Postgraduate Dissertation

“Case Study research in the Cultural Development and Motivation of Remote Working Employees”

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Patras, Greece, “September” “2020”
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“Case Study research in the Cultural Development and Motivation of Remote Working Employees”

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I would like to take the opportunity to say a big thank you to my supervisor Mr. Konstaninos Koutsikos for all the support and advices provided during this dissertation. It is for sure that without his help I would not have finished the research. I would also like to thank my wife Anna for the understanding and the support over the long period this research took. Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family, especially my parents for all the support that provided through all the studies I have done until now.
Remote Working is a growing tendency in modern business environment. Also, culture is found to have a major effect in the performance of an organization. The way that culture is integrated or embodied by employees that do not work in the main office of the organization (satellite offices or remote working employees), and ways that can be used to support the development of culture is to be examined.

The study could help business to better understand the way that Remote Employees are feeling and explore methods that can be used in order to support the cultural development.

Case Study research methodology has been used to answer two main questions related to remote working:

- How to make remote working employees feel part of a team and that they contribute to a common cause?
- What ways / methods can be used to support the development of culture and motivation in remote teams?

The results of this research have been used in order to start a company related with remote working. The company is called GRemoters and is also presented in this dissertation.

Keywords

Remote Work, Motivation, Cultural Development, Engagement.
“Περιπτωσιολογική μελέτη στην ανάπτυξη κουλτούρας και κινήτρων για εργαζόμενους που δουλεύουν απομακρυσμένα”

“Ανδρέας Καράμπελας”

Περίληψη

Η απομακρυσμένη εργασία είναι μια αυξανόμενη τάση στο σύγχρονο επιχειρηματικό περιβάλλον. Επίσης, έχει αποδειχθεί ότι η κουλτούρα έχει σημαντική επίδραση στην απόδοση μιας εταιρείας. Οι τρόποι με τους οποίους η κουλτούρα ενσωματώνεται ή εφαρμόζεται από υπαλλήλους που δεν εργάζονται στο κεντρικό γραφείο του οργανισμού (δορυφορικά γραφεία ή απομακρυσμένους εργαζομένους) και τρόποι που μπορούν να χρησιμοποιηθούν για την υποστήριξη και την ανάπτυξη της κουλτούρας εξετάζονται.

Η μελέτη θα μπορούσε να βοηθήσει τις επιχειρήσεις να κατανοήσουν καλύτερα τον τρόπο με τον οποίο οι απομακρυσμένοι υπάλληλοι νιώθουν και εξερευνά μεθόδους που μπορούν να χρησιμοποιηθούν για την υποστήριξη και την ανάπτυξη της εργασιακής κουλτούρας.

Η μέθοδος της ερευνητικής μελέτης περιπτώσεων έχει χρησιμοποιηθεί για να απαντήσει σε δύο βασικά ερωτήματα που σχετίζονται με την εξ αποστάσεως εργασία:

- Πώς να κάνετε τους απομακρυσμένους εργαζόμενους να αισθάνονται μέρος μιας ομάδας και ότι συμβάλλουν σε έναν κοινό σκοπό.
- Ποιοι τρόποι / μέθοδοι μπορούν να χρησιμοποιηθούν για την υποστήριξη της ανάπτυξης της κουλτούρας και των κινήτρων σε απομακρυσμένες ομάδες.

Τα αποτελέσματα αυτώς της έρευνας έχουν χρησιμοποιηθεί για να ξεκινήσει μια εταιρεία που σχετίζεται με απομακρυσμένη εργασία. Η εταιρεία ονομάζεται GRemoters και παρουσιάζεται επίσης σε αυτή τη διατριβή.

Λέξεις – Κλειδιά

Απομακρυσμένη εργασία, κουλτούρα, κίνητρα, μέθοδοι και ανάπτυξη
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Remote Working is a growing tendency in modern business environment. More and more organizations choose to have some or even all their employees working remotely. There are several studies which suggest that half of the working force in the future will work remotely. When we talk about remote working employees we mean the employees that work for an organization from a remote location in respect of the main office of the company. One example may be the employees who work in the same town as the main office but instead of going in the office they work from home. Another example may be the employees who are located in a different town of even country.

It has been observed that some companies managers struggles or even fail with this kind of working relationship. As Mr. Beat Buhlmann notes, the main reason is because they try to apply the same methods that are used in office based teams (Buhlmann, 2018). In most of those cases that fail, business managers were treating organizational culture using the same mentality, methods and techniques that exist for used in traditional office environments.

Culture is found to have a major effect in the performance of an organization. How to make remote working employees feel part of a team and that they contribute to a common cause will be examined. The way that culture is integrated or embodied by employees that do not work in the main office of the organization (satellite offices or remote working employees), and ways that can be used to support the development of culture and innovation is to be examined, also.

The recent issue with the coronavirus and the quarantine, that was placed in order to effectively encounter the virus spread, proved in the most unexpected way that remote working is the future and a strategic necessity for modern business. There are many big companies like Facebook, Google, Twitter and Amazon that have recently announced their plans to have a big presentence of their employees working remote (Duffy, C. CNN Business, 2020).

Methods for new organizations / Startups are also reviewed and examined. Leading Remote Employees environment, implementation, benefits and best practices are reviewed and analyzed.
The study could help business to better understand the way that Remote Employees are feeling and ways to support the work culture development of those. Changing from Remote Working Employees to Remote Thinking Employees will also be considered.

In addition to that, the knowledge that has been acquired from this dissertation was used to start a new company “GRemoters”. A company that is aimed in supporting other organizations or individuals that are already working or willing to start working with Remote Teams. GRemoters and the services provided, as methods that can be used to support remote working teams, improve staff morale, increase workers engagement, help build remote team culture and hence enhance total organizations performance, are also described in this dissertation.

The method that has been used is mainly Research and data from available sources, Case and Literature Review-Scholarship.

This dissertation is part of my MBA study that I am doing during this period in School of Social Science in Hellenic Open University. One of the reasons that I started this degree was my willingness to do research in remote working teams. Having worked with various kinds of remote teams, I found that there is a lack of knowledge and methods regarding remote employees and how to make them feel part of a team. Also, during my studies in EAP and from the knowledge I acquired from the modules I studied, I have started to think about my first questions and how organizational culture development could be used in order to support my first thought. The main questions that this research aims to answer are:

- How to make remote working employees feel part of a team and that they contribute to a common cause?
- What ways / methods can be used to support the development of culture and motivation in remote teams?

The gathering of the data and the analysis of them begun simultaneously, as described in the methodology used. In order to support the analysis of the main questions and to help the future reader to fully understand the subject in research, some other aspects of remote working environments as well as what is motivation and culture in modern business were investigated and are also presented.
2 Research methodology

2.1 Introduction

Before choosing the methodology to be used in this study, a research was done regarding the methods that are available in order to sufficient cover the needed outcomes, which wanted to be achieved from this dissertation. Those outcomes were to answer as best as possible the issued questions and to propose real practical solutions for the addressed problems. Different kinds of research methodologies like Quantitative and Qualitative approaches were consulted. After choosing the qualitative method as more appropriate for this study, the different qualitative research methods that exist were studied in order to choose which one to use. Case study has been chosen as the most appropriate methodology for this research so further study for the case study method and the different approaches that exist was performed, in order to conclude to the final methodology to be used.

The research Methodology that has been used for this dissertation is based in the “Case Study” method and more specifically in the embedded multiple Case study. For the data, companies that are pioneer in the Remote Working field and are trusted by many well known worldwide companies, have been chosen. A more detailed analysis of the data used and why they have been chosen is described in chapter “Gathering Data”. Methods and techniques already used in Remote Working environments have been identified and documented in a way the support the strategy and the thinking of prospective organizations and managers willing to start, transpose to a remote management system or further their knowledge on how to manage a remote team. Even if there are some references to tools that are used in remote working environments, my main intention was not to investigate on the tools, but focus on the needs, procedures and management knowledge needed to run a remote working team.

Before explaining further the case study methodology and why it was chosen, a brief introduction to quantitative and qualitative data as well as different qualitative methods is presented below.
2.2 Quantitative vs Qualitative data

When doing a research there are two major groups of data that the researcher can use in order to do his analysis and draw conclusions from the sources he has used. Those two groups are the Quantitative and Qualitative data. Quantitative data, as the name implies, are based in quantity, meaning statistical investigation of available data or direct comparing of numbers. Quantitative research is the “systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques” (L. Given, 2008). It is used to quantify patterns, behaviors, or any other data. Quantitative research make the use of data that can be measured in order to come in certain conclusions about the subject in research. When gathering data for a quantitative research, the methods used are: any kind of surveys like online surveys, email surveys etc. polls, interviews, questionnaires, website cookies, observations etc. Those data can be represented in the form of numbers and the understanding and interpretation of those numbers can be used to predict a pattern.

