during the pandemic, working conditions were turbulent (Men, 2014), which led into a situation where in post-pandemic times, strong leadership of leaders is required to achieve positive results and meet organisational goals, despite external difficulties (Oleksa-Marewska & Tokar, 2022). It has been established that common goals of the organisation are achieved and met when leaders take care of the organisation's most important capital, employees, i.e., in this study, followers (Oleksa-Marewska & Tokar, 2022). As previous studies have shown, in the prevailing world situation, where many organisations work according to the hybrid model (Phillips, 2020), the psychological well-being of followers and the maintenance of group and team spirit and growing it in a positive direction, means that communication is emphasised in the leader's work (Oleksa-Marewska & Tokar, 2022; Berger, 2008). In this case, the positive and good communication includes flexible leading and clear presentation and the right way to communicate their goals and vision to the follower clearly. The purpose of this kind of communication is to create an open dialogue, which will lead to the ability to increase stability among the followers and its ultimate purpose is to lead to the organisation's success (Oleksa-Marewska & Tokar, 2022).

The latest research has shown that hybrid work is here to stay, it can be stated by the results that most of the employees and followers have stated that they are likely to look for other opportunities if they are asked to return to a fully on-site model (Dowling et al., 2022). This shows how popular the hybrid model is. Giving followers days to work remotely during the working week is seen to decrease the level of burnout, number of employees leaving their jobs and mental health issues. In leadership, this trend can be seen as a change because leaders need to take into account and confront the strong feeling of followers towards the flexible working model (Dowling et al., 2022). Today's leadership must be based on trust and new means of communication to support followers in hybrid work, especially during remote work. Studies have found that this strengthens followers' motivation and endurance in today's hectic work environment. To fulfil this goal, organisations' internal communication between leaders and followers has an important role, where good internal communication meets the organisation's culture, leaders' behaviour, diversity and structure (Grunig et al., 2002).

On the flip side, hybrid work has also been found to have a positive effect on followers on the mental side, which leads to better working results (Dowling et al., 2022).

The employees are the ambassadors and representatives of the organisation to all external stakeholders. These modern-day requirements are crucial for the organisation, which means that employee-organisation relationships need to be created to a satisfying level (Berger,

2008). In the best-case scenario good and well led employee-organisation relationship creates a working environment where employee productivity is boosted and workforce is created to be critical and cost efficient, this leads to situation where organisations` external relations are handled in top quality and organisations` most important assets, such as, reputation is protected (Berger, 2008). To fulfil this goal, organisations` internal communication between the leaders and followers has an important role.

Internal communication has become one of the most important thing to the organisations (Kubiec, 2019), facilitating the flow of information, ideas, and knowledge among individuals and teams. It plays an important role in organisational collaboration, establishing a shared vision, and aligning organisational goals with employee actions. However, the advent of hybrid work has introduced new challenges and complexities to internal communication dynamics (Philips, 2020).

Purpose and research question

The purpose of this thesis is to examine and study the multifaceted aspects of internal communication within the context of hybrid work. Specifically, it seeks to examine how leaders and followers experience and engage with internal communication processes.

Lastly, this study seeks to shed light on the complex relationship between, internal communication, and hybrid model of working, offering a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities that arise in this evolving landscape. By examining the experiences and perceptions of leaders and followers, this research aims to provide valuable insights for organisations to adapt their communication strategies and create environments that advance effective collaboration, engagement and success in the hybrid work era. Based on the purpose this thesis will aim to answer the research question:

How are leaders and followers experiencing the internal communication in organisation in the context of hybrid work?

Literature review

Previous research about experiences of hybrid model work

Experiences of hybrid work models have been studied to some extent during the last few years. The situation is new for many leaders and their followers, and it can be said that the work culture is in transition in many organisations and corporations (Wiatr & Skowron-Mielnik, 2023). The importance of the team has grown, as team members do their work much more individually and on their own initiative without additional supervision (Wiatr & Skowron-Mielnik, 2023). Due to this, the ability of team members to integrate independently into their own tasks has become important element for successful working and reaching the organisational goals (Wiatr & Skowron-Mielnik, 2023). Next important element according to previous studies is that different teams in different organisations work in a highly dynamic and complex working environments, which means that members of the team need to work more adaptively when coordinating their actions. Third element is the success of the leader, that is the key element to define the direction of the team (Wiatr & Skowron-Mielnik, 2023).

Previous studies have shown certain negative features or experiences that have entered the work culture along with hybrid working. From the leaders` point of view. One of the biggest challenges is planning and leadership is often seen in these situations as project management (Wiatr & Skowron-Mielnik, 2023). That is why flexibility is seen as a huge strength in leading hybrid work, so that the delegation of the work tasks and the expression of communication are more understandable and easier. From the point of view of the followers, psychological safety has been perceived as the biggest challenge in hybrid work (Wiatr & Skowron-Mielnik, 2023). Face-to-face conversation, joint lunches and coffee breaks, as well as informal face-to-face conversations have decreased, and as a result, many team members experience deficiencies in psychological safety. Studies have also pointed out that these lead to teams becoming distant from each other and this has bad effect on team collaboration (Wiatr & Skowron-Mielnik, 2023). Research shows that the most important task of a leader in working with hybrid model is, in a nutshell, to focus on followers and respond to their needs.

But what hybrid model work is in general? Hybrid work can be considered a flexible intermediate or mix of working remotely and in the office. For many organisations the hybrid work has become a norm due to the Covid-19 pandemic, when the most of the organisations where forced to remote work due the lockdowns around the world (Vilkman, 2016). Main point of the hybrid work is that part of the working time is performed at the office and part is done remotely from home or wherever employees want their work to be done. There are still as many ways to implement a hybrid model of working as there are organisations (Vilkman, 2016). Some organisations give employees the freedom to choose whether they work in the office or remotely, wherever they want. Some organisations, such as the organisations involved in the study, have certain designated days when everyone must be in the office, on other days they are free to choose where they work (Hopkins & Figaro, 2021; Työterveyslaitos, 2023).

Hybrid work gaining more popularity in the recent years means that the communication is heavily reliance on technology and leaders in organisations have a new challenge to customise the best model of working to their team (Hopkins & Figaro, 2021). The challenge is that leaders have to know their own followers and their needs in order to get the best possible performance out of them. Some of the followers need social time and face-to-face communication, while other are satisfied with the fact that they can carry out their work duties in a place of their own choosing (Hopkins & Figaro, 2021).

