

MASTERTHESIS

for the completion of the master's program awarded with the title
Master of Science (M.Sc.) International Business

SUBMITTED BY
Lisa Engel

GLOBALLY DISTRIBUTED TEAMS IN THE TECH INDUSTRY

Rethinking the Leadership Approach
to Ensure Successful Teamwork

SUBMITTED TO
The Hamburg University of
Applied Sciences
Faculty of Business and Social
Sciences

PRIMARY SUPERVISOR
Prof. Dr. Natalia Ribberink

SECOND CORRECTOR
Jan-Hendrik Schünemann

DATE OF SUBMISSION
October 19, 2020

Abstract

The present study makes the leadership of globally distributed teams in the technology industry the subject of discussion. Aiming at detecting crucial leadership aspects in a remote set-up and necessary character traits to accompany this global role, this thesis investigates the differences between dispersed and co-located leadership and the everyday challenges arising through the dispersion. As this is a qualitative study, it is supported by experienced professionals who contributed by participating in interviews concerning the underlying issues. The consulted experts either work for companies from the tech industry or function as trainers for remote teams from various industries. From the experts' experiences, five major issues for the daily business could be detected: building a remote environment, creating team commitment online, communicating virtually as well as providing feedback and managing conflict remotely. The analysis of the interviews and current studies shows that the desired leadership competencies barely change through the dispersion besides their intensity has to be increased and every task needs to be executed more thoroughly. There is a shift from the classical leadership approaches towards a situational approach is recognizable. Increasing regularity on communication and alignment as well as granting time for socializing can enhance the whole team performance, prevent conflict situations and foster leadership success.

Keywords: virtual teams, leadership, global teams, digitalization, globalization, leadership development, remote, training

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Glossary

Agile	a project management approach that enables the organization to adjust their planning and execution depending on the current business demands and therefore remain flexible
Megatrend	deep current of change that has been present for a while and will impact the future global economic, political, cultural and scientific societies throughout decades
Micromanagement	controlling and monitoring every part of subordinates work through to the smallest details
Leading by Example	creating the impression that something is possible to achieve by demonstrating it to your subordinates and through that increasing motivation and achieving trust and cohesion
Stand-Up (Meeting)	a regular/daily catch-up meeting where every team member summarizes what they are currently working on, an environment to address ad-hoc issues and questions

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List of abbreviations

AMER	Region of North, Central and South America
APAC	Region of Asia Pacific
Appx.	Appendix
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion
e.g.	Example given
EMEA	Region of Europe, Middle East and Africa
GDT	Globally Distributed Team(s)
GLOBE	Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness
HR	Human Resources
IBM	International Business Machines Corporation
IFIDZ	Institut für Führungskultur im digitalen Zeitalter (Institute for Leadership in the Digital Era)
Inc.	Incorporated / Incorporation
IT	Information Technology
SSRN	Social Science Research Network (database)
U.S.	United States of America

1 Introduction

Buzzwords like *Digitalization*, *Globalization* and *New Work* are flooding media channels, informing about an ongoing transformation of the modern daily business world. They describe the interconnected reality of the 21st century – the new normal. The globalization and digitalization are no novelties but rather describe steady progress throughout multiple decades. As megatrends¹, they slowly change the world in a fundamental and sustainable way. The concept of New Work is influenced by these movements. There is a shift from meritocracy towards a more creative society happening that radically remodels the work environment. Technology supports the rise of new ways of working that enable a never known symbiosis of work and life. This ongoing disruption of traditional business models is driven by global organizations and highly skilled workforce who see great potential in the development of these megatrends. In Germany, digitalization already takes a noticeable hit because of the enormous shortage of IT specialists. A study by the German digital association *Bitkom*² expresses great concern that the shortage in professionals for the tech-industry is as high as ever and it starts to show not only in the economy but other areas such as administrations, authorities and sciences. Every vacancy in tech roles leads to sales losses, hinders innovation and decelerates the demanded progress in digitalization. (Pauly, 2019) There is a demand for change associated with a shift in people's mindsets on how to operate in today's world and until now most businesses voluntarily decided to join the movement.

But what if some higher power takes over the decision-making process? Something that not only shuts down businesses from one day to another but also influences our daily lives. In the beginning of this year COVID-19 pressed pause on the world, intervened with our routines and decelerated the global economy. The human population, governments and businesses around the world are making major efforts to reduce human density to slow down the contamination process and therefore exonerate the medical systems worldwide. For now, the overall economic outbursts of this pandemic are unpredictable – some smaller businesses already

¹ For more information on current megatrends visit <https://www.zukunftsinstitut.de/dossier/megatrends/>

² For more information on *Bitkom* visit <https://www.bitkom.org>

closed, while some can continue to work. At some point, there will be a new normal that businesses have to accept and adapt to.

This research was intended as an industry study concerning the leadership of globally distributed teams of multinational tech companies. Today, it is far more than that: it's a helpful tool for all the companies being forced to work distributed by this state of emergency, even if it's just a distribution throughout a city. This guideline might be helpful to people and companies outside the target group, who are new to the environment of remote work and team interaction without being able to meet face-to-face. Make use of it, teach each other and take care of one another. Given the current challenges, it is now more important than ever to have great leaders guiding the way.

1.1 Research problem

As the digitalization keeps proceeding the business world is highly dependent on thriving humans. It is about the people who initiate the change and promote it in a bearable manner for all parties involved. As global markets and technologies are evolving, companies need to adjust to that proceed. In the tech-industry remote work is not a novelty and nowadays it can be observed in various, if not all, IT companies. But the further the team is distributed, the more complex the organizational requirements get. Regardless of people being in favor or against the transformation into the digital era, the change is already there and needs curious and well educated people to guide through this process. (Kühmayer, 2020) Globalized markets need motivated professionals to lead the way through international challenges, which is demanding enough when the leader and his team are co-located in one office. The degree of complexity further increases when the team is split across various countries and the leader needs to rely on virtual communication for the most part. But where exactly lie the differences in leading a local versus a distributed team and what are the everyday challenges leaders of globally distributed teams have to face?

1.2 Research question

The goal of this research is to provide insights of experienced leaders in the tech-industry and trainers of distributed teams and develop a portfolio of leadership requirements to prepare the more unexperienced for taking on their global role. This thesis highlights important characteristics for those leaders and emphasizes interesting training aspects for leadership development in a distributed set-up. Aiming at providing a guideline for new GDT leaders which navigates them through the issues of daily business within a dispersed team, the underlying research question of this thesis to elaborate the above-mentioned aspects is:

What are the main issues to be considered working with globally distributed teams in the tech-industry and how can the leadership address these to operate successfully?

1.3 Course of investigation

The following chapter of this research paper is dedicated to lay out the theoretical foundation for the analysis following in chapters four and five. The initial literature review provides insights on the status-quo in research regarding the topic under investigation. What is the academic standing on leadership in general - and further - on leadership in a global and distributed set-up? The following subchapter will provide a more detailed declaration of the term “globally distributed teams” in the scope of this research. How is this term defined by the author and what differentiates them from local teams? The term “globally” leads to the next subchapter, which is dedicated to the topic of diversity. Diversity often arises from the global distribution of team members and therefore needs to be explained in connection with the terms “inclusion” and “diversity management”. The last two parts of chapter two broach the topic of leadership by first defining global leadership and differentiating it from local leadership and second explaining the McManus and Perruci’s Five Components of Leadership Model which will be thematically adjusted in chapter four.