Qualitative research is used in order to reveal and understand the behavior and methods used of the subject being in research. According to Stake “most contemporary qualitative researchers hold that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered” (Stake, 1995, p. 99). Exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Yin, 2009) are all different types of qualitative research methods. As Denzn and Linclon describe “qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter” (Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S., 1994). Qualitative data are used to approximate and characterize specific behaviors. Qualitative data can be studied, observed, extracted from real cases and of course recorded. Most commonly, those data are not numerical. Most commonly used methods for gathering data for a qualitative research are observations like real life scenarios observation, face-to-face interviews, process and record keeping.

Even if most researchers classify case studies as qualitative research and distinguish the qualitative and quantitative methods due to different approach of available data, Yin argues that “regardless of whether one favors qualitative or quantitative research, there is a strong and essential common ground between the two” (Yin, 2009, p. 15). As Yin argues qualitative and especially “case study unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence-documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations-beyond what might be available in the convention historical study”. (Yin, 2009, p 8).
Qualitative research is not used to prove theories, but to identify specific patterns and is more likely that the theory will emerge once the data have being gathered and the cases have been analyzed.

The lack of a large enough quantity of available data, the small number of companies and people working remotely in Greece, the nature of the main questions in research and since their answers are not based on numbers or quantities is was clear from the start that the quantitative approach was not applicable for this research. As a result the qualitative approach was chosen to be used for this dissertation since the main research was based in the analysis of real life scenarios, procedures, tools and techniques involved in remote working environments through the case study and patterns identification method. The research also focused in identifying potential bottlenecks in respect with performance in remote teams and hence propose solution or methods that can act in a positive in order to limit them.

2.3 Different qualitative research methods

Case study is not the only qualitative research method that exist. According to Creswell (2007) there are five different approaches that a researcher could adopt while doing a qualitative research. Those are: Narrative, Phenomenology, Grounded, Ethnographic and Case study research approach.

Narrative method is a method which mainly uses data that may be written, video recorded or spoken words by identities. It is data from individuals stories (Polkinghorne, D. E. 1989). It mainly focuses on real life experiences, as were leaved and documented by the individual person that actually had the experience. The proposed procedure when doing a narrative research consists the following steps. a) Decision about if the question or the analysis that the researcher is willing to investigate, can be covered by narrative research. b) Selection of the data to be used, usually data come from one or two individuals. c) Gather information regarding the subject of those data. d) Analysis of the gathered data, and e) actively involve participants in the research.
Phenomenology is quite similar to a narrative research with the main difference being that it uses data and experience gathered from several individuals, describing the same situation by their own perspective and trying to identify what all those individual experiences have in common. There are two major approaches for phenomenology research the hermeneutic and the empirical approach. The hermeneutic approach is using interpretation from the individuals who lived the experience. While empirical is using purely descriptive records. The procedure used in phenomenology research is common with the one used in narrative method with main difference that the researcher also asks the individuals two broad, general questions (Moustakas, 1994)

Grounded Research is used when the researcher intends to make a theory and not just describe what is being studied. The main idea behind this method is that the theory is generated by data gathered from a large number of subjects that actually experienced the situation. There are two mostly used approaches when doing a grounded research, the systematic and the constructivist approach, developed by Strauss, A. Corbin, J. (1990) and Charmaz, K. (2006) respectively. In the systematic approach, the researcher is trying to construct a theory that explains a specific activity, approach or procedure on a topic. Constructivist approach is based in the assumption that theory is not discovered but is constructed by the study the researcher is performing and the interaction with the subject. According to Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1990) the proposed procedures when doing a grounded research are: a) Decision from the researcher if the grounded theory is suitable for the research he/she wants to perform. b) Interview the participants asking them detailed questions regarding the process, the strategy and the effect of the subject. c) Collect other relevant data (other than interviews) c) Analyze the gathered data d) use the analyzed data to construct the theory.

Ethnographic Research is similar to grounded research but is focused in a much wider examination of data using a whole cultural group (Creswell, 2007). The researcher is using this method to describe the shared patterns of behaviors, beliefs and language of a group that shares the same culture. There are many approaches in ethnographic research like feminist, auto ethnography, business, medical and many others. Two of the most popular are the realist and the critical. In realist ethnography, the researcher tries to document the situation as accurately and real as possible without any distortion. In the critical method, the researcher tries to connect the analysis of the data with the wider cultural system. The
procedure used has the following steps. a) Decided if the ethnographic research is suitable for the research he/she wants to perform. b) Choose the cultural group that is going to be used for the research. c) Select what cultural aspects are going to be studied. d) Gather the data that are going to be used for the analysis. e) Make the analysis and make the “cultural portrait” of the group that has been analyzed.

Case Study is a research method that uses a single or multiple cases and types of resources within a bounded system. It is a qualitative method where the researcher analyses a bounded system or multiple bounded systems, using thorough data gathering from single or multiple sources (Creswell, 2007). Since case study method has been used in this dissertation it is further analyzed below.

2.4 Case Study definition and introduction

A detailed study on the method that was used for this dissertation was done in advance. More specifically different approaches of case study methodology were studied in order to conclude which was the most appropriate for this research. Even if other sources, than the ones described below, have been used in order to establish a firm understanding in the specific research method it is worth saying that the method used for this case is mainly derived by the methods and approaches described in the above three sources: Bedrettin Yazan in his “Three Approaches to Case Study Methods in Education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake” (Yazan & Bedrettin, 2015), Case Study research: Design and methods by Yin, R. K. (2009), Writing @ CSU an online Case Study guide of Colorado State University and final the book Case Study Methodology in Higher Education by Annette Baron and Kelly McNeal (Baron, A. & McNeal, K. 2019).

Case Study as a research method is mainly used in order to analyze and understand the processes involved within complex real world systems in their natural content. This can involve studying one or more cases and different analysis levels (Yin, 2009). It is used in qualitative research methodologies and “enables the researcher the opportunity to design research and is specifically tailored to the inherent and individualized complexity of the research problem, anticipated outcomes, and generalizability of the finding.” (Baron, A. & McNeal, K. 2019). According to Yin, each research method can be used for one of those
reasons Exploratory, Descriptive or Explanatory. Of course those methods can be combined according to the outcome needed. For this study all three methods were used.

Exploratory is called the initial research and is used to acquire more information and to understand more about the topic in consideration.

Descriptive is used to describe and provide further information on the topic. For this study it has been used in order to describe what is remote working environment, the types of working relationship etc.

Explanatory is used to answer “how” and “why” questions and is used to make sure that additional research is being considered. It is also used to analyze how events occur and how those events influence specific results.

2.5 Case Study – My approach

Most of the methods that are used for contacting a case study research have the same five basic steps: Plan, Design, Gather Data, Analyze, and Report. Yin describes case study research as “A linear but iterative process” (Yin, 2009, p9).

Each step has several actions / decisions that need to be performed. Those actions are illustrated in the picture below and are extracted from similarities found to the actions proposed from all three case study gurus Yin, Merriam and Stake as well as many other case study researchers.
Except from the plan step, which for this study is described in the Introduction and to quantitative vs qualitative data chapters earlier, all the other steps together with detailed information of each step and description of the followed procedure are described in the following chapters.

2.6 Designing a Case Study

When the researcher decides what he intends to investigate and which method is more appropriate in respect with the study he would like to perform, he can start with the designing of the case study. According to Yin, a research design is the pathway that is used
to associate and connect the gathered data with the researcher’s conclusions that are going to be drawn in respect with the initial intended questions willing to be explored.

The main reason to have a research design is to make sure that the gathered data are appropriate and are used in order to answer the questions that the researcher wanted to answer at the beginning of the research.

There are at least four problems that the research design is dealing with (Philliber, Schaw, & Sloss, 1980)

- What question to study?
- What data are relevant?
- What data to collect?
- How to analyze the data?

In other words the purpose of the design is to form a structure that is going to help the researcher to go from the start to the end of his research. In the start lies the questions, that are to be investigated, and at the end the outcomes and the results of the study that answer those questions and form the conclusions of the study.

Because of the complexity of case studies, it is very difficult to outline any specific or general method for conducting a case study research.

What a researcher could use is Yin’s (2009) five basic components of a research design.

1. The study’s questions.
2. The study’s suggestion (if any)
3. The units or subunits to be analyzed.
4. The logic connection of the data to the suggestion.
5. The principle for the conclusions.

Study Questions: The questions that the researcher is trying to answer should answer to: who, what, where, when, how and why. The six W’s as they are called by many are considered basic when trying to solve a problem. Most case studies are trying to find answers for how and why. One of the obstacles a researcher may face is to find the initial study questions that are covered earlier by other studies. Yin (2009) proposes three steps to prevent this from happening.
1. Using the literature in order to focus in a key topic, without worrying about specific questions.

2. Do a research in previous studies of the topic to be covered and try to find the question of those and if there are any new questions that arise.

3. Check previous studies and check if they provide information that can support new questions.

As described earlier, the initial questions that this dissertation is trying to answer are: a) how to make remote working employees feel part of a team and that they contribute to a common cause? And b) what are the different ways that can be used to support the development of culture and motivation in remote working environments? In addition this research also investigates, what is remote working environment, what are the different types of remote working relationship, what methods can be used by new organizations that are interested in working remotely, how to lead remote employees, what are the methods and techniques already used by organization with Remote Working employees.