Previous studies have shown that communication between leaders and followers is related strongly to the personality of the leader, usually leaders who are more human-oriented and charismatic tend to have very supportive style of communication which main characteristic usually are the positive connotation for preciseness, assuredness, argumentativeness, supportiveness and lack of verbal aggressiveness (De Vries et al, 2010). Leader who value relationships focus on their communication strongly on clear and good communication which increases the followers working attitude and their working satisfaction. Also there is possible to find a good balance between the formal and informal communication during the working days (Wikaningrum and Yuniawan, 2018).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, working at home became a common form of work for those who had the opportunity to do so. Now that we are living in the post-pandemic era, many people still do most of their working days remotely, mostly at home (Kohont & Ignjatovic, 2022). This has caused a phenomenon in which digitalisation has increased because the ability to work must also function flawlessly at home and the number of different digital platforms and communication channels has increased. According to Kohont & Ignjatovic (2022) researches has confirmed that when workers have an option to work remotely from home it has a positive impact on workers motivation and performance. However, remote and hybrid work has its own challenges, especially for leaders. Communication and coordination with followers have emerged as the biggest challenges for leaders and leadership in remote working (Daft, 2022; Kohont & Ignjatovic, 2022). This is the result of the fact that internal communication of organisations has changed considerably, for example face-to-face conversations between a leader and follower have turned into group video calls via laptops or group e-mail chains. This has led to the fact that in leadership you do not get the same grip on your own followers and interpreting their body language and moods is more challenging and it is difficult to implement approaches and ways of communicating (Daft, 2022; Kohont & Ignjatovic, 2022). Other identified challenges in leadership during remote work are monitoring the work, lack of information, longer response time in communication, because things cannot be asked directly face-to-face, and solving problems in organisational processes (Kohont & Ignjatovic, 2022). According to research, there are also challenges for followers and not just leader. Previous studies have showed that the biggest challenges for followers in remote work are anxiety, long working days, separation of work and free time and, as mentioned above, longer response times from leaders and difficulty in communicating when face-to-face meetings cannot be arranged during remote work (Kohont & Ignjatovic, 2022).

Theoretical framework

Communication in leadership

Clear and effective communication plays important role in the field of leadership, facilitating the exchange of ideas, motivation, vision, and direction within an organisation (Gilley et al, 2009; Aalto, 2021). The purpose of using this as a theoretical framework in this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how communication functions as a critical component of leadership, examining its multifaceted dimensions, influences and implications for both leaders and their followers.

How communication works as the foundation of leadership? Communication in leadership refers to the process of transmitting, receiving, and interpreting information, emotions, intentions and thoughts between leaders and their followers (Gilley et al, 2009). Normally it is done to achieve common organisational goals, foster collaboration and establish a cohesive organisational culture (Ricketts & Rudd, 2002). Reasons why communication have a huge role in leadership is that clear and effective communication enhances the relationships between leaders and followers, it increases followers' engagement, enables informed decision-making and clarifies organisational goals (Aalto, 2021; Johansson, 2018). Based on this it can be stated that when it comes to trust-building, communication is a backbone in leadership, clear and effective communication also promotes effective collaboration and creates open and transparent environment (Gilley et al, 2009).

Communication in leadership have many different models. Communication can be verbal which means all the communication done by spoken language, verbal communication normally includes formal presentation, discussions, one-on-one conversations and speeches (Guo et al, 2015). If leader wants to be sure that the verbal communication is on point and effective then it should be in mind that verbal communication involves clear articulation, ability to convey complex ideas in an accessible manner and active listening (Guo et al, 2015). Opposite of verbal communication is nonverbal communication which cues such as tone of voice contribute significantly to communication in leadership, facial expressions, gestures and body language (Ciuffani, 2017). These cues convey intentions, attitudes and emotions and usually are providing layers of meaning beyond spoken words. As a third way to communicate is usually seen the written communication. It requires precision, ability to convey complex concepts in writing and above all clarity (Johansson, 2018). Emails, memos, reports and other information exchange in a written form are included in written communication. We cannot mix formal and informal communication with these models and ways of communication, because formal and informal communication can both happen verbally, non-verbally or by writing (Zerfass & Huck, 2007).

For effective leadership there are some different communication strategies. Good, experienced and especially effective leaders tailor their communication style and adapt based

on the preferences, characteristics of their followers and needs (Gilley et al, 2009). In other words leaders can be like chameleons and they can adapt the different ways to communicate on different occasions, this fosters better understanding and engagement among diverse individuals (Gilley et al, 2009; Aalto, 2021). Active listening plays a huge role as a strategy of communication in leadership. It helps leaders to demonstrate empathy and seeking clarification. It is stated that the leaders who have adapted active listening as their communication strategy, are better equipped to address concerns, make informed decisions and provide relevant feedback and information (Atwater & Waldman, 2007). Lastly, one communication strategy to think about is to establish a feedback loop, that ensures that exchange of information between leaders and followers is continuous. Giving and receiving feedback helps leaders to understand the impact of their communication and make necessary adjustments (Atwater & Waldman, 2007).

Communication has a huge role to play in leadership especially because of all the impact it can create in a relationship between leaders and followers. First of all, effective and clear communication creates trust. Honest and transparent communication fosters an environment where followers feel valued and respected which more likely to align with the leader's vision (Atwater & Waldman, 2007). Good and clear communication of strategic direction and vision gives tools to leaders to motivate, push and inspire towards the common organisational goals and targets. Communication of purpose helps followers to understand how their contributions contribute to the larger organisational mission (Atwater & Waldman, 2007; Charteris-Black, 2007). Open dialogue and clear and effective communication strategies usually help also to lead disagreement and prevent potential disruptions inside the organisation, which helps leader a lot in a conflict situation, because the leader are able to address conflicts promptly and constructively (Atwater & Waldman, 2007).

All in all communication is an important part of leadership, it is a backbone and an essential pillar of effective leadership, collaboration, facilitating understanding and alignment among leaders and their followers (Zerfass & Huck, 2007). It highlights the multifaceted nature of communication in leadership and shows that there are many ways of communicating, such as, multiple different channels and models. It also shows that how important part the communication plays in terms of building trust, resolving conflicts and conveying vision inside the organisation (Zerfass & Huck, 2007; Atwater & Waldman, 2007). When leaders understand the huge role of communication and adapt it in their style of leadership, it is possible for leaders to increase their leadership effectiveness, while they also are able to create organisational culture, which will most likely to lead into the open and positive organisational environment, where the followers are engaged into the vision and common goals and in the long term this leads to the growth and success (Zerfass & Huck, 2007).