The applied methodology will be explained in detail in chapter three. The concept of empirical studies and expert interviews will be described in the first subchapter. This is followed by a subchapter for the quality criteria needed to successfully and significantly execute a qualitative study. The subchapter case selection introduces the interviewees and the relevance of their expertise for the investigated topic. The methodology part of this research paper is completed by a subchapter regarding data collection and processing. It describes the whole process from the initial drafting of the interview guideline to the conduction and evaluation of the interviews in order to prepare their output for further analysis.

Chapter four is the first part of the respective analysis. The initial step is the adjustment of McManus and Perruci's *Five Components of Leadership Model* by adding and adjusting parts, so that the model is also valid for the leadership of globally distributed teams. The following section analyzes the essential competences and attributes for a global leadership position and furthermore a distributed leadership position. The findings of subchapters 4.1 and 4.2 are evaluated and summarized in subchapter 4.3 to form an interim conclusion which will then flow into the analysis of topics for a potential leadership development training in chapter five.

In chapter five, the author will provide insights on occurring challenges and best practice cases shared by experts of the industry. Subdivided in five parts, the fifth chapter covers the areas of a remote working environment, the challenges of commitment and communication as well as the sensitive topics of feedback and conflict management. The carved-out topics are explained in greater detail and paired with real world examples for better understanding.

The sixth chapter concludes the whole scope of this research paper by answering the underlying research question. The author will provide explanations for limitations and challenges during this investigation and finally give an outlook on how the field of distributed work might evolve and where the potential for future research lies.

2 Theoretical foundation

As already introduced in subchapter 1.3, the second chapter is dedicated to the theoretical foundation of this research. While the author describes the method of conducting the literature review and its respective outcome in subchapter 2.1, subchapter 2.2 is concerned about the team definition in a local as well as in a globalized context. To complete the foundation of global collaboration subchapters 2.3 and 2.4 elaborate the topics diversity and diversity management as well as global leadership. In the last step the author explains the theory behind the *Five Components of Leadership Model* by McManus and Perruci to prepare the reader for the proceeding analysis in chapter four.

2.1 Literature review

The literature review reveals that in the past years research on the topic of GDTs generally has increased.³ The author approaches the databases in a narrative way because it is a reliable method to quickly penetrate existing research and filter valuable sources. Thoroughly conducted it supports the identification of consistencies, discrepancies and novelties in the field of interest.

To scrutinize the area of globally distributed teams and the respective leadership behavior the author decides to conduct a general as well as a theoretical literature review. Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) describe the general literature review as a useful tool to initially explore the status quo of research and familiarize oneself with the topic under investigation. It is a commonly used tool to identify research gaps that have the potential to be transformed into an argumentative problem for academic dissertations. The theoretical literature review on the other hand examines the theoretical background that is applied to the current research and investigates which underlying themes influence the subject. (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016, pp. 24 f.).

³ Using different time spans while searching the databases revealed that 10 years ago much less was published in regard to GDTs than nowadays. This forms the impression that interest and research has increased.

The first database consulted for the general literature review is *Econbiz* by the *ZBW – Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft*. Using the search term “globally distributed teams” and filtering the results for free online accessibility delivers 295 outcomes. To further narrow it down the search term “tech” is included, which leads to a remaining 137 results. The author then decides to apply a year span to the search to find the most recent papers published in the field of interest. Surprisingly, setting the filter from 2015 to 2020, only results in one, not applicable paper. Broadening the span by setting years 2010 to 2020 still results in the same scenario. Only by giving the time span another 5 years, 2005 to 2020, increases the number of results to 75. This gives the impression that in the early 2000s research regarding distributed teams was at its peak. The abstracts of those 75 papers are browsed broadly by the author to decide if they are suitable for adding value to the topic under investigation. The thorough investigation of the abstracts and outlines lead to a final 12 papers which can be included throughout the process of this research. In the next step, the term “tech” is replaced by “leadership” which initially leads to 177 results in the *Econbiz* database. Again, adding a filter to show results of the last 5 years only shows one suitable source. When starting the search in 2010 there are 9 results while starting in 2005 brings up 109 results. This reverse development supports the first impression of GDT research peaking in the earlier 2000s. Those 109 sources younger than 2005 are viewed more thoroughly to identify potential value for this research. The closer examination of the sources revealed eight new papers that appear useful in the scope of this research. Most of the sources are not exclusively addressing the tech industry but rather discuss the general concept of leading a distributed team. Nevertheless, one of the results is a highly relevant meta-study conducted by IFIDZ in 2019. The study analyses the outcomes of 61 studies and surveys around the topic of leadership conducted between 2012 and 2018. The aim of the study lies in creating a portfolio of character traits for leaders in the digital era as well as ranking these according to their contribution to leadership success. The presented competencies are clustered in three categories: analogue competencies, digital-analogue competencies and digital competencies. The analogue category includes leadership competencies relevant and known before the digital era. Digital-analogue competencies include those that were relevant before the digital era but underwent significant changes initiated by the digital era. The last category of digital competencies includes all the abilities that were non-existent or irrelevant before the digital era. Of the 86 detected leadership competencies 72 % are allocated to the analogue category,

15 % are allocated to the digital-analogue category and 13 % are clustered as purely digital competencies.⁴ A total of 100.000 people contributed to the underlying studies. The results given are not sufficient to provide a wholesome impression, but they form an indication of such and will therefore be integrated into the analysis in chapter 4.2 of this research.

The second database consulted is the *Social Science Research Network*. By including the search terms “leadership” and “distributed team” a total of 15 results are detected. Of these, two papers are adding value to this present study and are included during the process. The *Social Science Research Network* is a good source for current empirical data and innovative research topics, therefore the author also consulted SSRN for input on multicultural team composition. Searching for “multicultural teams” in the database resulted in a total of 26 papers. Eight of these results are investigated more thoroughly for they might be considered supporting towards the analysis of cross-cultural team composition in chapters four and five.

When initiating a literature research online an obvious database to consult is Google Scholar. While browsing this platform the author finds a lot of interesting papers linked to a database called *IEEE Xplore* and decides to visit this website. It claims to be the world’s largest technical professional technology organization for the advancement of technology.⁵ Given this research discusses the tech-industry, the database appears suitable. Looking for the search terms “globally distributed teams” produces 248 initial sources. It is possible to further filter the results by the following categories: Conferences, Journals, Magazines, Courses and Early Access Articles. The author decides to filter for Journals which leaves an output of 16 articles. To further narrow it down and to only receive the most recent articles another filter is added: years 2015 to 2020. This reduces the number of articles to eight. A close assessment of those eight articles detects that only one article could prove itself valuable for this research, therefore the remaining articles are neglected.

To get a complete overview on the topic under investigation the author not only looks for literature on leadership but also for the current insights on followership. Because of the previous search outcomes, the author decides to consult the *Econbiz* database again. When

⁴ For a full overview of all 86 competencies and their respective classification consult Appx. 11 of this research.

⁵ For more information on *IEEE Xplore* visit <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/Xplore/home.jsp>

inserting the search terms “global followership”, the database provides 48 sources, most of which were published in the early 2000s as well. Some of the sources are educational textbooks and therefore excluded from the search for scientific resources, which ultimately leaves seven sources that appear relevant. Regarding “followership” and “team composition” the SSRN database offers a total output of 231 papers. A first browse reveals that existing research seems to focus on gender diversity rather than on ethnic or expertise diversity for example. Given the scope of this thesis the author refrains from investigating other areas of diversity than cultural diversity in greater detail.