Study suggestion: study suggestion is used in order to focus the attention of the research in what should be examined. In other words study suggestion is focusing the researcher in the direction of what he should study in order to answer the study questions set earlier.

For this study remote working environment techniques and methods are examined. For this purpose, organizations that already use this method of working have been studied, Journals related to management and specific articles related to remote working as well as literature related to management and human resources have been used also, further information of the data used can be found further down on this study in the gathering data, source chapter.

The Units to be analyzed: This component is used to define what the case is. In this dissertation for example, the case is the Remote Working environment. In different studies the unit may be a single disease or a specific situation. It would be pointless to analyze cases that are not relevant with the study questions that the researcher is aiming to examine. For example for this case, it would be pointless to do examination in organizations that have only office based working. In other studies, the cases are not so easily recognized so the researcher should be careful when choosing the case or cases. Addressing the question to be examined to others and discussing the cases that the researcher has chosen is a useful tool that can be used in order to best identify the units to be analyzed.
The logic connection of the data to the suggestion: This is referred to the way the researcher links the data to the suggestions. There are several techniques that are used, like pattern matching, explanation building, logic models, and cross case synthesis.

For this study almost all those techniques are used in various ways and places. Pattern matching has been used in the sense of examining what are the methods used from most of the organizations working remote, explanation building has been used in order to document and write down the methods used in remote working environments and cross case synthesis has been used in the sense that the methods used in Remote working environments and that are proposed in this study have been identified and synthesized using many cases to cross check them.

The principle for the conclusions: The researcher should also explain the logic under which he drew his conclusions. In some cases, this may be a statistical analysis that has been used. Other case studies are not dependent on statistics and hence the conclusions are driven through other ways. A major and important alternative strategy is to rely in theoretical suggestions following them in order to lead at the case study. A second method would be to develop a descriptive framework in order to organize the research. Those two methods have been used in this dissertation.

2.7 Type of data gathering process in qualitative research methods

As described before, there are many methods used in order to gather data while performing a qualitative research. The most commonly used are the above:

Face-to-Face Interviews: It is one of the most commonly used method. The data are gathered directly from the person being interviewed on one to one basis. Its main advantage is that the researcher can gather precise data directly from the people being actively involved.

Focus Groups: Another method used in focus group method which is performed using a group of people. Usually the group is between 5-10 people. It is used to explain complex situations
Process observation: For this method the researcher observes directly the process which is under investigation and writes down notes. Video recording and photography can be also used.

Case Study Research: In depth and detailed study of case studies are used to gather data. It involves the thorough understanding of the subject being researched. It can be used to do research on both simple and complex situations. Its main advantage is that it can use multiple qualitative data gathering methods in order to come to conclusions.

Process and record keeping: Is called the method in which the researcher uses already existing and reliable document or any other kind of similar sources on information for the purpose of gathering data. Those sources may be internet, seminars or conferences notes.

### 2.8 Single and multiple case approach

When doing a case study research, the researcher can use single or multi-modal approach. Single is referred as the method of using only one source of data collection that is used in the research. Multi case approach is when more than one methods of data collection are used in order to draw the study results. Collected data methods can be: observation, interviews, journals, books, focus on groups and or surveys.

According to Yin (Yin, 2009, p 46) those two approaches can be further divided in two more sub-groups being the holistic and embedded. In holistic analysis only one unit is analyzed while in Embedded several units are analyzed.
The researcher has to decide before any data gathering, if he is going to use single case or multiple cases so that to do his investigation. Single case research has five rationales (Yin, 2009) and are similar with a single experiment analysis. The five rationales that Yin describes are:

a. Critical Case: is the method where an already defined specific theory is studied. The researcher can use this method in order to examine the theory in detail and from his research validate, dispute, or enhance the theory.

b. Extreme or unique case: As the name implies, this method is referred to cases which are so unique and rare that even one single case should be documented and analyzed. It is commonly used in rare clinical cases.

c. Representative or typical case: it is used when the case in research is a “typical” situation such as a typical office set up amongst many that are used from an
organization. The analysis and results of this situation is assumed to be representative for all other similar situations.

d. Revelatory case: According to this method the researcher has the opportunity to study a situation which was unexplored until then, due to being inaccessible.
e. Longitudinal case: Here the researcher in examining the same case but in several time intervals in order to study the effect of time in the case.

2.9 Holistic and embedded analysis

Both types of cases, single or multiple, can be holistic or embedded. As described holistic is the analysis of one unit only. So, for single or multiple cases, when performing a holistic research means that the analysis is focused in one specific subunit. This for example could be how a specific process affects the performance of a business unit by examining one organization, when performing an one case study only or on how the same process affects the performance by examining the same process over several organizations. On the other hand, embedded as previously described is when the researcher is analyzing more than one unit. For example, in a single case embedded analysis the researcher may analyze several processes and how each one is affecting the performance, the morale or the financial outcome of an organization. While in multiple case embedded analysis the researcher would use several different cases to make his multi-unit analysis. Both holistic and embedded methods have advantages and disadvantages and the researcher should carefully choose which of two he is going to use, depending the kind and the depth of the analysis he intends to perform. Holistic advantages can be seeing when only one unit can be identified or when the relevant theory is also holistic. On the other hand, many researchers support that case studies that use multiple sources tend to be more correct and conclusive.

According to Merriam “the more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be” (Merrian. S.B., 1998, p 40). Many researchers prefer to use a multiple case analysis method in order to strengthen the validity of their results.
For this dissertation the multiple embedded case study design have been used. “The multiple case study design affords the researcher an opportunity to explore the phenomena under study through conducting a replication strategy” (Baron, A. and McNeal, K. 2019).

Multiple real life cases and methods that are used have been studied and analyzed in order to conclude in the main theory behind Remote Working and the methods used. Also, the same method was used to identify common mistakes that organizations may do and to propose possible solutions.

2.10 Gathering data, sources

As described previously several, sources have been used to gather data in order to analyze the Remote Working Environment and derive the methods and the techniques that are used from organizations. Those sources include real life cases examples from well-known companies with many years of experience in remote working teams such as, “How to build a strong Culture with Remote Employees” (Hall E., 2016) a video by the VP of People at Trello, Elizabeth Hall, that describes what methods are used by Trello in order to build strong culture in their organization.

Other sources were books like “Ultimate Guide to Remote Work” by Wade Foster (Foster, W. 2019) and the team of Zappier.

Journals: Several articles from Harvard Business Review and London City repository have been studied, some of them are:


And:

Other sources: Except from the well-known and documented sources described before, several other sources were used in order to get familiar with real life situations and come up with the types, methods and tools that are used in Remote Working Environments. Those sources include LinkedIn Training center and several related training sessions as well as other not so well known sites and journals. My personal experience and knowledge has been also used, since I have been working with Remote Teams for more than fifteen years for big multinational companies like Schneider, Vestas and others. Also, the last 5 years I have worked fully remote with big companies like Hexagon, TUV Nord and others.

2.11 Analyzing the data methods

Every research method should have a strategy regarding the analysis of the data that are gathered in order to have quality results. The methods used for the analysis is connected with the desired results, the questions to be answered, the type of the data as well as the skills and the experiences of the researcher (Maggopoulos G, 2014).

According to Yin, the case study analysis methods is the most hard and least developed feature of case studies (Yin, 2009, p127). While in the quantitative research method the analysis of the data is more straightforward, since statistics and mathematic formulas are used to analyze them in qualitative research, the analysis is strongly based on the researchers own style and empirical thinking. Yin suggests that a case study should have both quantitative and qualitative data analysis and give four general strategies while analyzing the data. The four strategies are: a) Relying on theoretical propositions, b) Developing a case description, c) Using both qualitative and quantitative data, and d) Examining rival explanations. (Yin, 2009, p. 130-133)

According to Bogdan and Bilken the analysis of the data in qualitative research is “the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, observation notes, or other non-textual materials that the researcher accumulates to increase the understanding of the phenomenon” (Bogdan RC, Biklen SK. 1982). The whole process of analyzing the data contains the understanding of the information contained in the data,
detecting patterns and drawing information useful for answering the questions want to be answered.

Stake (1995) uses a different meaning in the analysis and states that data analysis is “a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations” (Stake, 1995, p. 71). Stake proposes that data collection and data analysis should happen at the same time. He also differentiates the quantitative and the qualitative analysis of data in case study and he has used two wider strategies while analyzing data: a) Categorical Aggregation or b) Direct Interpretation (Stake, 1995, p 74). Stake also proposes that the researcher should be careful not to get excited by the data but be selective. Also he noticed that even if data that appear only once may be significant, the most important data are the ones that appear many times (Stake, 1995, p 78), noticing by this way the importance of the patterns in data analysis. He also recognizes that the proposed strategies may not apply in all the cases and adds that “Each researcher needs, through experience and reflection, to find the forms of analysis that work for him or her” (Stake, 1995, p. 77)

On the other hand, Merriam states that data analysis as “the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning” (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). She also favors the parallel data and analysis method. Merriam also supports using a dynamic data collection analysis and claims that the data analysis is not finished when the data have been gathered. She supports that the preliminary analysis of the data may lead the researcher to make changes in the research questions or give birth to new questions related to the research.