Formal and Informal communication

Formal communication is a way of communicating in workplaces, for example. Formal communication is usually seen as goal-oriented communication, the purpose of which is to convey information related to the topic, share opinions and give feedback (Gomes & Dailey, 2017; Lammers & Barbour, 2006).

A good example of formal communication is, for example, a workplace where there is a morning meeting where the team leader reviews the day's agenda and goals. The most important feature of formal communication is the previously mentioned context, for which a group or team of people have gathered and with the help of the most important points related to work of the matter are discussed and reviewed (Canary et al, 2015).

Formal communication is not only oral communication because this concept can also include, for example, written reports or discussions via messages in different communication channels. Overall the main feature of formal communication is a critical aspect of the field of organisational communication (Gomez & Dailey, 2017).

Informal communication is the opposite of formal communication. Workplaces also tend to have informal communication culture, which means that people usually discuss the matter, such as e.g. non-work-related matters (Koch et al, 2018). These can be, for example, a discussion about the weekend news with colleagues over a shared coffee, or otherwise just chatting about the world or your own personal issues or matters. Informal communication is usually seen as a very important way of communication in workplaces (Koch & Denner, 2021).

It often creates a relaxed atmosphere, increases team spirit, and people get a break from hectic and often stressful work and routine at their workplaces. Informal communication is not even intended to solve any work-related problems, but as a general rule it has been considered to momentarily divert one's thoughts to something other than work (Koch & Denner, 2021). Informal communication can also be planned, such as a joint lunch break planned by colleagues in advance, or it can just be spontaneous exchange of information over a coffee machine. In addition to the fact that informal communication increases team spirit, it also usually brings employees closer together as individuals, which in turn improves the work atmosphere and organisational culture (Zhao & Rosson, 2009).

Linguistic skills are in the core of verbal communication, successful verbal communication requires a leader to have developed language and the ability to interact with the followers in very clear matters (Rocci & de Saussure, 2016).

Methodology

Research design

In order to answer the research questions of this study, a qualitative study was conducted for this thesis. Reason to choose qualitative research method is that it gives insights into the phenomenon (Silverman, 2020), this serves this research, as this study examines the experiences in organisations internal communication in the context of hybrid work model from the leaders and followers perspective. In this study the hybrid model work is the phenomena. Based on this an interview guide has been assembled and people from the organisation`s leadership and follower positions were asked to be interviewed. They were asked pre-planned questions with the possibility of spontaneous follow-up questions about their experiences of hybrid working and communicating their workplace culture. In the interviews, the good aspects of hybrid model working were found, as well as its negative effects on communication. The environment and atmosphere of the interviews were created to be relaxed that the interviews could an open dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. This can be combined with Grounded theory, which supports empirical research and is based on intensive interviews and does not give a biased perspective on the researched topic, as it is an way of open data collection (Charmaz, 1996).

Setting of the study

The research was done in cooperation with a large Finnish media organisation. The organisation has approximately 5000 employees and it also has operations and holdings outside of Finland, for example in Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway. The organisation owns numerous radio and television channels, newspapers and magazines, and book publishing houses. The organisations` portfolio also includes organising various events such as music festivals. The organisation is huge in the terms of its turnover which is more than one billion euros. The headquarters of the organisation is in Helsinki.

For the purposes of this study, this organisation was a great fit. The research studies communication in the context of the hybrid model, and the organisation in question have implemented hybrid model in their working culture after the pandemic. The organisation was also interested in participating in the research, because their work culture includes training their leaders with help of different workshops and development days. The organisation also felt that communication is an important topic and that emotional intelligence is particularly important to them in leadership. In the interviews, 11 different leaders from different departments and teams participated. In order to give the research an unbiased perspective, 6 followers from the leaders teams also participated in the interviews.

Data collection

To understand the phenomenon and gather data, both for theoretical framework and analysis, there were made an interview guide which aims to create open and relaxed atmosphere to the interviews without predefined theoretical framework, as it was mentioned previously in this chapter. As Bryman & Bell (2011) argued that primary data gathered by interviews is a good source for qualitative research. Also the concept of snowball sampling was used while gathering data (Bryman & Bell, 2011), which means that first there were couple candidates to interview and after the interviews it was asked if there are new contacts and potential people to participate in the interviews. It was mentioned previously in this chapter that the position of interviewees differed from each other, there were 11 different leaders from different departments and teams, for example leaders from creative and process teams and leaders from digital sales and sales. After interviewing the leaders it was asked if there are potential followers, followers in this context, to interviewed and in total 6 followers participated in the interviews. During the interviews, the questions were open-end questions, that the participants had chance to talk openly about the topic, without directing the interviewees in any direction. The interview questions were not sent to the participants in advance. All of the 17 interviews were done remotely in Google Meet or in Microsoft Teams and with the permission of the interviewees, all interviews were also recorded. After the interviews, all interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word to make coding and data collection easier.

Data analysis

The data was collected and as it is a characteristic of Grounded Theory, let the data speak for itself were used as a mentality of data analysis (Bowen, 2009; Charmaz, 1996).

All of the 17 interviews were recorded and after every interview they were transcribed by the researcher to see the interviews on paper to guarantee detailed understanding and having a backup if something happens to the recorded files. All the transcripts were done in Microsoft Word by automatic dictation. All transcripts which were made automatically, were also examined and while listening the recordings just in case to ensure that transcripts does not have any mistakes and also to ensure that all the quotes used from interviewees to this study had a right usage.

After the transcripts were done all the interviews were coded in excel which was easy to then create different categories for a sake for finding correct information from all the interviews to this study. Categories were named by their topic for example “Formal communication”, “Hybrid work model and communication-leaders perspective”, “hybrid work model and communication-follower perspective” and “conflict and problem solving in hybrid work-leaders perspective”.

. These constantly recurring themes or categories during the interviews led to the formation of final research questions and the narrowing of the theoretical framework to only the necessary theories for this study.

Ethical reflection

Building trust between the interviewer and the interviewees is an important part of the research and to create and make the interview sessions as relaxed and open as possible (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Trust and an open space was created by promising the participating company that the finished study would be sent to them to read and that all those participating in the interviews would remain anonymous in the study. One way the relaxed atmosphere during the interviews was created was to ask interviewees to tell about themselves and their own backgrounds. This acted as an ice breaker and after that the interviews themselves felt like casual conversations or dialogues. The interviewees were also informed about the topic of the study before start of the interview.