After covering the fundamental theory and underlying topics such as leadership and followership, the author conducts a narrative literature research for the industry under investigation. Starting point is again the *Econbiz* database, because it provides current and relevant sources on the topic. The first search with the terms “global tech industry” brings up a total of 4.290 sources. By adding the word “leadership” to the search bar the results are narrowed down to 1.035 sources. Setting a time span for publication dates from 2015 to 2020 radically reduces the amount of results down to 26 sources. These 26 are browsed for potentially relevant resource material. Only three sources are suitable for driving the research forwards. By replacing the term “leadership” with “change” the search yields 3.075 results. To further narrow it down the author applies a time filter to only look for literature from the year 2015 or after. Instead of the initial 3,075 results, there are now only 48 sources. When tightening the time span even more, from 2017 to 2020, only 19 results are shown. Of these, four sources have interesting abstracts for the scope of this research as they share insights on modern leadership practices and change management in a digitalized environment.

Two applicable studies, that appeared during the literature research, will be influencing the analysis in chapters four and five of this thesis: the *GLOBE Study* by House (2014) and Hofstede's *Cultures & Organizations: Software of the Mind* (2010).

The GLOBE Study is a research program to investigate cultural dimensions in the global corporate world. Standing for Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness it addresses all factors to be elaborated in the course of this research. In 1991 Professor Robert J. House of the University of Pennsylvania started the project accompanied by approximately 170 social scientists and management researchers who collectively investigated the

leadership of companies belonging to the financial services, food processing and telecommunication industries of 61 different countries. The study does not explicitly investigate companies from the tech-industry, but the author assumes overlap in the industry under investigation and the results for the telecommunication sector and general results of the GLOBE Study. (House, 2014)

The second study conducted by Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) arose from the demand in empirically valid knowledge about cultural differences and their implications for national economies and corporations. *Software of the Minds* is a study based on employee data of *IBM*, one of the best-known technology corporations worldwide and therefore appears an ideal complementary source for the underlying investigation of this research topic. Hofstede et al. provide a wholesome picture about cross-cultural issues, not only the positive aspects but especially the culture clashes. They imply that “Studying culture without culture shock is like listening only to the foreigners who are from here.” (Hofstede et al., 2010) This critical approach will support the analysis in chapters four and five in which the author investigates leadership behavior to carve out training opportunities that increase leadership for globally distributed teams.

Interestingly, the research concerning GDTs throughout the last years is rather limited whereas in the early 2000s a lot of literature was published in regard to remote work and leadership of such. Considering the current situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic there will probably be an increase in resources on remote collaboration and leadership throughout the year. Multiple global companies are already sharing insights on remote work and distribute playbooks or guidelines for e.g. home office set-ups through their social-media channels to support other companies that are new to the concept.

2.2 Globally distributed teams: What sets them apart?

To understand the concept of globally distributed teams it is important to reproduce the development path of teamwork. Therefore, this subchapter is structured as follows: What defines a team, what do we refer to as a global team and finally what makes globally distributed teams special?

By definition “a team is any group of people organized to work together, both interdependently and cooperatively to accomplish a purpose or a goal.” (Heathfield, 2019) This broad definition of a team does not include the fact that there is a distinction between teams and working groups in terms of performance outputs. In a working group the individual’s performance is measured, whereas in a team the overall performance reflects the individual as well as the collective results achieved. (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993) In the scope of this research the author therefore refers to the following definition when mentioning the term: “A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.” (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993) The term “team learning” helps to understand how a diverse group of people develops into a high-performance team. “Team learning is [...] the acquisition of knowledge, skills and, performance capabilities of an interdependent set of individuals through interaction and experience” (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006, p. 86). Teamwork is anticipated to be flexible, reflective and continuously improving, which makes team learning an important process to cope with increasing economic competitiveness. (Decuyper et al., 2010, pp. 111, 114)

Much research on teamwork has been conducted and thereby identified a range of guidelines to ensure its success. The different research outcomes can be summarized in the following four segments: team composition, transparent goals, internal and external validation and harmony inside the team.

Team composition - Casey Stengel, former US American baseball player and manager, once said: “Finding good players is easy. Getting them to play as a team is another story”. (Manns & Rising, 2005, p. 43) This quote is not only true for sports but for so many other areas, including today’s business world. Organizations pursue teams that have diverse expertise and experience on a professional level while being open minded, curious, respectful and able to self-reflect. (London, 2012, p. 73) One of the hardest tasks for the leader is to decide which individuals are complementing each other in a way that they can perform as a team and produce output efficiently. (Perretti & Negro, 2006, p. 774) The ideal constellation of individuals in a team is reached, when the collective output is superior to the individual shares. Studies also show that well established teams generally achieve superior results and greater

efficiency compared to newly implemented teams without experience in working together. (Hirschfeld et al., 2006, p. 472 f.) Additionally, the learning curve of teams is dependent on the member composition and the team lead. A study of team learning shows that the teams with the steepest learning curve have three common characteristics: the team environment feels like a safe place for open communication and development, the team lead is capable of motivating the team members and the general team structure is enabling knowledge transfer. (Edmondson et al., 2001)

Transparent goals – Knowing the big picture and having specific team achievements is the essence of teamwork. A common commitment makes the team perform as a collective rather than individuals. (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993) Working together as a team creates an energetic environment, enriched by the enthusiasm and inspiration that each individual team member contributes to approach the common goal. (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003, p. 106) The team environment is a powerful motivator because the goal can only be achieved if all members contribute equally and every participants knowledge is utilized. A tangible and common goal drives the team members to support and encourage each other in the best possible way. (Sharma, 2012, p. 130) The continuous commitment of all members to achieve the aspired goal is described by the term *team cohesion*. Cohesive teams believe in their ability to perform not only as a team but also as individuals. (Balkundi & Harrison, 2006, p. 51 f.) Cohesion is a benefit for teamwork but can also form a threat. The more cohesive a team, the higher the likeliness of groupthink because members trust each other so much they don't question opinions anymore. Therefore, cohesion needs to be balanced in order to progress goal attainment. (Kellerman, 2008, p. 69 f.)

Internal and external validation – An outside view can open up new perspectives when a team is not able to proceed at some stage in the process. To use this possibility, teams need to look outside their usual work environment every once in a while, to validate their work and increase motivation. Emotionally intelligent interactions inside the team, complimented by outside appreciation and feedback, result in increased capabilities and help the team grow stronger. (Druskat & Wolff, 2001) In an interview with the Harvard Business Review Prof. Hackman of Harvard University explains that external opinions not only motivate but also prevent condescension inside the team by scrutinizing decisions made and challenging the

team. Deviants are an important part to improve performance and stimulate in-team competition. (Coutu, 2009)

Harmony increases productivity - Performance and productivity can be seen as both – the source and consequence of teamwork. Studies show that the performance of productive teams not only exceeds the performance of equally qualified individuals but also seems to outperform the teams own expectations. (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003, pp. 107, 258) This requires the members to act as a team rather than a group of individuals. The team feeling can be achieved by creating mutual trust, being honest with each other, engage in team activities and including humor. Humor is a powerful tool in regard to conflict prevention and decision making. Studies show that the effect of humor has a positive influence on an individual's mental condition and therefore e.g. enhances team dynamics and the willingness to compromise. (Eisenhardt et al., 1997, p. 87 f.) Interpersonal skills play an important role in this context. To be able to successfully participate in a team, character traits such as risk tolerance, the willingness to help, active listening, moral and professional support and the ability to provide and receive constructive criticism are helpful. Nevertheless, all people have the capability for personal growth and therefore the member selection process shouldn't primarily be based on these factors. (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003, pp. 48, 120)

Global teams can be described as a modern form of the classic team, composed of members located in different countries who collaborate to achieve a joint goal. (Chudoba & Maznevski, 2000, p. 474 f.) Being dispersed across different geographical boundaries hampers team cooperation which can partially be offset by the usage of online communication tools but still results in a different way of interaction than face-to-face communication. (London, 2012, p. 74 f.) Despite the challenges and driven by technological advance, global teams gained increasing prevalence in the globalizing business world throughout the past decades. (Gibson & Cohen, 2003, p. 95 f.) Especially technology companies take advantage from being present in multiple countries by using the respective local knowledge, resources and workforce. Studies show that this global collaboration is a great benefit to innovation and therefore marks an important topic when researching global teams in the tech industry. (Cantwell, 2017, p. 50) The distribution of subsidiaries across the globe automatically results in a geographical spread of workforce. This generated dispersion is the one characteristic that distinguishes global

teams from normal⁶ teams. (Maznevski, 2012, p. 188 f.) Due to its complexity and severe influence on teamwork the following subchapter is dedicated to dispersion and diversity.