There are two major approaches for the analysis of the Qualitative data. The deductive and the Inductive approach (C. Sunday, 2016).

In an inductive approach the researcher gathers the data, then looks for patterns and then he develops the theory. The researcher, after gathering the data, identifies patterns in the data which can be used to develop a theory that could explain those patterns.

In the deductive approach the researcher works the other way around, he is using an already hypothesized theory and afterwards he is trying to use the data analysis in order to confirm or question the theory.
For this dissertation the analysis approach was basically inductive and was influenced mostly by Stake and Merriam methods.

The steps that were followed for the analysis of the data are the ones below and are illustrated in the following picture

- Research Questions
- Data Collection
- Analyzing the data in respect with the research questions
- Identifying patterns.
- Extracting data and theory.
- New questions arise
- Start from the beginning.

![Analyzing the data - steps](image)

**Figure 3 Analyzing the data - steps**

### 2.12 Reporting results from a Case Study research
Regardless the research method chosen to be performed, the final step of each research is to present the findings to an audience. Reporting or presenting the results is a vital step in all researches, since it is crucial in the sense that the outcomes of the research can be accessible in a meaningful way for reading or even further study after the analysis is performed. The results of the research could be used to further research, practical guide, theory learning or other, depending of what was the wanted result from the study and the way those results have been presented.

The presentation of the results of a case study is considered to be one of the most difficult steps while doing a case study research. Most of the case study methodologists argue that the reporting should start at the same time as data are gathered, rather than waiting for the analysis to finish. There are several strategies used for the reporting of a case study (like categorical, thematic, narrative) that are greatly depended on the type and design used for each specific research. According to Hancock, D. R. and Algozzine, B. (2006) the thematic analysis is the one mostly used by novice researchers. According to the method, the information gathered are examined with the questions of the research in order to conclude to answers. While examining the data, the researcher may choose to reexamine the initial questions in respect to the findings of the analysis.

There are several characteristics that according to Robson each case study reports should have (Robson, 2002). Those should be that each research report should:

- Tell what the study was about.
- Communicate a clear sense of the studied case.
- Provide a “history of the inquiry” so that the reader can see what was done, by whom and how.
- Provide basic data in focused form, so that the reader can make sure that the conclusions are reasonable
- Articulate the researcher’s conclusions and set them into a context they affect.

(Robson, 2002).

All those characteristics depend also of course on the type of case study the researcher is performing and the design of the case study he has chosen to do. For example, not all data gathered can be provided in focused form in quantitative research this may be easy and straight forward, in qualitative research however this may be not so easy.
Yin also addresses that the report type of the case study should also depend in the audience the researcher is willing to present it. Some of the audience types are a) dissertation committee, b) academic colleagues, c) potential customers, d) funders. For each audience, different aspects of the reporting may be important. For a dissertation committee, the methodology used and the details of the steps performed during the research are important. For a non-specialist the most important part is the final analysis and the answer to the questions rather than the method used. Each case study report may have more than one target audience and the researcher may choose to do one report that can be addressed to all the audience or make separate report for each target group.

Yin also suggests six options for the structure of the report “linear-analytics, comparative, chronological, theory-building, suspense, and unsequenced” (Yin, 2009, p164) each of them used depending the type of the case study:

**Figure 4 Six options for the structure of a case study research report.**

**Linear-analytics**: Is the standard perspective for writing reports. Linear analysis usually follows the next steps. What is the research topic and what literature may be already available, what are the methods that have been used, which are the findings from the data gathering and their analysis, what are the conclusions from the research and any implications? Since it can be used in explanatory, descriptive or exploratory case studies, it is commonly used in dissertation researches.
Comparative: While using this structure, the researcher repeats the same case study twice or as many times as needed in order to compare different descriptions or points of view. The same research could be described many times using different point of view in order to identify all the aspects of the study.

Chronological: This is referred to the report were the data are represented chronologically. It is used for cases that are related with the time effect. It has an important role when doing explanatory research, since if something is due to an event that happened previously, it is crucial when examining the situation to understand what happened before the event in order to reach to it.

Theory-building: The presentation of the research is based in a theory-building logic. It is used in exploratory and explanatory researches approaches, since they can both be used when the research purpose is to build or examine theory.

Suspense: This structure is the opposite of the linear-analytic structure. The conclusions or outcomes of the research are presented first and then they are supported, in the next chapters with evidence and explanations for the conclusions. It is used mainly in explanatory case studies.

Unsequenced: In this structure there is not specific guide for the sequence of the chapters as it is of low importance. It is used mostly in descriptive case studies were the order of the chapters is not critical. However, the researcher must make sure that all the topics are covered, even if their order do not matter.

For this dissertation the approach that was used depends on the linear-analytics and the theory-building structure. The whole report starts with the introduction chapter that describes what is the research about, giving an overview of the current situation in remote working, what are the aims and the objectives of this dissertation and the questions to be examined. Then, the methodology used and why it has been chosen is described, it continues with the data that are gathered, the analysis and the conclusions from the research. There is also a chapter with a real-life implication of this research the “GRemoters” and the description of it.

As mentioned earlier, the Methods and techniques that are already being used in in Remote Working industry, have been identified and documented in a way to support the strategy and the thinking of prospective organizations and managers willing to start, transpose to a
remote management system or further their knowledge on how to manage a remote team. Even if there are some references to tools used in remote working environments, my main intention was not to investigate on tools that are used, but focus on the needs, procedures and management knowledge needed to run remote working team. So, for this reason, the theory-building structure has also been used.

I have also chosen to follow the thematic analysis that is proposed by Hancock, D. R. and Algozzine, B. (2006), so the approach used was also to examine all the gathered data with the questions that were in research, in order to conclude to answers. As described in this method, while the process of gathering data was happening, the initial questions were reexamined and more questions that supported the initial research question were formed.
3 Findings - Analysis and discussion of findings

3.1 Introduction

As it has been described in the earlier chapters this dissertation is based in the case study research methodology and its main questions that are going to be examined are the following:

- How to make remote working employees feel part of a team and that they contribute to a common cause?
- What ways / methods can be used to support the development of culture and motivation in remote teams?

The approach used was the multiple case study research and the analysis was based in the inductive approach. The data gathered were used to identify patterns on which the analysis was based.

The first step was to start searching for relevant sources of information that could be used in this research. The analysis of the findings started almost at the same time as when data gathering procedure has been started and continue until the end of this study.

The next step was to investigate which method was the most appropriate for this research and hence available research methodologies were studied. Due to the nature of the above questions that were the purpose of this research, the available sources found and due to the fact that remote working is something relative new, the qualitative method and in more details the case study approach, was chosen as research method for this dissertation.

In order to support the analysis of the main questions and to help the future reader to fully understand the subject in research, some other aspects of remote working environments as well as what is motivation and culture in modern business were investigated and are also presented. For this, two main methods were used, the case study and the literature review. Case study method and pattern identification was used to cover information related with remote working, like what types of remote working relationships exist. Where literature
review was used to describe subjects like what culture in modern business is and what is motivation.

3.2 Remote working employees – Different types of remote working

For the information provided in the following paragraphs both the data gathered from real life cases as described in chapter 2.8 of this dissertation and the personal experience from all the companies I was working for have been used. For the analysis the inductive approach was mainly used in order to identify patterns and extract the data relevant with the descriptions provided. The linear-analytics and the theory building structure, as described in chapter 2.10 was also used.

3.2.1 Who is a remote working employee / what is remote working?

Remote working employee is called any employee that works from a remote location. He/she may be permanent employee or freelancer.

Remote working, as the name implies, is the working style where the employee works remote, in respects to the office space of the organization. A remote worker can work from home, from a remote office, while traveling, from a café or anywhere he chooses. The Employee may work full time remotely or part-remote meaning that he/she may work all the days’ remote or may some of the days choose or must work from the office.

3.2.2 Types of remote working relationships

There are several types of Remote working relationship. The most common are described below.

- Permanent / Full-time remote working employee
Permanent Full-Time remote working is the Working relationship in which the employee is being paid per month and have the same benefits as if he was working in the office. Those include salary, healthcare coverage, office equipment, bills for tools used in the job like phone and intern etc. Depending the type of work permanent remote working employee has to work the same working hours as the working hours followed in the main office, or most usually they have the flexibility to manage and schedule their working hours according to their desire.

- **Part-Remote Employees (Flexible or Telecommuting)**

A part-remote employee, sometimes also called Flexible or Telecommuting, is the relationship in which the employee is working part-time in the office and part-time from his home, or any other remote place. The organization may give the opportunity, or request from the employee to physically be in the offices some of the time, giving him the chance to have a part-time sense of culture and a relationship status of a traditional office based working relationship and in the same time providing him with flexibility.