There are few potential limitations to the interviews. For example, all the interviewees represented the same organisation, which may affect how openly the people who took part in the interviews dared to talk about topics concerning the organisation. Another ethical limitation can be considered the fact that the interviewed followers were asked openly to tell they feel about how they are led and how they are communicated with. This may lead to the interviewed followers were giving embellished answers. One limitation can also be noted that the interviewees were only conducted remotely via video connection. Because of this, emotional intelligence and reading body language was not at the same level as it would have been if the interviews had been done on site, for example at the organisations` office. Interviews conducted anonymously can also present challenges for readers to fully understand the interviewee`s background and exact role in the organisation

Empirical study

Formal and Informal Communication

During the study, it was important to examine the importance of communication in the work environment and what it means in itself, both from the perspective of leaders and followers. Through the interviews, it merged that there are clearly two different styles of communication in the work culture in question. There are formal and informal communication ways. Based on the interviews, it can also be stated that the formal way of communicating between leaders and

followers is more common and most of the communication between them consists of formal communication.

“I would say that the formal and informal communication occurs during the working day. Most of the day is spent communicating formally about work-related matters. Maybe about 80-90%, but a very important counterweight is the 10-20% of informal communication, where we talk about this and that about our personal lives etc. with coworkers and the boss.” -Follower 6

During the study, the interviewees said that formal communication includes all official communication related to the work or itself, such as team meetings, giving feedback, giving help or an opinion on a specific work task, etc. Formal communication takes place face-to-face as well as through virtual communication channels such as Microsoft Teams and Skype, which means that it does not matter how and where the communication was happening, but what defines it as formal communication is its content.

“Formal communication is when you discuss and review work-related issues, give feedback, share opinions. As is usually the case at well-functioning workplaces and corporations. It is important to remember that, at least from the leaders point of view, to keep all formal communication short and clear in order to avoid misunderstanding and other things harmful to the quality of work itself.” -Leader 11

Informal communication during the working day is not nearly as much as formal communication, but research shows that its importance is even greater. Informal communication means e.g., coffee table discussions, exchanging news about weekend or telling that own child got a good certificate from school. In the other words, informal communication includes all matters not related to work and discussing them with colleagues and leaders. During the interviews, almost all the interviewees considered these small moments very important in everyday life. It brings the feeling of belonging to a group and for a moment take your attention away from the stressful pace of work. Based on the interviews, it was also noticed that informal communication has a positive and refreshing effect on group dynamics and creating team and “we” spirit in the workplace, which is very important especially in these times when the pace of work increases, and stress levels might rise very high. At the same time, followers and leaders will get to know the people with whom they spend 40-50 hours a week at the office and learn to understand each other better and why someone might have a difficult day at work, etc.

“Informal communication is incredibly important and as a leader I have been a bit worried about how it has worked for my followers now when they spend part of the week working remotely. People are social and we need each other, if we only talk about work, it would not be long before we were all on the verge of burnout. All coffee table discussions and joint lunches

are great opportunities to get know each other better and discuss everything possible between heaven and earth. Basically, people also always want to be heard and tell their own story.” -Leader 8

“Informal communication at workplace opens many mental locks and has a positive effect on team spirit, which in turn affects the fact that people feel good about coming to work, which in turn affects the quality of work and success at work.” -Leader 9

Hybrid working and Internal Communication, Pros and Challenges

During the research, new challenges emerged from many directions that exist in the current style of working. The company involved in the study revealed that they use a hybrid model, where depending on the team, they have 1-2 mandatory days in the office, which have been agreed in advance among the team so that everyone is under the same roof on the same day. The rest of the days can be remotely or on-site.

“We use a hybrid model. Which means that, depending on the team, every week there are 1-2 mandatory pre-arranged office days when everyone from the team comes to the office. On other days, everyone can work remotely anywhere or in the office, it all depends on personal interest.” -Leader 7

Most of the respondents in this study who have a role of a leader in the organisation praised the hybrid model as being good in the sense that it is efficient and saves, for example, on daily commuting to work, and many employees are more refreshed and energetic thanks to it. Based on the interviews, it can also be concluded that the hybrid model also brings new challenges to leading that did not necessarily exist before when everyone still worked in an office. Most of these challenges are related to communication and emotional intelligence caused by the fact that nowadays during remote days everything is done via computers and for example the body language and mood of the followers is difficult to interpret. The lack of sociability and the lack of face-to-face conversations also make it difficult to communicate in leadership.

“Working in a hybrid model has brought new challenges to leadership, for example, communication and emotional intelligence in leadership is more difficult when most of the time we only stare at each other through screens and through that I then try to read the expressions and gestures of my employees, it is clearly more challenging compared to being all in the office at the same time” -Leader 5

The internal communication is in a crucial part of everyday in life. Especially nowadays, when we are living in the post-pandemic period after the Covid-19 pandemic, the importance of internal communication has come to the fore even more. People are not always under the same

roof at the office, but many work remotely at home or somewhere else. According to the respondents of the interviews, this has increased different services of different platforms where you can communicate internally, which in its own way makes communication more efficient, but in the other hand it makes it more challenging. For example, there are so many different platforms to communicate with, that it is practically impossible to monitor their correct use, and difficulties are also caused by the fact that you do not always know on which platforms it is appropriate to share internal matters within the organisation and where it is not.

“There are many good things about hybrid working, but there are also challenges. For example, working remotely is more efficient and people stay more energetic. One challenge that I see in leading is that we have a very larger number of different communication channels and that brings certain kind of challenges, we have Teams, e-mail, WhatsApp, so when communicating it is easy to get confused about where to find any information...It would make it much easier if all the information was always in the same place, but it does not work that way. In addition to this, we also have different channels for different transactions and different project management systems” -Leader 4

“What is related to the one-way communication within the organisation, yes, the Corona era and this hybrid work and this technology have caused discussion about different channels, that where we talk about what. We have Teams, we have Slack, we have email, so what is correct? Can you put work-related messages on WhatsApp etc. So yes, we talk a lot about these channels and how to communicate in different channels” -Leader 1

For the research, interviews were also conducted with followers, where they were able to tell and reflect on their experiences, what it feels like to work with a hybrid model and how they experience leadership and internal communication. Followers were also wanted in the interviews, so that the research can also take into account another point of view and not just the point of view of the leaders. Many of the followers praised hybrid working, especially that it is efficient and that it saves time, for example, followers do not have to spend time during the day commuting to the office on the days when they are working remotely. The hybrid model also has the advantage that they can go to the office on certain days to meet colleagues, and handling urgent matters and communicating with leaders is better and easier. However, all 5 followers had noticed that in the hybrid model, working remotely has brought them more responsibility, the trust that has been created between the leaders and them when they work at home has increased trust and the followers have been given a great responsibility, so they do not want to neglect it.