2.3 Diversity as a consequence of dispersion

This section explores the topic of dispersion and its various repercussions. A particular focus lies on the exploration of diversity and inclusion as inevitable consequences of dispersion. As mentioned in subchapter 2.2 dispersion in the context of this research refers to team members being physically located in multiple countries all over the world. Due to world economies flowing into each other and corporations globalizing, the thought of decreasing cultural differences appears possible while reality states the opposite. The diminishing of economic frontiers seems to provoke the strengthening of cultural discrepancies and confronts the business world with not only opportunities but also unknown challenges. (House, 2004, p. 5) Globalized business results in the immediate consequence of virtual collaboration through e.g. video calls or email. (Maznevski, 2012, p. 189) The challenges arising due to virtual communication will be further discussed in chapter five of this research. Another barrier caused by the global dispersion is the issue to work across time zones. Although the time span can create opportunities and competitive advantage, a great organizational effort is necessary to coordinate the work. (Maznevski, 2012, p. 189) Alongside the challenges of time zones and virtual collaboration, another effect of dispersion is the complexity of technological infrastructures in the different countries. Whilst some countries have modern and reliable technological facilities, others might be disadvantaged due to the development stage of their country's infrastructure. (Chudoba et al., 2005, p. 280 ff.) The most obvious consequence caused by team members being dispersed over multiple countries worldwide is diversity. International companies recruit from a global pool of workforce and therefore teams are composed of various cultural backgrounds (Mendenhall, 2018, p. 280 ff.; Thomas, 1999, p. 242) as well as distinct fields of expertise (Maznevski, 2012, p. 190). Diversity has grown into a vogue word in the last couple of years. Company's characterize themselves as diverse and inclusive to attract new talent to satisfy the demands of the modern world of

⁶ As a normal team the author defines a team that is co-located in one place, meeting each other face-to-face on a regular basis.

work. (Point & Singh, 2003, p. 750) Nevertheless, executives need to understand and be aware of how extensive such a change really is and that the process does not stop after hiring a diverse group of people. (Thomas, 2004) The process starts by understanding what diversity means. One definition of it is that “Diversity is the mosaic of people who bring a variety of backgrounds, styles, perspectives, values and beliefs as assets to the groups and organizations with which they interact”. (Guion, 1999, p. 1) These are closely linked to the characteristics of each individual, which in turn are depending on and shaped by their ethnicity, culture, religion, generation, gender, sexual orientation, age etc. (Litvin, 1997, p. 206; Point & Singh, 2003, p. 750) In the scope of this research the focal point lies on cultural diversity and neglects the other strands of diversity due to this thesis not being e.g. a gender study but an industry study focusing on the global distribution of workforce and the general leadership task. Nevertheless, a diverse composition of individuals in a team enhances creativity and innovation through the increased likelihood of different perspectives and opinions. For this to be successful there needs to be a certain level of guidance and management. (Kirkman et al., 2004, p. 361 f.) The awareness of present cultural habits and values in different parts of the world is one of the major challenges that needs to be addressed in a globalized work environment. (House, 2004, p. 5) Managing diversity is a conscious choice and commitment made by an organization and by individuals to not only value differences but using them as a source of strength to achieve a common goal. (Groysberg et al., 2018) Diversity management therefore is concerned about those organizational processes that can either strengthen or restrain the ability to create an environment that empowers divergence. (Shore et al., 2011, p. 24) Talent is located all over the globe, therefore diversity has become an everyday challenge for companies wanting to hire the best available talent in today’s business world. To access this global talent pool and subsequently attract the desired workforce HR management needs to modernize their leadership and corporate policies. (Fulmer & Goldsmith, 2001, pp. 12, 17; Rosenzweig, 1998, p. 646 f.) Diversity Management is not only important for recruiting purposes but also for the operating business because the demonstration of interculturality and openness can help to attract international investors (Egan et al., 2011, p. 12) and additionally address new customer groups (Rutherford & Ollerearnshaw, 2002, p. 13). Diversity in the workforce therefore can facilitate the communication with foreign investors as well as customers or clients. Diversity Management enables the company to exploit this advantage by providing the foundation for all involved parties or individuals to collaborate productively without limiting anyone. (Shore

et al., 2011, p. 35 f.) When addressed efficiently, diversity can create a competitive advantage for the organization through different opinions as well as distinct fields and levels of experience that trigger creativity and a variety of thinking. (Kochan et al., 2003, p. 8 ff.)

A term that is commonly used in connection with diversity is inclusion. Despite diversity and inclusion being individual terms, they imply similar concepts. While diversity depicts the versatile composition of a group or team, inclusion is the employees' perception of belongingness and uniqueness within the work group. (Point & Singh, 2003, p. 750; Shore et al., 2011, p. 35 ff.) The motivation behind the implementation of diversity and inclusion actions is versatile – corporate social responsibility, compliance issues, a perspective competitive advantage or the opportunity of increasing business are the thriving force for most companies. (Hunt et al., 2018, p. 1) The concept of inclusion therefore forms an important part of diversity management as it benefits the company in multiple ways. (Hickman, 2016, p. 276) It needs to be seen as a continuous process within a diverse organization to create an environment in which every employee can feel empowered to collaborate, develop and grow personally as well as professionally. (Hickman, 2010, p. 246) The concept of diversity and inclusion⁷ nowadays is necessarily embedded in a global company's organizational culture. As mentioned before, the attentiveness towards social and economic justice is rising⁸ and therefore companies need to maintain their image in order to stay competitive. Stakeholders, competitors and prospective talent build their first impression around these parameters, so the leaders of the organizations have to be aware and align with what they want to demonstrate to the outside world. (Schein, 2010, p. 288 f.)

To create a well working environment within the company cultural awareness is a necessity. The most prevalent definition of culture was elaborated by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) by examining 160 interpretations of culture to formulate the following universal definition:

Culture consist of patterns, explicit or implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of

⁷ In the further course of this research the term D&I is used to discuss diversity and inclusion as an entity.

⁸ Many companies dedicate a whole section of their website to communicate their organizational culture and therefore raise awareness towards their values, vision and mission.

traditional (historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action. (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 181)

Transferred to the corporate world, the definition of culture is discussed in the context of organizational culture⁹ which can be described as “a phenomenon [...], different in many respects from national cultures. An organization is a social system of a different nature from that of a nation, if only because the organization’s members usually did not grow up in it.” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 47)

A study by Chrobot-Mason and Aramovich conducted in 2013 shows that in an inclusive environment of equal opportunities and fair treatment employees are more associated with the company and less likely to consider job transitions. (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2016, pp. 327 ff.) The development of a corporate culture therefore is an important part of success. Through sharing the same values and mission it is possible to create an enjoyable and empowering workplace environment. (Bloch & Whiteley, 2007, p. 44) Factors such as the company’s’ industry, the corporate values and mission as well as their employees form an identity which is expressed in the corporate culture. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 78) Organizational cultures will be discussed in greater detail throughout subchapter 2.5 as it is part of the *Five Components of Leadership Model* by McManus and Perruci.