- **Freelancer. (Contractor)**

Freelancer it the type of relationship that is most commonly found to be used in remote employees that work in a different country, in respect to the main office/s of the company. Freelancer works for long- or short-term projects, for one or more companies. They are usually getting paid hourly or per project. They have almost full flexibility regarding managing their working hours and their compensation includes all the costs that may occur, meaning that they have to manage any extra costs for healthcare coverage, office equipment, tax, etc.

### 3.2.3 Types of working environments in relation with remote working employees
The next few paragraphs try to describe the different environments that exist in remote working in relation to the main offices (headquarter) of the business (if there is one) and where the employees of this organization work. This is done in order to help the reader understand that when we talk about remote working, there may be different types of relations regarding one or more employees and the rest of the team.

The working environments that were discovered through this research are the following:

There is only a headquarter. The business has one office where most the employees work (in an office based environment), where remote workers work in a remote environment. So, the majority of the employees work in the office, while there are also some employees working remote.

There is a Headquarter, satellite offices with one or small numbers of employees and remote employees. The majority of the employees work in the main and satellite offices, while there are also employees working remote.

One or small number of remote working employees. There are cases that only one or very few employees are working remotely, whereas the rest team works from the office or offices of the organization.

All employees are working remotely. There have been several new companies that have chosen to have all of their team work remote.

We should also take under consideration the differences between established organizations and a startup organization. Established organizations where most of their work force is used to work in offices and have recently chosen to move to a more flexible working environment, may find it more difficult to go remote. While a new company that starts now and all the employees are new, may find it easier since office culture is not yet developed between the employees.

3.2.4 Reasons to be a remote employee. Reasons to have a remote employee

There are several reasons why an organization would choose to have some or all employees work remotely. Also, someone may choose to work remote for several reasons. The data used in order to identify those reasons were mainly real life cases, journals and training
material from LinkedIn as described in chapter 2.8. The analysis of those data was done using the inductive approach described in the methodology used.

- The employees are more flexible in managing and choosing the hours they prefer to work.
- The employees with children may prefer to work from home, so that they can also manage the time needed for taking care of their children.
- There is no time or cost needs in regard with the daily driving to the office since most commonly the office of a remote working employee is in their own home or in an a very near location, (elimination of commuting time).
- The employees with health problems may prefer or have no other option than working from home.
- It is required by the nature of the work. For example, a service center that is located remotely in respect to the office. Someone who is working on a remote project. Customers are located in different town than the organization’s main offices.
- In the case of Freelancers, the Employee can make extra money since there is the option to work as many hours as he /she wants.
- Location preference. Many people live in places that may be far from industrial or office centers, so they have the opportunity to work from their hometown without having to move to a new location to find a job.
- There is the option to work while traveling.
- Organizations can expand the territory that they are looking for employees focusing on the best employees regardless the place or country.
- Organizations can have less expenses by having remote working employees. No need for office space and bills related to this.

### 3.2.5 Advantages and disadvantages for remote working teams
The aim of this chapter is to discuss some of the main Advantages and Disadvantages of remote working both from the perspective of the organization and the employee.

The recent COVID-19 crisis and the “lock-down” forced many organizations to have most of their employees work remote. It is not strange the fact that many of those organizations decided that some of the work will continue to be remote, even after the crisis, benefiting, by this way, from the great advantages that remote working provides.

It is also noticed that in many cases, employees working remote are more productive. (Strauss K., 2017)

Advantages:

- Organizations have the option to hire the best employees from all over the world.
- The employees save a lot of time since the commuting time and costs related to commuting are lower.
- The employees are more independent and have greater flexibility.
- The productivity is increased since there are fewer office related interruptions.
- It may assist employees with health problems.
- The company’s working hours can be extended.
- Helps for a cleaner greener environment.

Disadvantages:

- Is not applicable in all cases, for example if specialized equipment are needed.
- It is more difficult for employees to network.
- Employees’ home bills can increase.
- Not all employees can be productive while working remote.
- Could create difficulty in scheduling meetings and coordinating projects.
- Supervision and evaluation needs a lot more preparation and can be more difficult.

3.3 What is culture in modern business
For this chapter data gathered as described in chapter 2.8 of this dissertation were used. The analysis was based in pattern identification and was mainly focused on answering the questions that were set up in the beginning of this research, as it is also described in the method used. Both Exploratory and descriptive methods as described in chapter 2.3 were used and linear-analytics and comparative structure approach as described in chapter 2.10 was used. Literature review also was used were necessary to present theory needed for the better understanding of the analysis.

According to Richard L. Daft (2014) “Culture is the set of keys values, assumptions, understandings, and norms that is shared by members of an organization and taught to new members as correct”

More simply culture can be the commonly accepted opinions or assumptions regarding the way things are done within a company. Those can be tangible, like accepted dress code, food, language used or intangible such as behavior in special occasions, values, equal opportunities belief, and deeper beliefs like truly family comes first.

The importance of Culture in modern business environment and its effect on the performance, has been accepted from almost all the companies. A lot of them, also have a specific, strategy for the development of organizations culture.

All organizations accept the importance and the effect of culture and have invested a lot of resources in the culture development of the organization. Some culture quotes from well-known companies are presented:

“Just for fans” – that's Xiaomi's belief. We are led every step of the way by our hardcore fans. Many of our employees were Mi fans before they joined us. As a team, we share the same relentless pursuit of perfection, constantly refining and enhancing our products to create the best user experience possible. We are also fearless in testing new ideas and pushing our own boundaries. Our dedication and belief in innovation, together with the support of Mi fans, are the driving forces behind Xiaomi’s unique products. - Xiaomi Culture” – (Mi Middle East, 2020)

“Move Fast. Be Bold. Be Yourself. At Facebook, you’ll have the opportunity to work with great people, tackle big challenges and make a real impact — while being your unique, authentic self at work.” – (Facebook Careers, 2020).
“We will only achieve our mission if we live our culture. We start with becoming learners in all things—having a growth mindset. Then we apply that mindset to learning about our customers, being diverse and inclusive, working together as one, and—ultimately—making a difference in the world.” (Microsoft Culture, 2020)

3.4 Why organizational culture is important

Culture is a vital part of everyone’s daily life. It influences our way of thinking, the way of doing things, the commitment someone may have, the relationship with our co-workers, what we are waiting from the organization we work for and affects our productivity and efficiency.

There are two important functions that the culture supports in an organization a) it supports the relation of members in respect to the way they can communicate with each another b) supports the adaption to external environment. Richard L. Daft (2014)

3.5 Culture development in remote working environment

“Culture is something that organically evolves every day with every shared interaction.” (Gutman, 2018). While in office environment, the culture can be built through activities usually not organized but spontaneously happen, like going for a coffee or a lunch with a co-worker, attending happy hours after work, eating all together at the same time, chatting at the watercooler or even dressing up for special occasions.

In the other hand, in remote working environment for culture to develop it must be organized and proactive. Activities like, going to grab a coffee with a co-worker or just going for a beer after work cannot just happen since people do not work in the same place or even at the same times (employees may come from different countries with different working times). Hence, activities related to culture development must be well organized by someone and have a specific time.
But culture in remote working environment is not only about meeting co-workers or having a lunch all together, it is also about:

- The communication method used from each employee for internal needs. When to use phone call conversation, email, chatting or videoconference should be defined and communicated to each new employee.

- The way that communication with people outside the company is done. How fast should a customer’s request be answered? What is the most important a quick answer or a slower yet of high quality answer?

- Even how many hours each employee is supposed to work must clearly be defined in a remote working environment.

Safety guidelines and rules must be accessible by all and even basic safety rules should be passed to each new employee from the first day of work. Methods like on work training are used to “pass” culture in a new employee however again the methods and techniques are different from an office environment and has to be taken under consideration.

3.6 Tools/Methods used for building remote teams cultures

Culture may be described in a book or in a set of rules, however it is something that is build day by day by communicating, sharing experiences and a common environment of interplay.

Some of the methods that are identified from this research to be used, by well-known companies that embrace remote working, in order to support Culture development are:

- Video call with teammates for an hour after work. (Hangouts)

- Having virtual place to share photos from vacation, chat about favorite food recipes, or discuss books recently read will help draw out organic conversations people would naturally have if they were working in an office.

- Some companies, like Zapier and Trello, use apps (Donut, a Slack app) designed to pair workers together every week allowing them to discuss about matters like work, life family,
music or anything else, simulating the office social life and encouraging people from different projects or departments to get to know each other better.

Onboarding process as a method for new employees to learn more about the company’s culture, to get to know some co-workers more personally or learn about habits other employees have.

Some companies choose to have the new employees work for a week or two in the office before someone goes remotely. Having, this way, the opportunity to get to know some of the persons that they will work with and some of their habits.

Even if work that each employee is doing is independent, company may ask from people for Overlapping working hours, so everyone knows that at those hours everyone is working and is available.