“In general, the hybrid model is a good and modern solution. I notice that I am much more energetic and I do not spend extra time on commuting to work on remote days, I also feel like I have more free time because, for

example, during a break I can put the laundry in the washing machine or run the dishwasher, so in the evening when the workday is over I have more time for my own interests...the flip side of the coin is also that it is nice to go to the office 1-2 times a week to socialise and see all the co-workers.” - Follower 1

“In general, the hybrid model has been a good practice, especially when working remotely, it gives me a lot of freedom as an employee, but it also brings a lot of responsibility and the fact that I am trusted is a key. As an employee, I have to take care that I am worthy of that trust and do not abuse it, but at least in my team everyone is a professional and an expert and proud of what we do” -Follower 3

The followers also had their concerns, even though in overall many thought that the hybrid model is a very good solutions and it brings a nice balance to the everyday working life. Negative things about the hybrid model were found during the interviews. Followers had the same concerns as leaders and for the most part they were related to the technology. Followers mentioned that there are so many different platforms and communication channels in use nowadays during remote work that sometimes it is difficult to remember or observe which channel people can find correct information. Another thing that made interviewees think during the interviews were that what can be talked about in different channels, for example, is it okay to talk about work matters on WhatsApp, so the things related to communication through technology need to be clarified and improved based on interviews made in this study.

“Communication, especially remotely, is much faster and more efficient, but it lacks of social aspect that is the part of the communication when we are all under the same roof, in addition, we have so many different platforms that sometimes it gets confusing where to find the specific information and, for example, the meeting held via Teams we have to focus more precisely because we are not really present as a group.” -Follower 4

When interviewing the followers, it turned out that on remote days there have challenges on verbal communication, when it comes to the fact that face-to-face meetings can not be organised during remote days. Most of the interviewees paid attention to the fact that when they want to talk about work matter or project with their leader and they want to have for example a confirmation about it, the communicating via messages does not achieve the same goal as a face-to-face meeting. All the followers have also noticed that on remote working days, efficiency is put to good use and then many team leaders spend almost the whole day in different meetings, and because of that, internal communication is often done in the form of messages, unless there is free time for a phone call, for example in Teams.

“Remotely, there can sometimes be difficulties in internal communication, because everything is made to be busy and efficient. Of course, if my matter is not so urgent, it can wait until the day when we are all in the office and

then we can discuss it face-to-face, but for urgent matters, it is perhaps not the most instructive situation to go over them via messages in Teams chat”
-Follower 1

Followers were also discussed during the interviews about how they perceive their leaders communication in their direction and whether they feel that the leadership style has an effect on communication in the context of hybrid working especially remote work. Most of them felt that when communication with their team leader, the basic things and communication have remained largely the same even working remotely. Meaning that the biggest changes in communication in the context of hybrid model do not depend on the leader`s manner and style of leadership, but the challenges are more focused on technology and that emotional intelligence and reading body language are more difficult and it is difficult to build a similar team spirit through computer screens, in other words during the remote days people sense the lack of informal communication. That is why many of the followers who participated in the interviews experience mandatory days in the office necessary so that the most important and urgent matters can be communicated in clear and good way, as well as being able to sense the feelings of the leaders and colleagues and sometimes talk about other things than work. For example, corridor discussions and joint coffee or lunch breaks were perceived as an important means of communication within the organisation.

“I do not feel that leadership style necessarily affects communication, especially remotely, from what I have heard and noticed myself, it is pretty much the same regardless of the leader, I think it is because remote leading is quite difficult and challenging, because it is difficult to sense the general atmosphere of the team via a computer screen...Being remote on certain days is of course more efficient in a certain way, but it is nice to go to the office a couple of times a week to go through important things better, and having lunch together, for example, is another thing. So you could say that the social aspect is also really important when communication as a team and as individuals” -Follower 1

“I do not think that leadership styles have a different effect on remote communication, everyone has their own challenges on remote. When we are on site, communication from the leader is the same as before, but it is certainly difficult to transfer that energy via Teams. I personally like the hybrid model and I would assume that it is perfect for my more introverted colleagues. I personally need to visit the office at least a couple of times a week so that I do not get moldy at home, interacting with people is great in the office and communication is easier and it feels more personal.” – Follower 2

Conflict situations and problem solving as part of internal communication during hybrid model working

It appears from the respondents that the importance of communication is particularly evident in conflict situations, when disputed issues need to be resolved, a notable trend is also that conflicts most often arise from a lack of communication. Such as, for example, failing to give a clear role assignments as a leader or otherwise failing to communicate about the completion of certain tasks or deadlines. This lack of communication usually leads to conflicts, the resolution and mediation of which takes a lot of time away from the work itself. The lack of communication has become more prominent now with remote working, because the form of communication has changed to a completely electronic version and it has made communication more difficult, especially from the leaders point of view. The research also showed that leaders who lead with a coaching leadership style and they are leading a team of experts, a lot of conflicts arise from the fact that if they accidentally micro lead or intervene too much in the work of the follower.

“There are always conflicts because we do not live in a perfect world. Conflict might come from ambiguity of the roles or from the fact that sometimes have a little special or busy schedules...it had lead to that I have thought that hey, this is something that is easier for me to do now, rather than bothering someone on their day off or on their weekend or late at night, so the person who would normally have done it is terribly hurt that why I do not let him do the work and why I went to do it myself” -Leader 2

“There have been conflicts and they have usually been based on not knowing the other person that well. Most people are nice and no one is mean on purpose, so most conflicts are based on misunderstanding and poor communication, so it is important that people know each other and talk to each other.” -Leader 1

The respondents felt that during their leader`s careers, conflicts have always been resolved quickly and that sometimes emotional outbursts and conflicts are part of everyday life when leading others. And it has also been noticed that in an organisation where experts and proud professionals work, it is the things and matters that fight and are in conflict, not the people. In this work environment, all the leaders had an opinion that they have smart professionals in their teams, who also know how to behave professionally in conflict situations and never go in personal things during the conflicts. The research also showed that, most importantly, a solution and reconciliation is always made and conflict can be resolved.