Empowering employees and making them feel as part of the team are leadership tasks that gain increasing importance in a global context and will therefore be reviewed in detail in the following subchapter.

⁹ The author uses the terms “organizational culture” and “corporate culture” interchangeably throughout this research.

2.4 Global Leadership

Following the description of globally distributed teams in subchapter 2.2 and the concept of D&I in subchapter 2.3, this subchapter discusses the fundamental part of global leadership. Starting with the distinction of the terms management and leadership, the author then describes the different leadership styles and their respective characteristics in a global context.

This research is concerned about leadership, not management, of global teams because the tech-industry is a fast-changing environment and demands visionaries that can drive change and innovation forwards. Before analyzing the leadership characteristics and tasks in the proceed of this thesis, the author defines the terms leadership management and clarifies the differences between a manager and a leader.

Management is used as a tool to ensure alignment on schedules and budgets within organizations as its main function. This includes processes such as planning and budgeting, organizing and recruiting as well as controlling and general optimization. (Kotter, 1990, p. 4) Whereas the definition of leadership by McManus and Perruci reads "Leadership is the process by which leaders and followers develop a relationship and work together toward a goal (or goals) within a context shaped by cultural values and norms." (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 17) Leadership is different to management in a way that it empowers change instead of supporting consistency by establishing a vision, aligning people through communication and providing a motivating and inspiring work environment. (Kotter, 1990, p. 4 f.) The time horizon of operation is one of the main differences between management and leadership. While managers are concerned about the present and operate in a time horizon of one year, leaders operate more visionary in forthcoming time horizons that exceed one year. (Hinterhuber & Krauthammer, 2015, p. 16 f.; Kotter, 1990, p. 6) Leaders are concerned about change processes and by that take a catalyst position - rather than creating coherence through coordination, like a manager, a leader provokes movement. (Kotter, 1990, p. 4) The leader thereby follows a bigger mission: starting by delivering the organizations vision to his followers, then assigning responsibilities and finally supporting peoples' personal development. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 73) Effective leadership is reached when an improved status quo for a leader as well as his followers is accomplished without undermining involved

parties on the way. This constructive change is the result of three processes, namely through establishing a common vision and a respective guideline, inspiring people to join this vision and motivating people to contribute to and embrace the change. (Kotter, 1990, p. 5) Nowadays, research has acknowledged the increasing complexity of leadership roles that results in an ascending demand for leadership development which includes skill building through trainings as well as providing aspiring leaders with the required knowledge and tools through education. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 5)

In the course of this investigation leadership styles are analyzed in regard to their applicability in a globally distributed set-up. Cultural differences and dispersion in a globally distributed set-up require sensitivity and attentiveness from the leader, therefore, the author decided to focus on the book *Primal Leadership* by Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2013) in which the authors define six different leadership styles that are based on emotional intelligence:

Visionary Leadership as a classical style of leadership is, as the name suggests, vision driven. In common literature it is also referred to as transformational or charismatic leadership. (e.g. Taylor et al., 2014, p. 566 f.) Visionary leaders conceive the company's future by giving it a greater purpose and projecting their euphoria onto the employees. This leadership style seeks to elevate the organizational climate through a culture transformation affecting multiple company levels. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 57) Visionary leaders intend to inspire their subordinate employees by stressing goals without providing instructions on how to reach them. By that employees are left the opportunity to approach tasks in their preferred way. (Nanus, 1992, pp. 4, 8) By granting people the freedom to actively contribute to reaching the main goal, visionary leaders sustain innovative behavior and create a feeling of meaningfulness and belonging for their followers. As a result, the organizations' objectives, mission and values become consistent with the employee's interests through the experienced appreciation of their work. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 57 ff.) Visionary leadership is said to increase dedication, empower followers and hence improve the overall organizational performance. (see e.g. Goleman, 2000, p. 80) Inspiration, emotional intelligence, self-confidence and self-awareness are important personality traits for visionary leaders, alongside with empathy and transparency to be able to change perspectives, reflect and create a trust base. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 58 f., 253 ff.) In rapidly changing and highly innovative industries, such as the tech-industry, visionary thinking is essential to remain competitive.

Growing or transforming businesses also benefit from visionary leadership that guides the direction and prevents confusion by building a foundation of trust. (Nanus, 1992, p. 18)

Coaching Leadership is a long-term oriented approach executed on an individual level rather than in a group. The focus in coaching lies on personal development rather than goal achievement. By showing a genuine interest in the follower the coach establishes a stable relationship based on trust, rapport and positive emotions. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 59 ff.) A study by Ellinger et al. even shows a positive correlation between employee satisfaction, business performance and the utilization of coaching. According to their findings, thoroughly executed coaching results in increased knowledge sharing between employees. (Ellinger et al., 2003, p. 449 f.) Goleman et al. describe that coaching engages the leader and his follower in regular conversations with continuous feedback that encourages the follower in his personal aspiration and supports in identifying long-term development potential by uncovering strengths and weaknesses. The achievement of the respective development goals is transformed into a strategic plan with the responsibilities explicitly distributed between the leader and his follower. Within coaching leaders generally tend to formulate rather ambitious goals to challenge and thereby motivate the employee. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 60 f.) Besides its positive effects the execution of coaching can also bear risks provoked through leaders e.g. not taking enough time for their followers or lacking the expertise and sensitivity necessary to coach an individual. Without necessary compassion and empathy coaching can easily be mistaken for micromanaging or immoderate supervision. Insufficient motivation on the follower side, on the other hand, can also negatively affect the coaching process. (Cox et al., 2014, p. 321; Goleman et al., 2013, p. 61) The general task of empowering the development of other individuals requires the coaching leader to be emotionally self-aware, patient and empathic. Emotionally self-aware and empathic leaders emanate authenticity and sincerity towards their followers which makes them feel valued and understood. The ability to empathize with employees and the communication of trust and believe can trigger a mentoring partnership between the leader and the follower. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 62 f.)

The third leadership style defined by Goleman et al. (2013) is **affiliative leadership**. The strong focus here lies on the open communication of feelings to increase satisfaction, retain harmony and elevate team affiliation. The individuals and their emotions play a superordinate role

compared to the accomplishment of organizational goals. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 64 f.) The affiliative leadership style is beneficial towards the organizational culture but not suitable to enhance business performance therefore it is recommended to complement it with another approach to ensure satisfying impacts. (Goleman, 2000, p. 84 f.) Goleman et al. (2013) advise to pair the affiliative and the visionary approach because it maintains the importance of team harmony while the members are striving for a common achievement. Affiliative leadership on its own can be applied to e.g. solve trust issues or increase morale and communication due to the leaders' collaborative, empathic and conflict avoiding character traits. In business downtime leaders can achieve great success increasing loyalty and cohesion using the tranquility during less stressful periods. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 64 f.)