Assignment of a buddy that helps the new employee to get to know the company’s culture from someone within, the team dynamics and the company history.

Meeting all the team once or twice per year. During those meetups organized events that help in growing the teams’ culture are organized. Events likes playing a sport together, canyoning or other group activities help the team members to get to know each other more.

Finally, organizations have to remember to communicate “musts” that would like to represent. Culture slogans like “Safety First” - Vestas, “We will never – and I mean never – turn our backs on our employees.” – Howard Schultz, Starbucks, “We believe in work+life, not work vs. life.” – Dharmesh Shah, HubSpot should be communicated with any mean possible (emails, chat, while in meeting, etc.)

All the organization should represent the culture that the organization is willing to build.

3.7 Startups - Building culture for remote working employees

It is understood that for new companies especially Startups, as well as companies that are in the process of transitioning to have employees work from home, will most definitely luck of clear established managerial procedures, rules and guidelines of how to work remotely.
Analysis of the data gathered using the inductive approach showed that organization should take under consideration the following:

Scheduled meetings between managers and employees in these cases are a must. In those meetings both managers and employees should discuss the expectations from each other while working from home.

Working hours: How many hours per day should the employee work? What hours should the employee be online? Does the employee have to be online all the time?

Response time: Is there any expectation regarding how fast an email should be answered? Should an email schedule be established? Similar questions for text messaging and chats should be answered also.

Be clear of the tools that are needed to get the work done. Computer, Desk, Printer, Mouse, Keyboard, etc.

### 3.8 Motivation

Similar approach when gathering and analyzing the data, as described in chapter 3.3 was used. The analysis was based in pattern identification and was mainly focused on answering the questions of this research, as it is also described in the method used. Both Exploratory and descriptive methods as described in chapter 2.3 were used and linear-analytics and comparative structure approach as described in chapter 2.10 was used. Literature review also was used were necessary to present theory needed for the better understanding of the analysis.

Every person needs motivation to perform in any of its tasks that he/she may have. Motivation is the desire and the rewards that push someone in performing (or not performing, in the absent of motivation) a task or action. As Daft describes in his book (Daft, 2014) rewards can be either intrinsic or extrinsic, or both. Intrinsic are those rewards that have to do with internal causes such as, desires, needs, interest or intentions. While extrinsic are those that are related to external causes such as salary, bonuses, promotions, penalties.
Employee Motivation is the amount of this desire, enthusiasm, and level of energy that a worker brings to their working related activities.

There are several studies that show that Motivated Employees come with better organization performance (Deressa and Zeru, 2019).

Managers bear the responsibility to promote the employees motivation by finding the best balance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors, techniques and rewards in order to keep employees engaged and accomplish high work performance.

According to the content theory of motivation (Daft, 2014, pg. 443) there are five needs that motivate people and hence employees also. As per the theory that was developed by Abraham Maslow (Maslow, 1943) and is called “Hierarchy of needs theory” there are five needs that are related to motivation. Taking those needs one step further we can say that those needs have to be covered regardless if the employee is working in an office or remotely, however one can understand that the methods to be used to accomplish them may be different:

Physiological needs. This is referred to the need of any people for physical needs like food, water home or car. In remote working this also covers thinks related to the work like a good PC, internet access or an adequate salary.

Safety needs. Refers to needs that have to do with the feeling of security and the emotional stability. In remote working this has to do with the employees feeling that there is a job security and there is not threat of losing his job. Benefits other than salary, like health coverage is another example of safety need.

Belongingness needs. Refers to everyone’s need to feel that he is accepted and belongs to a group or team. In remote working this has to do with the employee’s feeling that he is part of a team and not just an individual. It also implies that there is communication and a relationship between him and the managers.

Esteem needs. Refers to the desire that others know your existence, be recognized and be appreciated. In remote teams this corresponds to the need of the employees to be recognized when their performance is good, to be appreciated for their work and not to be just a remote pc but an equal employee working remotely.
Self-actualization needs. Refers to the need of people for self-accomplishment and achievement. In remote working employees this is related with having equal opportunities to grow, regardless if they work remote or not, and have the same training opportunities as office workers.

3.9 Motivation and remote working

Regardless the work relation, remote working or office based working the need of employee motivation in every modern organization is vital and the desired outcomes for motivated employees are the same.

As described before, working from home or office people have the same needs and things to be successful.

The needs for Existence, Relatedness and Growth as described by Clayton Alderfer in his ERG theory (Guterman & Alderfer, 1972), or the satisfying factors such as absence or job dissatisfaction, good working conditions, pay, interpersonal relationships, achievement, recognition and opportunity for growth as described by Frederic Herzberg in his two-factor theory (Herzberg, 2003) still need to be satisfied regardless if someone is working from home or in an office. However the approach and the techniques used for Remote Working conditions are different.

Those techniques, tools and methods used by organizations that have remote working employees have been identified by this research using the “pattern” method are described below.

Effective Communication:

The fact that remote teams do not work under the same “roof” does not mean that this should be any reason for hindering their communication.

Good communication is vital so that all the work related information like projects, tasks, goals and deadlines can be passed in all the team. Communication also helps keep workers’ morale up and bound the team together. It is difficult for the employees to ask any question
that may arise, if there are not good and effective communication channels and do not know to whom they should communicate for their questions. Staying in touch with the team is crucial, by using methods like planning on monitoring all relevant electronic connections, using proactive messaging, face to face meeting through video conference, the team will get more connected and be more productive.

Meetings should be planned regularly, there should be tools for water cooler conversations. If something urgent comes up, an easy and fast communication should be available also. The communication should be organized and well prepared to be effective. Tools used, chat rooms available and the time of communication, should be well prepared by the management and available to all employees.

All the successful organizations with remote employees have heavily invested in remote communication tools and trained their employees when and how to use them in order to be able to communicate for both formal and informal needs. It is also vital to make clear that even the most common methods of communication like emails and chat rooms or phone calls are also available for urgent matters.

Have cleared defined goals.

While in Remote Working environment, managers cannot just go through the employees’ desk and have a quick check about the work progress of a project or any other related questions, or in the contrary the employee cannot just go to the manager office and ask what is required from them for a specific task.

For employees to know what the management is expecting from them, is a positive motivator factor. While having managers telling employees that they missed some deadline, or that the project they are working is not going according to what was intended by the organization, is another negative motivator factor, especially when the employees did not know from the start the deadline or the specifications that were needed.

It is very important that goals are set and agreed-upon from both managers and the employees.

It is observed that the need to have those goals clearly defined, in written format and accessible at all the time is crucial in remote working environments. Also it is necessary to
be careful and have those goals monitored and re-examined every time the work related field of the employee changes.

Like in most cases the tools used in remote teams for goals set up and monitoring are specialized cloud software tools. Information about stakeholders, team members with expectations from each one of them and method used to track goals must be available and accessible from all the team through those software. Organizations should make sure that both managers and employees have the training and the qualifications needed to effectively understand, use and monitor those programs.

**Build personal relationship with and between Employees.**

Regardless working in office or from home, people have the need to know with whom they are working with. While talking about where someone spent his vacation or about the new car someone bought comes naturally in an office environment, with remote working employees this is something that must be intentional planned by the organization and the management.

Personal relationships are vital for positive motivation since trust, feeling part of a team or even asking for a favor is easier when someone has personal relationship with his teammates. Knowing that you share the same passion for a sport, music or hobbies are some of the things that can bond the team together. An organization should have the necessary tools and methods available for enchanting this personal relationship build between teams.

One of the most effective way that was noticed from this research, was to have annual or even semi-annual face to face meetings with all the company members, or if not possible not all the company then with the team members. Those events could be used to give feedback to employees, build organizational culture and to have the opportunity to get to know team members in a more personal way and to give reasons for light communication after the event, when being remote.

Other commonly used methods are: having chat rooms for “light chat” available, plan coffee breaks or have launch and at the same time use cameras and audio to give the opportunity for casual chats, have planned informal video chat between employees giving them the opportunity to talk about anything that may want.
Management of output, not activity.

It is difficult for an organization to keep track of how much time remote employees really work, what time they work or even if the time they sit at their desk they actually work or not. Employees working from home may find that they are more productive if they work during night, or if they take hour breaks during work. If the work is done there is no reason for the management to interfere with the specifics of work activity of each employee. There is no reason for management to put any restrictions if the needed job quality is achieved and the output of the employee is not affected negatively.

Giving Feedback.

Organization should develop specific tools for measuring each employee output and have this output available to the team. Knowing exactly the amount of job an employee has done is a good motivator factor since the earlier it is noticed that an employee has not reached the output needed by him the soonest the employee will act to do so. Having employees knowing that they perform well is a positive motivator for them.

Also, by having the needed due dates and the work progress available to all the team members will serve as motivation to get the job done within the needed time.

Transparency in the evaluation methods is also important for remote working employees’ motivation. Having well-known criteria that determine if an employee is effective while working from home and how well or not, they are performing acts as motivator for the employee to effectively accomplish those criteria. Managers should have those thoughts in mind and establish tools for all those described above.