“This kind of thing, on the other hand, is part of the workplace discussion, i.e. things are the ones arguing, not the people, then the voice is not even raised in the discussion and the conflict is resolved in an adult manner and in a civilized manner.” -Leader 2

Feedback between followers and leaders on communication during hybrid model working

During the interviews the importance of feedback was also brought up and receiving feedback for communication and interaction, whether the feedback was positive or negative it is vital for leader. As examples, the leaders in the study told what kind of feedback they have received about their own output and communication. Examples were brought up such as that some of the leaders went through things at too fast pace, so that the followers did not have time to internalise the discussed topic, this was seen to be particularly emphasised when work is done remotely. Leaders also get a lot of feedback that they know how to demand their followers in a good way. This is because the followers are experts and also want to perform their jobs in the best possible way and learn new things and develop in their work. The leaders felt that the feedback was really important, but many of them also pointed out that you also have to know how to do something with the feedback, if there is feedback that you do not know how to communicate clearly enough, then you have to ask the followers how they could improve that feature and thereby start developing themselves. So to speak, a good leader starts taking action immediately after feedback and does not just wonder about the feedback and what to do with it. Also during the study all of the 10 leaders agreed that giving feedback back and forth is also a very important way of communication.

“In the biggest companies normally are regular feedback discussions where you get feedback, and for example, I have received feedback that I am too fast, and I talk too much and I talk too fast, that the message may not get through and the subordinates are still in the starting pits, when I am already going. Having learned from this, always make sure and take care that everything is in sync when you communicate with your subordinates”
-Leader 2

“In our organisation we have done two times during 2 past years a huge research about feedback and leading...The most feedback has come from the fact that I know how to demand in a good way, but give space at the same time. Also that I communicate very clearly what the goals are and how to reach them. So, feedback comes more from the fact that I support and I trust to my subordinates, and I adapt them to new things and I am respectful. There has been a lot of positive feedback, but of course there have also been individual conflict situations where we may not agree on something, then as a leader you just have to trust your own vision but at the same time not push someone else.” -Leader 3

As mentioned earlier, giving feedback directly is very important for a leader to develop, it became clear in the interviews that feedback, giving and receiving it should be a dialogue and its importance as part of communication is also irreplaceable to the follower. Followers had

different views on giving feedback depending on their team background. All the followers who participated in the interviews also felt that giving feedback is a really important means of communication, especially when the pace of work is so hectic today, which is affected by remote working. Everything is so efficient in today's working world that the followers found feedback conversations with the leader to be pleasant experiences. During the feedback meetings people can speak honestly and directly and give the feedback. Followers also mentioned that to receive feedback is a good thing because with help of that they can learn and develop their own work. Feedback discussions were also perceived as an important part of strengthening trust and relationship between leaders and followers.

“Time to time we have development discussions where feedback is given directly to both sides. Outside of that, our team has an open culture, and, for example, our leader is very encouraging and cheerful. I have noticed when I am on site at the office that if someone is stressed out, the team leader often goes and lift the mood and feel of that person” -Follower 3

“We give feedback in both directions very directly and we have two-way discussions about how you have performed at work. If things have gone badly and the goals have not been reached, you will hear about it. Of course, modern times organisation leading do not involve yelling or army-discipline, but sometimes things are discussed in a strict tone, and we think about ways to do better next month, for example.” -Follower 4

The interviewees were also asked to give direct feedback on communication, and not only on feedback conversations, organised by the organisation and leaders, where work is evaluated, and feedback is given on the work. Both leaders and followers felt that communication is the best done on days when they are in office, then communication feels more personal and meaningful. During the research, it also became clear that when communicating face-to-face, people can be sure that the message will get through, and there is more time even for small moments when people can share things outside of work, which in turn increases work morale and increases the feeling of humanity in to working environment.

“As I already mentioned before, everything has its pros and cons, when it comes to communication, the office is better because then you can definitely get your point across and then you sometimes have time to exchange civil life issues and things with the whole team. Things feel more personal.” - Follower 2

There are also differences between the answers, for example those working in the sales team saw communication as a bit more straightforward than others. This has already been explained earlier in this study by the fact that, for example, leadership in the field of sales shows indications task-oriented leadership style, which is due to financial pressure and goals that sales teams and departments are facing. This was by no means perceived as a bad thing, but on contrary motivating. Even though in remote work people do not get as deep in the conversations

as in the office, it was felt that in the end, communication with the leader is pretty much the same, whether it is an office or remote day, because the whole team cannot be involved in sales event anyway.

“Direct communication and talking about things as they are is very important. I even feel motivated when I am pushed a little to move forward and achieve my goals. These basic communication things do not change that much whether I am at home or in the office.” -Follower 4

Analysis and Discussion

Formal and informal communication

In this study, the aim was that whether the role of the person in organisation is a leader or a follower, the interviewees were treated equally as individuals. As the first takeaway, what was interesting to observe were the interviewees` comments on how they generally feel that communication is distributed in their work culture. A clear vision of how formal and informal communication flourishes in their organisation culture was clear to notice, also a note that during working hours most of the time is spent on formal communication than informal, even though informal communication is highly valued inside to organisation and it is commonly valued in other organisations too (Koch & Denner, 2021). Informal communication only takes about 10-20% of the workday but its importance for the organisation is massive and it is vital to its culture (Zhao & Rosson, 2009).

If its true that 10-20% of informal communication takes place during the day, the question arises as to whether it is enough or even too much. Will work quality and efficiency suffer if there is less and less formal communication during work. In general, some leaders were worried about the well-being of their followers when in the hybrid model working on remote days they do not get to socialise with colleagues *“as a leader I have been a bit worried about how it has worked for my followers now when they spend part of the week working remotely”*(Leader 8). So it may be possible that even in a certain way, from the leaders perspective, more informal communication and social moments are needed. All in all, studies have shown that informal communication is also needed at workplaces so that people can forget the hectic and stressful work routine for a while and, in addition, with it is easier to build better team spirit and work environment (Koch & Denner, 2021).