Democratic Leadership stands for including experienced staff and knowledgeable people in the decision-making process by seeking their opinion. This approach is not suitable when organizations are in crisis and decisions are urgent as well as in fast-paced industries with intense competitiveness. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 68) When applied in daily business the democratic leader is the one to take a final decision but will allow his followers to contribute in the decision-making process. This approach is likely to increase the employees' motivation and job satisfaction as it makes them feel valued. Additionally, it contributes to their personal development by actively engaging them in important decisions. On the downside, the democratic approach can decelerate the whole process due to the participation of multiple parties. It is suitable in set-ups where teamwork is essential and the quality of the outcome is more important than the quantity or speed of execution. (Bhatti et al., 2012, p. 193) The classical character traits of a democratic leader include the ability to work in a team and collaborate, talent in conflict management, having an influential personality as well as being empathic. Democratic leaders are good listeners and show a genuine interest in their opposite. They are seen as a part of the team rather than following a top-down leading approach. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 69)

As the fifth style Goleman et al. defined the **pacesetting leadership** approach which stands for leading with excellence and high expectations. The pacesetting leadership style can be extremely effective in e.g. fast-growing or sales-driven companies with highly qualified and motivated workforce. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 72) Pacesetters are said to be impatient when

employees don't perform to their expectations. They perform excessive pressure while providing little to no guidance which can result in trust issues, dissonance and a tainted team environment. Pacesetter leaders have a high intrinsic motivation to achieve results and therefore sometimes take over tasks from their followers which could lead to lower self-esteem in the long run. (Goleman, 2000, pp. 80, 86) They don't trust that their subordinates are as proficient as them and therefore tend to micromanage. The more pressure leaders put on their followers the higher their anxiety levels might get, so rather than feeling energized and challenged to create sustainable performance they desperately get the job done. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 73 f.) Nevertheless, there are situations in which pacesetter leadership can be effective and positive. The underlying motivator for pacesetter leaders lies in continuously improving performance showing that they are eager to educate and challenge themselves. (Goleman, 2000, p. 86) Combined with character traits such as self-awareness and empathy pacesetter leaders can achieve great results. Being self-aware helps them to reflect on their own behavior, paired with empathy that can change perspectives for leaders to perceive their environment and better estimate the situation. The lack of self-management is what leads to micromanagement and impatience. (Goleman et al., 2013, pp. 74, 253 f.) The combination with other leadership styles, such as the visionary or the affiliative approach, makes pacesetter work well in everyday business because it reduces the importance of quantitative achievements and brings awareness towards the people. (ibid., 2013, p. 74 f.)

The **commanding leadership** style, sometimes referred to as a coercive approach, is driven by leaders expecting immediate response to their orders. Commanding leaders desist from sharing responsibility but rather taking complete authority, overseeing all processes and criticizing rather than providing constructive feedback or praise. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 76) Data used by Goleman et al. (2013) shows that commanding leadership is the approach least likely to evoke success because of its intimidating and negative attitude towards subordinates and the general climate. (ibid., 2013, p. 76 f.) Commanding leaders are experts in creating strategies for efficient goal achievement and expect high performances from contributors. (Nging & Yazdanifard, 2015, p. 1137) When executed poorly the coercive approach can erode people's pride and satisfaction within their job which are important drivers for delivering good work. The leadership style undermines the overall task of leadership: provide employees with a shared mission and by that giving their work a purpose. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 77) Even

though commanding leadership appears a legacy of the twentieth century businesses and battlefields, in some industries and scenarios it is still common practice. And it can make sense to apply this leadership style in some situations e.g. in the act of a hostile takeover or in an emergency room. (Appx. 10, 137-142) When used judiciously, it can be a powerful way to initiate radical change and erupt the followers' way of working by attacking the organizational culture but not the people. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 78 f.) The competencies of emotional intelligence that underlie this leadership approach are initiative, achievement and influence. Aligning with the pacesetter leadership approach, self-awareness, emotional self-control and empathy are necessary traits to keeping the approach positively practicable. (ibid., 2013, p. 79 f.)

The following subchapter brings leadership into another perspective. McManus and Perruci developed a model which permeates the concept of leadership into five different components.

2.5 McManus and Perruci's Five Components of Leadership Model

This subchapter describes the *Five Components of Leadership Model* which is used as a ground line for the elaboration of the expert questionnaires and therefore forms an integral part of this research. The *Five Components of Leadership Model* was elaborated by Robert M. McManus and Gama Perruci, who both hold a professorship in Leadership Studies at the Marietta College in the state of Ohio.¹⁰ In *Understanding Leadership* (McManus & Perruci, 2019) the authors provide an extensive written description of their model therefore this book will be the primary source for this subchapter.

¹⁰ For more detailed information on Robert McManus and Gama Perucci refer to the website of Marietta College, following this link: <https://www.marietta.edu/directory>

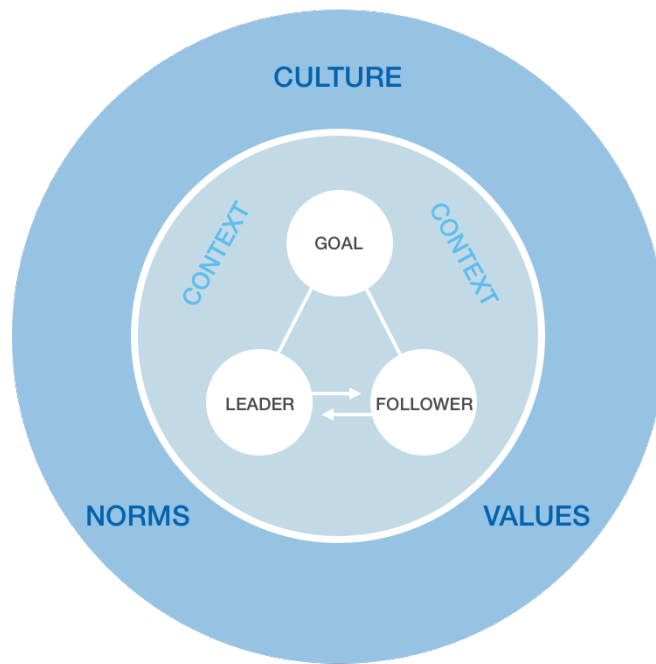


Figure 1: Own illustration of the Five Components of Leadership Model by McManus and Perruci (2019)

In *Understanding Leadership* (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 16 ff.) the focus lies on leadership as a process. They stress the importance of leadership being seen as more than simply the heroic leader but rather a combination of individual components equally contributing to creating a wholesome process. By creating the model McManus and Perruci aimed to provide a simple guide to support imminent leaders to penetrate the challenges and complexity of twenty-first century leadership that include e.g. intercultural matters, conflict situations, facilitation and other sensitive issues. (ibid., 2019, pp. 11, 19)

The underlying assumption of their research is that leadership studies should be focusing on 'purposeful interactions' which include ethical and behavioral matters. They anticipate that the relationship between leaders and followers is led by good intentions and that power relations are formed through voluntary actions and purposeful considerations. (ibid., 2019, p. 20)

The *Five Components of Leadership Model* distinguishes the terms leader and leadership by adding the complementary perspective of the follower. Because leadership can only be executed if there are people to follow the leader, McManus and Perruci focus on elements such as the empowerment of followers. They agree with Rost and Amarant (2005) that nowadays education, technology and communication tools are ways for the follower to

actively engage themselves in the leadership process rather than standing on the sidelines. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 33; Rost & Amarant, 2005, p. 46) Leadership is not exclusively about the person holding a superior title anymore, but leaders still remain an indispensable part of the process equation. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 37) The line between leader- and followership can be blurry at times depending on the degree to which the leader and his followers influence each other. (ibid., 2019, p. 40) In modern, knowledge-based organizations the hierarchical gap between leaders and followers also becomes indistinct. (Bennis, 2000, p. 74) As the business world evolves into an increasingly competitive and innovation-driven environment, high-skilled followers are needed to ensure continuous growth. Therefore, it is not sufficient to see followers as incompetent and obedient subordinates to their capable leaders but as knowledgeable individuals who have great influence in organizational achievements. (Carsten et al., 2014, p. 14) The responsibility for insufficient leadership is also dependent on the intensity of cooperation since inconsiderate followership can be equally harmful to the leadership process than e.g. miscasting the leading position. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 49) By including the art of followership in their model McManus and Perruci (2019) approach leadership from a holistic, modern perspective. Even though followers are already an established part in organizational structures, they still are rather unacquainted characters from a research perspective. (Kellerman, 2008, p. xvii f.) One way to show the distinct distribution of power inside an organization is to look at the power continuum which illustrates a range with an individual focus on one side and a group focus on the contrary. The power continuum distinguishes between the primacy of the leader and the primacy of the group to show the power structure in leadership processes. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 33) The power continuum will be part of the first analysis in chapter four of this research.