Build strong Culture.

Culture acts as motivation in everyone’s daily life. The unspoken rules of what is allowed or not, or for example what kind of dress someone should wear is each occasion, act as positive or negative motivation factors for everyone. And while culture development comes
“more” naturally in an office environment, in remote office environment it is something must be planned by the management.

Hence activities related to culture development must be well organized by someone and have a specific time.

**Use up-to-date technology.**

Nothing is most frustrating and kills motivation faster than a slow computer or programs with big problems. Investment in fast internet connection and high-end technology is vital for most remote jobs and the organization should encourage employees to either invest on those or even being funded by the organization.

In the recent event with the COVID and the fact that many employees had to work remotely due to the virus and the lockdown, it was noticed that when the businesses have forced remote employees to use their own PC and their home internet access, even if those were meant to be shared by more than one person in the family, this had a major negative effect in employees motivation.

Technology used for video-conferencing, messaging, sharing of files, remote project management should be well known and invest in them by any organization wanted to work remotely. Training for this kind of tools, should also be available for anyone in the organization.

**Keep employees happy.**

Studies have shown that happy employees are more motivated and perform better. The study showed that happiness increased the productivity by 12% (Andrew Oswald, D. E. P. and D. D. S. (2020)).

Some of the tools that can be used by managers to keep remote employees happy, are the following:

a) Have a conversation with employees to determine what company needs to do to put their minds at ease.
b) Keep an eye on how the organization can support the employees on having a nice working environment, even if they work from their home.

c) Acknowledge with small gifts achievements.

Collide working time.

Collide working time at least some days per week. Companies found out that by having some days all employees work at the same time helps in various ways. Firstly, if you want to talk to someone and you know that both of you work at the same, then you know for sure that you will find him. Also, by knowing that all employees are working at the same time and being able to see activity in the communication tools like chat rooms, then this supports the feeling of being part of a team.
4 Applying the research results in a real life scenario - GRemoters

4.1 Introduction:

As I mentioned earlier one of the reason that I started this MBA was my passion and willingness to do a research in remote working environments. Having worked for many years with various types of remote teams, I found that there is a lack of knowledge and methods regarding remote employees and how to make them feel part of a team. Especially for companies that have both office based and remote employees, I noticed that even thought for the office based employees there is usually some strategy to support their engagement and their organizational cultural development, the same does not apply for the remote employees, at least most of the times.

The working experience and the passion that I have in remote teams, the knowledge acquired throughout the modules of the MBA and this dissertation, and the recent situation with the COVID-19 virus, which forced many organizations rethink the remote work option, supported something that I was thinking for many years now, to start a company that is related with remote working organizations and employees. The company created is named GRemoters, from the words Greece and Remoters.

The company’s webpage is [http://www.gremoters.com](http://www.gremoters.com) and is the first company created in Greece specialized in providing support and consulting services for organizations and individuals willing to work remotely from Greece. I strongly believe that remote work is the future and a strategic necessity for modern business.

The main purpose of GRemoters is to support both the organizations and the individual employees in their remote working experience. This is done by providing services that can make their every-day remote work life easier. The main focus on the provided services is to support the cultural development, motivation, equal opportunities, business ethics, and engagement of employees and to make a better working experience for organizations that already have or willing to have employees working remotely. The use of this kind of services
can improve staff morale, increase the productivity and hence enhance total organization’s performance.

There are four main services that are provided and analyzed below. The relation between those services and the findings of this research is also presented. The services can be used to build motivation and culture within a remote team. They can also be used in order to achieve a budget reduction to organizations wanted to go remote.

4.2 Description of provided services

Service 1. – Providing physiological needs and more

The first provided service has to do with the physiological needs that is described in the “Hierarchy of needs theory” by Abraham Maslow and was mentioned in the motivation chapter before.

One of the problems which was noticed was the luck of appropriate equipment needed from employees in order to efficiently perform their tasks. Old slow PCs, small monitors, small desk, not appropriate office chair, slow printer or slow internet connection are only some of the problems that an employee may face and obstruct him from performing his duties as efficiently as possible.

The reasons for this problems are usually not as straight forward as someone may think and there are cases that the employee or the organization may not even know that they face a problem related to what is described before. Hence, has a slow performance.

This research showed the strong relation of up-to-date technology and the motivation of remote employees (chapter 3.7, Use up-to-date technology).

The first service tries to fix this problem and has to do with the material things and tools every employee needs in order to perform his job. This includes everything that he may need from a PC, a monitor, a keyboard up to a printer, a desk, a chair and a big variety of equipment from which the customer can choose depending on what is applicable for his case.
GRemoters provides all those things needed and described before in a monthly fixed fee cost.

There are many benefits for both organizations and employees from this service. The most important ones are

- There is no set up cost for each employee.
- The organization has the ability to spread the cost for the set up over a longer period.
- There is only a monthly fee that has to be paid.
- Upgrades in equipment can be performed much quicker.
- Software setup, upgrade and support can be handled by GRemoters, so that the company’s managers can focus on more important issues.
- When an employee leaves the company, GRemoters handle the collection of the equipment.
- Each employee can choose the equipment needed according to his preferences and hence be more personalized.
- There is no worry about breaks and repairs since those can also be handled by GRemoters.

The second relation of this service in regards to the research, is the cultural development that can be achieved. The method that this can be done, depends on the strategy the organization follows. There are two options available:

Firstly, the organization may choose to have the same working environment set up for all the employees (this is similar to having a dress code that everyone should follow). Other organizations may choose to have the same colors in all the offices they have worldwide or even the same desk colors in all employees working remote.

Secondly, the organization may choose to give the opportunity to the employees to personalize their working environment by choosing the set up they prefer. Both options are different strategies on work culture development and depend on the strategy the organization want to follow.

The research showed that one of the methods used to keep employees happy and boost motivation is by keeping them happy through acknowledge achievements with small gifts (chapter, 3.7, Keep employees happy). Those gifts could be a better chair, a better monitor,
or even a coffee machine. Organizations can offer those gifts to keep employees happy and boost their morale and engagement. Also, keeping an eye on how the organization can support the employees on having a nice working environment, even if they work from their home, was found to act as a positive motivator (chapter, 3.7, Keep employees happy)

**Service 2 – Consulting services**

The recent COVID-19 event showed that most of the Greek companies were not prepared and lacked of knowledge needed to run a team remote. There were many cases that trading companies did not even have an e-shop ready. In other cases, especially for companies with just a few employees, there was only one email account for all the company, there was no knowledge of the available software and their capabilities. Those and many more were only some of the problems that a company that is not ready to go remote can face.

It was expected from the start of this research that most of the tools that are used for motivation and culture development would be software based. It is normal for someone to assume that remote working is based on modern technology in order to happen. The consulting support offered, aims to help in the motivation and cultural development of the organizations too. Communication tools, tools used form management of output and tools used in defining goals, are only some of the tools found to be used for motivation and culture development (chapter 3.7). GRemoters can advise on what software is available for achieving culture and motivation development, but can also offer support on how to use those tools, in order to support motivation and remote working culture. As described in the findings (chapter 3.4) some of the methods used for cultural development are: having video calls with teammate after work, having virtual place to share photos from vacation or having virtual chat rooms available for light chatting. Advises can be offered on all those methods from GRemoters.

GRemoters offer its experience in providing consultant support on every issue that has to do with remote working for both existing and new companies. Companies can take advantage of this service in order to:

- Understand what the needs for a company are and its employees to go remote.
- Understand what software is available and how they can be used in their daily tasks.
- Help them to choose the most appropriate software depending their needs.
Know what can be done in order to make the days needed to adapt to a remote environment as fewer as possible.

- Support them in their initial period.
- Support in the process of hiring new employee (especially for the part that has to do with capabilities need to work remote).
- Gain a lower initialization cost and reach maximum performance faster.

Service 3 – Training.

It was noticed in the recently lockdown, due to the COVID-19, that there was a big number of employees that had to work from home but lacked of the needed knowledge regarding the way to use the needed tools.

The research showed that the organizations should make sure that both managers and employees have the training and the qualifications needed to effectively understand, use and monitor those programs, (chapter 3.7). The motivation factor that has to do with self-actualization needs, the feeling related with having equal opportunities to grow, regardless if they work remote or not, and the same training opportunities as office workers, are described in the chapter 3.6 of this dissertation and can be achieved using this service.

Each employee that needs to work remote need specific skills. The same apply for managers working with remote teams. GRemoters provide training on those skills and tools needed.

The training can go beyond the tools that are specialized for remote working and GRemoters can organize any kind of training the organization may need for the employees in Greece. Especially for organizations that their main office is in a different country and have only few remote employees in Greece, sometimes it is hard to organize training for them in Greece and the cost for training in a different country (the one that the offices are based) is bigger, since they will have to pay extra for air tickets, hotel and food.