Communication and Hybrid Model working, pros and challenges

Especially noticeable was that all the 11 leaders who were interviewed were leading in expert fields which means that the responsibility of carrying one's own work plays a huge role, like it was mentioned in previous literature and studies (Mäntymäki, 2020) and while the organisation studied in this thesis is implementing hybrid model of working it means that their working model is very flexible and that requires better and deeper interpersonal skills from the leaders (Joo, 2005). This leads to that leaders act as a mirror to their employees and try to give their employees space and tools to solve problems by themselves. Answers are not given in advance. This leads to the fact that the experts are allowed to do their work independently and the leader has more of a role to support them. Although leaders give their employees the freedom to take their own initiative and be independent in expert organisations it has also been found that this can cause challenges in communication, especially in hybrid model work. The lack of face-to-face communication are often a difficult situation, especially from the perspective of leaders (Daft, 2022; Kohont & Ignjatovic, 2022). Reasons for this is that it has been established that formal information is understood better when there is a face-to-face conversation. This is why there are two sides to the matter. Organisations want to give experts independence and autonomy while they work and that is the way to lead experts, but it may affect that the formal topics communication do not necessarily stay in the listener's head as efficiently when working remotely than on onsite (Rocci & de Saussure, 2016). As mentioned earlier, there is concerns about how the followers can cope without informal interaction at home, it might affect their ability to perform at work and that is one of the biggest concerns of the leaders. Followers in the other hand also see a silver lining in this dilemma, which is that in the hybrid model, a lot of time is saved on remote days when time is not used for e.g. travelling to work.

The empirical study also explored the challenges associated with the hybrid working model, where employees had both remote and in-office workdays. Leaders and followers recognised the benefits of the hybrid model, such as increased efficiency, time savings, and the opportunity for social interaction during office days. However, they also acknowledged the communication and emotional intelligence challenges posed by remote work. The hybrid model used by the organisation involved in the study means that they are all in the office 1-2 times a week on pre-agreed days, and on the rest of the days everyone can do their work wherever they want. Which can be seen in line with the studies of Vilkmann (2016), who claimed that main point of hybrid work is that part of the working time is performed at the office and part is done remotely. Other similarities were found between the study of this paper and previous research. In previous research it was stated that some organisations might have some designated days when everyone must be at the office instead of that every employee can choose the days by themselves (Hopkins & Figaro, 2021). In general, most of the team does their work remotely.

The interviews also included followers who could share their own opinion about communication from the employee's point of view when working with hybrid model. Around this topic there were many different answers, but one which can be concluded and came up in every interview was that the importance of internal communication has become more

prominent especially after the Covid-19 pandemic. The reasons for this are, for example, the growth of emotional intelligence in leadership and the increasing importance of the work well-being of one's own followers after the difficult pandemic times, when people could experience a lot of anxiety, loneliness and uncertainty about work and their own personal life.

All interviewed leaders and followers saw strengths and weaknesses in the working of the hybrid model and the communication during it. The study went in line with the previous literature, strengths of hybrid work were efficiency and trust between leaders and followers were seen as a huge strength. During the interviews, the leaders brought up various concerns and challenges that the hybrid model and especially remote working have brought to leadership. During the study leaders mentioned emotional intelligence and communication as a challenge and how they could be channelled effectively and comprehensibly enough for followers via laptop screens. The challenge of emotional intelligence in terms of leadership is that it is difficult to read the follower's moods and body language and to notice what kind of feeling the follower is having. If there are difficulties in personal life, it is difficult to give followers help and support, and it requires the followers own initiative to come and discuss them, which might be difficult for more introvert people and then it is challenging to dig the best out of the follower from leaders point of view. Leaders expressed difficulties in interpreting non-verbal cues and body language through laptop screens in online meetings, which have affected their ability to understand and connect with their followers. The interviews revealed that the reliance on various communication platforms and channels in a hybrid work environment added complexity. Leaders and followers mentioned the need to navigate multiple platforms, such as Teams, email, WhatsApp, and Slack, to communicate and share information effectively. This fragmentation of communication channels made it challenging to monitor the correct use of each platform and determine where internal matters should be shared. These concerns and seen weaknesses of hybrid work are in line with the previous literature and studies, as it was mentioned previously Hybrid work gaining more popularity in the recent years means that the communication is heavily reliance on technology and leaders in organisations have a new challenge to customise the best model of working to their team (Hopkins & Figaro, 2021). The challenge is that leaders have to know their own followers and their needs in order to get the best possible performance out of them. Some of the followers need social time and face-to-face communication, while other are satisfied with the fact that they can carry out their work duties in a place of their own choosing (Hopkins & Figaro, 2021).

The followers echoed similar concerns, highlighting the need for clarity in communication channels and expressing the desire for all information to be available in one place. They also emphasised the increased responsibility and trust that came with working remotely, appreciating the freedom but recognising the need to maintain the trust placed in them by their leader. In terms of communication, it brings challenges from the point of view of leaders, that not everyone is in the same place and information is given via screens or chats, and based on that it is difficult to judge whether the messages and important information really be understood other side of the screen. Some leaders, on the other hand, saw as a challenge the fact that remote work has brought with it the fact that there are so many communication channels that sometimes it is difficult to remember which channel to find information on and whether the

communication channels in question are used for the right purposes or if there are any cases of misuse.

According to the interviews the followers felt that the good thing about the hybrid model is that they themselves have much more free time and energy, especially on remote days when extra time is not spent on commuting to work and back etc. They also felt that the trust between them and the leader has increased, and they can work really independently. Going to the office every week split the opinions. Some interviewed followers saw that as a good and important thing, because socialising with their co-workers and some felt it is not that important because they can socialise with other during the free time. The followers agreed that communication is now more effective, but problems arise when you yourself face challenges at work and you cannot just go and nudge the leader by sleeve and have a face-to-face conversation. During the interviews it was also mentioned multiple times that the effectiveness of communication has also influences the fact that during the day leaders sit more in meetings at computers and the help or communication provided by writing in the chat does not drive the same thing. In the interviews, it was also mentioned that the challenge of communication is finding the right information in the jungle of different communication channels.

Based on empirical results, while working during to the hybrid model, the leadership style gives a small direction on what kind of communication is between leaders and followers, leaders who are purely coaching leaders give space and trust to their own followers and their task is to raise team spirit and support followers and give them the right tools to succeed at work and takes care of the well-being of all team members, which links to same what Mäkinen (2021) mentioned in the previous literature. The leaders of the hybrid model who also had task-oriented leadership were found to have a degree of directness and immediate feedback in their communication, as well as pushing towards predetermined goals in a certain way. In the theory part it was mentioned that the leadership is “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Charteris-Black, 2007, pp. 2), which can be linked to the finding mentioned earlier in this chapter. This also became apparent when followers were interviewed about the matter. It can be stated on the base of this research that followers of coaching leadership adapted leader felt that the communication with their leader was generally friendly and open. A lot of freedom and trust and even dare to talk about personal matters our loud in the work environment. One follower from the sales side took part in the interview and he felt, in addition to freedom and trust, that things were discussed very directly and both positive and negative feedback was given boldly but matter-of-factly.