Besides leaders and followers, the third component of the model is a shared goal which puts all of the involved people in a partnership arrangement. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 16) The evolutionary hierarchy still exists by leaders defining the agenda, but the followers have the power to negotiate the execution of this agenda. The authors of the model describe the moment when leaders and followers join together to work on a shared goal as the “leadership moment” that initiates the process of combining resources and knowledge to achieve added value for the organization. This moment occurs when leadership is executed but it is unattached to the realization of the goal. (ibid., p. 54 ff.) Alongside the shared goal as one of

the models five components comes the vision which leads everyone towards the same destination by being reformulated into one or multiple goals. (ibid., 2019, p. 63)

Besides the main components which are the leader, his followers and a common goal, the model also includes two other factors that equally contribute to the overall process. For one, there is the context of the leadership process which includes the environment and decision making as well as the organizational structures in which the leadership is executed and, lastly, there is a cultural component to the model. The specifics of the context of leadership situations can be influenced by a multitude of factors, which can be externally driven by e.g. the economic situation, historical or political influences or internally driven through e.g. the industry, the corporate culture or change processes. (ibid., 2019, p. 71) The internally driven factors can vary depending on whether the company focuses on a shareholder approach or a stakeholder approach. Favoring the stakeholder approach, Economist Milton Friedman remarks that “There is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits.” (Friedman, 1970) A broader perspective is covered when including not only the business owners but also other affected parties such as employees, customers and the surrounding communities. From a stakeholder focus this means corporations should consider the “individuals and constituencies that contribute, either voluntarily or involuntarily, to [an organization’s] wealth-creating capacity and activities, and who are therefore its potential beneficiaries and/or risk bearers.” (Post et al., 2002, p. 8) The economic orientation of an organization has great influence on the internal and external business relationships but in the end, it’s not only the corporate culture that influences leadership, which is the reason for culture being the last component of the model that orbits all other components. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 81 f.)

The cultural dimension of leadership cannot be deducted from any of the other model components because from early days on leaders as much as followers are influenced by a variety of cultural norms and values. With the progressing of globalization, the necessity for intensified knowledge about leadership within cultural multitude is rising.¹¹ Originating from the definition of culture given in subchapter 2.3 of this research, culture is a construct developed throughout generations and continuously passed on. Matching the industry under

¹¹ See e.g. Bhagat, Triandis & McDevitt: *Managing Global Organizations: A Cultural Perspective*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2012 and Rondinelli & Heffron, eds.: *Leadership for Development: What Globalization Demands of Leaders Fighting for Change*. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2009.

investigation, McManus and Perruci (2019) establish a suitable comparison by describing culture as the “software of individuals within a collective. As long as the hardware is turned on, the software is telling us what to do and how to do it.” (ibid., 2019, p. 85) Extending cultural experiences and knowledge about our own and other cultures can be seen as software-updates which help to navigate through the different global arrangements on the power continuum because some countries naturally feel drawn towards a certain side of it while other might prefer the opposite side. (ibid., 2019, p. 85)

Following the model introduction, the author will share the underlying methodology of this research to highlight the utilization of qualitative research for further elaboration of the research question regarding leadership success criteria and the approximation towards the research goal to provide development areas and expert insights for distributed leadership.

3 Methodology

The analysis of the skillset for successful leadership of globally distributed teams requires insights into the general practice. People who experience leadership or those who need to provide guidance for others are the desired source to access insider knowledge. How certain companies are run is generally a topic that is not discussed publicly, therefore there is limited practical evidence but rather broad theoretical frameworks. To gain access to this kind of information the author makes use of empirical social research. By either using quantitative or qualitative measures it is thereby possible to unfold verifiable evidence to describe certain phenomena. (Kruse, 2015) Qualitative research has gained increasing acceptance in academic research during the last 20 years due to the high academic skill set the theory-based scheme demands from the researcher. Qualitative or interpretive studies nowadays are accepted as a beneficial tool to assess practical issues of everyday business in an accessible and relatable way. (Hackley, 2020, p. 12 f.)

In the following subchapters the author provides a stepwise description of the data collection and evaluation process before the data is ready to enter the analysis in chapters four and five.

3.1 Empirical study: Expert interviews

The decision to conduct a case study analysis is highly dependent on the topic. The more current the topic, the more relevant the case study analysis. (Yin, 2014, p. 4) In uncertain environments, such as entrepreneurship or fast changing industries, such as the tech-industry, the application of qualitative research is therefore recommended. (Neergaard & Leitch, 2015, p. 2) Due to the limited availability of recently published and relevant literature regarding the underlying research topic, the provision of individual research is considered useful. Conducting expert interviews during a worldwide pandemic is a challenge, but qualitative research is the adequate choice for a topic as sensitive as leadership and employee relationships. By using qualitative research instead of a quantitative study the author keeps a certain level of flexibility and scope for interpretation to explore the topic under investigation. (Ridder et al., 2016, p. 80) This form of research allows the usage of multiple information sources which in turn provide an understanding of complex interactions and the unique circumstances in which they occur. (Barr, 2004, p. 166 ff.) Qualitative research enables the author to be more inductive and build a case starting from one or a few specific scenarios to apply to a broader spectrum. In contrast, quantitative research uses a deductive approach to derive a specific from a general phenomenon. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 11 f.) Expert experiences, as part of qualitative studies, support the development of a leadership training and advance the underlying analysis through first-hand, practical insights rather than theoretical knowledge. The research goal to extract success factors for GDT leadership and the subsequent transformation into a leadership development training cannot be achieved by collecting data through a quantitative survey but by collecting subjective viewpoints, opinions and years of experience in distributed teamwork through the provision of interviews.

There are various types of interviews: the experiential interview, the expert interview, the investigative interview, the portrait interview and the opinion interview. While the portrait and opinion interview focus on individuals and their perspectives on distinct topics, the experiential, expert and investigative interviews are more concerned about the actual topic under investigation and the experiences of the interviewee are meant to support the general research rather than individual standpoints. (Neergaard & Leitch, 2015, p. 2 f.) The author of this thesis aims at a combination of expert and investigative interviews to analyze existing

literature by confronting it with practical expert experiences and enhancing the results with in-depth insights that are not as easily accessible. Once the decision about the interview type is made, there are multiple forms of how to structure the research interview. The decision depends on the extent of the topic, the interviewee and individual preferences of the interviewer. There is the unstructured interview which is laid out like a narrative conversation without any strict guideline. On the contrary there is the structured interview where the interviewer follows a strict guideline and executes the questionnaire without digression. (Neergaard & Leitch, 2015, p. 7) In the scope of this research the author decided to use the middle course. The semi-structured interview is based on underlying theory which raises expert perspectives on existing structures. The interviewer prepares a set of questions but leaves room for digression, queries and amendments. (Wengraf, 2001, p. 3) Due to the relatively high flexibility in a semi-structured interview the questionnaire is easily customizable to different interviewees while obtaining the framework of essential questions which is one of the main reasons of its application in this research.