There is also the opportunity for an alternative tourism option, which combines tourism, training and cultural development for organizations that want to bring their employees in Greece for training. This service is based on the findings of this research (chapter 3.4) and more specifically in the method used by many organizations to gather all the team once or
twice per year, in order to see everyone face-to-face and build the cultural development. Training can be combined with events that can help the teams’ culture development.

**Service 4 – Provision of workspace for remoters.**

This service includes two main options:

The first one has to do with providing shared workspace solutions for employees that need an office for one or few days. There are several reasons why someone may want to work on a shared workspace. Some of them are: a shared workspace can give you the office feeling in cases that working from home makes you feel isolated and alone, hence provide a place where cultural development between remote workers can happen. Employees that work and travel need an office space with appropriate equipment in order to perform some of their tasks.

The second option has to do with providing the organization with an office space dedicated for their remote employees in Greece. This way the organization can have an office space in Greece without the need to be “tax” active in Greece and by this way giving the opportunity to their employees to work in this workspace when needed. Some of the cases where this kind of service is needed is: organizations that may need to have expensive equipment that should be shared between one or two employees, the need of a space for the purpose of bringing customers, the need of a space in order to perform training, etc.

Some of the examples of this service and how it can be used to support motivation and cultural development, according to the findings of this research are described below. Sometimes it is not easy to travel and have all the necessary equipment with you, that is needed to perform your job. Slow (like slow internet), or luck of technology (not having second monitor) showed that can slow performance and act as negative motivators (chapter 3.7). Also, an organized office style workspace can be used from both individuals and organizations for networking and cultural development, as they give opportunity to communicate with other employees from the same or even different companies and support the feeling of being part of a team. Organizations can also use those spaces in order to have collide working hours that can be used to build organizations culture and act as motivation as described in chapters 3.6 and 3.7.
5 Conclusions

In a world that everything is getting digital, it is normal that the same will happen for work. The research showed that remote working is here to stay. Day by day, more and more companies realize the benefits of remote working. Also, the recent COVID-19 crisis and the lockdown forced many organizations to rethink remote working, as an alternative, and proved them that for many of the jobs, office is not a necessity. Furthermore, studies have shown that in many cases remote employees are more productive than the office based. I strongly believe that remote work is the future and a strategic necessity for modern business. Remote work will definitely change the world in many ways. Companies will be able to search over the world to find the best employees but in the same time employees will be able to search over the world for the best companies.

The effects that culture and motivation have in employees’ performance are well studied and documented. The same applies for remote employees. However, even if the needs remain the same, the methods used in respect to the office based employees, are different. In remote working environments cultural development and motivation is not something that just happens but should be well prepared. Organizations should have specific strategy regarding cultural development and motivation of remote employees.

The cases studied showed that engagement, cultural development and motivation is can be developed in remote teams too. Some of the methods that have been identified and are used to accomplish the above are: effective communication, having cleared defined goals, building personal relationship between managers and employees, managing of output, giving feedback, support the building of strong culture, using up-to-date technology, keeping employees happy, collide working hours.

The fact that many companies failed, when trying to move to a remote environment, showed that even experienced managers can fail when managing a remote team. This mainly happened because they were trying to use the same methods and techniques that they were using in an office based environment, which in most cases had not the desired results. Organizations must be well prepared if they want to move in a remote working environment. Managers, on the other hand, should first of all understand the differences between the two working conditions and secondly be well trained to the new methods and tools used in order to effectively manage their team.
One of the outcomes of this dissertation was the creation of a company that is focused in supporting organizations willing to go remote. The company is called GRemoters and has four main services:

- Service 1. – Providing physiological needs and more
- Service 2 – Consulting services
- Service 3 – Training.
- Service 4 – Provision of workspace for remoters.

There are many ways that a company like GRemoters can provide tools and support organizations and employees that embrace the remote working environment method. The services mentioned above are only some of the tools that can be used in order to support motivation, engagement and cultural development. Similar companies have started being created worldwide and their benefits are yet to be explored and understood, since there are not yet large number of available data to analyze them. However I am confident that those companies are here to stay since not all organizations have the needed knowledge regarding the specialized tools and methods needed to run a remote team and hence they will try to find support through companies like GRemoters.

No safe conclusions can be drawn from GRemoters until now. This is due to the fact that the company is still very new and there are not many data still available in order to be able to examine results. A big promotion will take place in the months to follow, which will also determine the fate of the company and add more data to analyze the result of this company.

5.1 Subject-matter expertise

This dissertation is part of my MBA study that I am doing during this period in School of Social Science in Hellenic Open University. One of the reasons that I started this degree was my willingness to do research in remote working teams. Having worked with various kinds of remote teams, I found that there is a lack of knowledge and methods regarding remote employees and how to make them feel part of a team. Also, during my studies in EAP and from the knowledge I acquired from the modules I studied, I have started to think about my
first questions and how organizational culture development could be used in order to support my first thought. This research had two main questions to be answered.

- How to make remote working employees feel part of a team and that they contribute to a common cause?
- What ways / methods can be used to support the development of culture and motivation in remote teams?

The research started by gathering data related to remote working and to the questions wanted to be answered. At the same time some preliminary analysis of those data was performed also. In order to choose which method to use for the analysis the methods available were investigated.

The two major groups of data that a researcher can use in order to perform his analysis were examined first. Those two groups are the quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data are based in numbers, whereas qualitative are used in order to reveal and understand the behavior and methods used of the subject being in research. Due to the nature of the questions in research and to the available data, the qualitative approach was chosen for this dissertation, since the main research was based in the analysis of real life scenarios, procedures, tools and techniques, involved in remote working environments through the case study and patterns identification method.

Then different qualitative research methods were studied. All five approaches, Narrative, Phenomenology, Grounded, Ethnographic and Case study, were studied before choosing the case study as the research method. Case study is a qualitative research method used in order to analyze and understand the processes involved within complex real world systems in their natural content.

Since case study was chosen, further investigation of the method was performed. There are three reason that the research can be used for and all those three were used for this research. Those are exploratory, descriptive or explanatory.

The approach used for the research had five steps: plan, design, gather data, analyze and report.

The plan refers to the description of the research, the questions to be answered and the choice of which method to use for the research.
The design refers to the units to be analyzed, the type and the method of case study to be used. Units are used to define what the case is, for example in this case the unit is the remote working environment. The type is the qualitative case study research, as already described above. While the method is based on five components, the study’s questions, the study’s suggestion (in any), the units to be analyzed, the logic connection of the data to the suggestion and the principle for the conclusions.

The data gathering refers to the data sources to be used and the actual gathering of the data. For the data gathering a research on the available qualitative data gathering methods was also done. The two options of single or multiple case approach were investigated before choosing the multiple case approach for this case. Single is referred as the method of using only one source of data collection that is used in the research. Multi case approach is when more than one methods of data collection are used in order to draw the study results. Collected data methods can be: observation, interviews, journals, books, focus on groups or surveys. For this dissertation the data used were from journals, books, real life cases, and training materials.

For the analysis of the data, holistic and embedded analysis methods were reviewed in order to choose the one most appropriate for this research. Holistic is the analysis of one unit only while embedded is when the researcher is analyzing more than one unit. For this dissertation the multiple embedded case study design has been used. The inductive and deductive approach for the analysis of the data were also reviewed. In an inductive approach the researcher gathers the data, then looks for patterns and then he develops the theory. The researcher, after gathering the data, identifies patterns in the data which can be used to develop a theory that could explain those patterns. In the deductive approach the researcher works the other way around, he is using an already hypothesized theory and afterwards he is trying to use the data analysis in order to confirm or question the theory. For this dissertation the analysis approach was basically inductive.

The final step of the research was the report. The report was based in the fact that the main readers of this research are going to be the two supervisors that are going to mark this dissertation and was written in a way that includes information on what the study was about, communicate a clear sense of the studied case, provide a “history on the inquiry”, provide basic data used and finally articulate the researcher’s conclusions.
5.2 Personal development

This dissertation was based in the two questions, mentioned above in chapter 5.1, and my love regarding remote working environments. However, it turned to be much more and gave me much more benefits than I could ever imagine before starting it.

Firstly, the qualitative case study research method was learned. A method that can be used in various real life practical cases. Especially when someone is interesting in answering questions were the answers cannot be based in numbers but in words.

Secondly, the case study approach and the multi-case data gathering approach enriched my knowledge regarding remote working environment. This knowledge was extended further from the knowledge needed to answer the questions that were the base of this research since in the process of examining the gathered data, the remote working environment in general was investigated. Remote working from both the perspective of organizations and employees was investigated. I can say that the gained knowledge already supports my work as a remote employee, since it gave me ideas about new tools that I can use and made me realize some of the aspects of remote working environment that I, as an employee, should also focus (other than doing the actual work), like how remote job politics work and how to communicate with my team more actively.

Lastly, the total knowledge gathered from this research used with the experience I had from working with remote teams, gave me the needed tools and impulse in order to start a new company that is related with remote working environments. The company is named GRemoters and is described in chapter 4.
6 References


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