When communication between leaders and followers is researched and considered in the context of working in a hybrid model, based on this research, it can be noticed that when work is done remotely, the leadership style does not have much importance for communication. Empirical research shows that according to leaders and followers, the biggest challenges and opportunities in communicating is related to technology, especially the abundance of current communication channels and platforms and their correct use. It was found out during the study by followers that, communication in remote work is not affected by the leadership style of one`s own leader, because the biggest challenge has been perceived to be that, for example,

getting help via computer is not the same thing as discussing face-to-face. For example, it is more difficult to get support and help from your own leader because remote work has been found to be very effective and as a result many of the leaders have stepped up their participation in meetings during the day, which leads to the fact that things may be asked in the Teams chat and communication via messages does not have the same effect on the followers` experience as with face-to-face conversations in the office.

Conflict situations and problem solving

Conflicts arise all the time because no one is perfect and the reason why conflicts arise in the work environment is, according to research, misunderstandings. If someone misunderstands, then it is a case of poor communication, either the matter has been told and articulated poorly, or the other party has not been able to listen, because listening is also an important part of communication (Jameson et al, 2010).

This study shows that the conflicts they have faced in their organisation have always been resolved and the reasons have been mentioned, e.g., the fact that everyone is professional and expert in their own field and that they are adults who understands that things have to be settled in the end. There is no information about whether the hybrid model has an effect that has been researched, that there would be more conflicts in remote work than in the office or vice versa. However, some formal communication happens through the communicating channels, which can lead misunderstanding because of the unclear written information. Timetables have also been one of the sources of conflicts, and that raises concerns. The corporate world is constantly becoming more efficient and fast-paced, and deadlines are constantly getting tighter (Men, 2014), so could that be a possible reason for increasing internal conflicts in the organisations in the future instead of a poor communication.

Feedback between leaders and followers on communication

Working in an expert organisation also requires a lot of skills from the leader, how to handle and communicate with professionals. One way is to create trust, which usually arises from honesty, openness and the ability to give and receive factual feedback. As the research revealed, trust is a two-way street and when communication is done correctly and honestly and space is given to the followers, leader can usually get trust back and an excellent working atmosphere is created.

Feedback can be given on many different occasions, but as a means of communication, giving feedback is vital, especially in the work environment. Feedback develops, stimulates and also challenges the employee. Also to learn how to accept feedback and talk about is a skill which is important to learn in expert professions (Guo & Sanchez, 2005). As stated in the study, it is important to listen when giving feedback, and at least the hybrid work has not caused problems for example in formal feedback meetings because they have been able to be organised both

remotely and in the office. In the other words, working in a hybrid model has not affected the giving of feedback between the leaders and followers. The question that arises when thinking about the future is whether giving and receiving feedback could be developed in the future. When everything is done electronically and most of the time of the week is remote. For example, electronic feedback surveys or the like could be effective in terms of data collection.

Conclusion

The research noticed a lot of similarities to previous literature and studies on the subject. The purpose of this study was to find an answer to the question: *How are leaders and followers experiencing the internal communication in organisation in the context of hybrid work?*

First of all, the study revealed that from the perspective of leaders, one challenge and concern is how informal communication works in the hybrid model on remote days. The importance of informal communication is huge in a working community, shared lunches and showing pictures of the dog to colleagues during a coffee break are things that cannot be experienced during remote work. Its importance cannot be emphasized enough, because informal communication is a small moment of the day, but it gives a person much more to talk and think about than just work. The good thing about the hybrid model is that people also spend time in the office 1-2 days a week, but the research shows that there is concern about whether it is enough in terms of social encounter and whether it is enough to build a positive and relaxed working community and team spirit that in the long run produces results and better quality of work.

When it comes to the question, how leaders and followers are experiencing the internal communication during the hybrid work, the answer is more complicated and according to the study, both pros and cons can be found. The hybrid working model brings both benefits and challenges for leadership, particularly in terms of communication and emotional intelligence. According to the research, this is due to the fact that, especially on remote days, it is difficult to have a mental connection with followers, because everything is communicated via laptops. This also complicates communication in the sense that efficiency has become an important element and leaders and followers feel that everything related to work is much more urgent. Messaging on different channels or quickly going through things via video calls is not necessarily the best approach in terms of communication. Another challenge noticed by the leaders is that the trust between followers and leaders has grown and the trust that work is done independently is high.

The biggest feature of internal communication during the hybrid work, which had negative implications during this study was that, leaders and followers recognised the need for the clear communication channels and platforms to facilitate effective internal communication. In particular, the number of different communication platforms and channels causes difficulties,

as it is difficult to remember where to find the right information, a challenge from the leaders' side was also whether communication platforms are used for the right purposes. Questions arose such as whether it is allowed to talk about work-related matters on WhatsApp. To address the challenges of hybrid working, leaders should focus on strengthening their leveraging technology effectively, and fostering trust and accountability among team members. Creating a supportive and inclusive remote work culture is crucial to ensure the well-being and engagement of employees. By adapting their leadership styles and utilising the available tools and guidance, leaders can navigate the complexities of the hybrid work environment and continue to lead effectively.

To conclude, communication in a hybrid work context was all in all experienced to be good, even though there are challenges around certain things, trust in doing work and efficiency and independence to work were seen as positive. Even on remote days there were seen many positive things, for example, people have more of free time. The best part of hybrid model was seen as the fact that there are certain office days during the week when the issues left to be occupied during remote days can be discussed when everyone is in the office at the same time. The most important thing in communication is the feeling of hearing and being heard, which affects social life, and therefore hybrid working, and communication was perceived as a positive thing for the most part.

Future research

It is recommended that the research be continued more deeply in the future so that communication and problems related to it can be solved and balanced in organisations. For example, the large number of communication platforms and how, as a leader, to stimulate followers better through technology and so that body language and emotions are better and easier to perceive and interpret. Another way is to study organisations over a period of 5-10 years and choose as a research target organisation that have only remote work, a hybrid model and only work in office. By this it might provide results in the longer term to see how the experience of internal communication differs in different types of organisations. Based on that it can be decided which of the models works best.

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