3.2 Quality criteria for evaluation

The fulfillment of certain quality criteria is required in order to consider empirical social research qualitatively valuable. Evaluating research results with different quality criteria can support the verification of the outcomes. (Mayring, 2015, p. 123) Methodological literature defines three different quality criteria: construct validity, internal and external validity and reliability. (see e.g. Merriam, 1995; Yin, 2014)

Construct validity: To show that the research outcome is not only based on the researcher's observations it is advisable to combine multiple information sources to ensure objectivity. A common procedure to secure objectivity is called triangulation. Patton divides this principle in four different types: triangulation of data, investigators, theories and methods. (Patton, 1990, p. 187) In the scope of this research, the triangulation takes place by combining quantitative studies, the qualitative findings from the interviews as well as the usage of multiple written sources. A further strategy the author uses to increase construct validity is the generation of a chain of evidence. The chain of evidence should be presented in an understandable way throughout the whole report by repeatedly stressing the relevance of

provided information and the disclosure of accordance between the sources. Another option to gain better construct validity is to let experts cross- or proof-read the results (Yin, 2014, p. 46 f., 127) which will not be executed for this research for two reasons: (1) The results need to be handed in for grading and will therefore not be distributed before the final assessment and (2) the experts opinion lead to the results, therefore a validation is not necessarily essential at this stage.

Internal/External validity: The validity of an investigation serves to examine how congruent the findings of a research are and provides information about the applicability of the data. (Merriam, 1995, p. 53 f.) There is a distinction between internal and external validity. The quality criterion *internal validity* is only used for former and explanatory research but not for descriptive or explorative research. Internal validity illustrates that factor x leads to factor y and all relevant determinants are included. As soon as there are factors left out, the internal validity is decreasing and the quality of the research suffers. (Yin, 2014, p. 47 f.) Whereas external validity illustrates the possibility of generalization of the data and therefore provides information about the representativeness of the investigation's findings. (Misoch, 2015, p. 237) As explained in the previous issue of construct validity, the author forfeits the external validation to eliminate the risk of plagiarism through the timely distribution of the research findings. Nevertheless, there is a certain level of internal validity included throughout the investigation.

Reliability: Reliability as a quality criterion illustrates the accuracy of the measurements and findings of the research. A common mean to measure reliability is the repetition of the study. The correlation of the findings shows the precision of the investigation. The retest of the reliability is to be seen critical since a learning curve is expected. To avoid this risk through internal consistency one can apply the "split-half-reliability" method. The investigation's findings are split in two and later correlated with each other. (Wirtschaftspsychologische Gesellschaft) Another option to determine reliability is the "Parallel-Test". This test re-examines the research question by using an alternative method. The outcomes of both tests will then be verified for homogeneity. (Mayring, 2015, p. 123) Due to time restrictions of the master thesis the author is not able to repeat the study to correlate the outcomes, but the topic could potentially be re-examined to validate the reliability.

3.3 Case selection

To ensure a research that is as meaningful as possible the case selection was conducted very thoroughly. The interview candidates represent a broad variety of professions inside the tech-industry: e.g. Account Management, Global Mobility, Strategic Planning, Data/Tech Lead. The experts operate in multiple regions across the globe and therefore geographically complement each other throughout the research. A total of eight interviews were conducted in the time span from February to April 2020.

The first interview was conducted on February 19th, 2020 with Natalia Silveira who holds the position of Head of Global Mobility at *ThoughtWorks*¹². *ThoughtWorks* is a privately owned, global software consultancy with their headquarters in Chicago, Illinois, USA. They have a total of 43 offices in 14 different countries and committed themselves to embrace a modern approach to software development. Besides delivering innovative solutions and striving for technological excellence, social change is embedded as a key factor in *ThoughtWorks'* corporate culture. In their social change framework¹³, they promote their approach to a more equitable future on different levels of society. Natalia Silveira, in her position as Head of Global Mobility, operates globally in all regions with *ThoughtWorks* offices - from South America, to Europe, and Australia. (see Appendix 3)

The second interview was conducted on February 27th, 2020 with Tim Wiegels, Director of Data at *FREE NOW*¹⁴, formerly known as *myTaxi*. They are a mobility provider with their headquarters in Hamburg, Germany. *FREE NOW* was formed as a joint venture of BMW and Daimler in 2019 and is part of the *FREE NOW* Group. *FREE NOW* is currently present in around 10 European countries with a total of 35 offices and 2100 employees. In his function as Director of Data Tim takes care of teams composed of data engineers and data scientists. The areas of Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence as well as Business and Market Analytics also fall into his responsibility. (see Appendix 4)

¹² For more information on ThoughtWorks in general visit <https://www.thoughtworks.com/>

¹³ For more information on ThoughtWorks approach on social change visit <https://www.thoughtworks.com/social-change>

¹⁴ For more information on FREE NOW visit <https://free-now.com/de/>

On March 2nd, 2020 the author interviewed another employee of *ThoughtWorks*. Daniel Löffelholz is part of *ThoughtWorks Germany* where he holds the position of Lead Consultant Developer. Daniel has worked on several projects for *ThoughtWorks* throughout the last 4.5 years and can rely on a total of 10 years of work experience in the tech-industry after graduating university with a computer science degree. (see Appendix 5)

The following interview was conducted on March 9th, 2020. The interviewee requested the anonymization of the interview for privacy and legal reasons. Therefore, when referring to the respective interview, the author will use Interviewee XY instead of the interviewees' name. Interviewee XY is employed at a Silicon Valley based technology company and holds the title Partner Manager. The interviewee has multiple years of experience in the tech industry as well as working in and leading global teams. (see Appendix 6)

To extend the perspective on the research topic, the author not only interviewed leaders and team members of globally distributed teams, but also people who have expertise in training these positions. Anna Danes is one of the founders of *Ricaris*¹⁵, a content provider for the largest Spanish web companies, based in Barcelona. This was the fifth expert interview and it took place on March 13th, 2020. Through the experiences Anna collected while working for *Ricaris*, she became a remote team expert and now trains companies struggling with remote collaboration. To satisfy the increasing demand for these trainings she founded the company *Managing Virtual Teams*¹⁶. (see Appendix 7)

Another remote collaboration expert was interviewed on March 19th, 2020. Lisette Sutherland is the founder of *Collaboration Superpowers*¹⁷ and author of the book "Work together anywhere", based in the Netherlands. *Collaboration Superpowers'* mission is to provide a roadmap for companies, individuals and teams to successfully collaborate over distance. They also host a podcast that features interviews and stories from businesses that are experienced in the field of distributed work. (see Appendix 8)

Elizabeth Purbrick, Senior Operations Manager at YouTube Music via *Vaco*¹⁸, was interviewed on April 17th, 2020. Elizabeth is based in London, United Kingdom. She has multiple years of experience in the tech-industry in different roles such as Content Specialist and Team Lead. In

¹⁵ For more information on Ricaris visit <https://ricaris.com/en/>

¹⁶ For more information on Managing Virtual Teams visit <https://managing-virtual-teams.com/en/>

¹⁷ For more information on Collaboration Superpowers visit <https://www.collaborationsuperpowers.com/>

¹⁸ For more information on Vaco visit <https://sfvaco.com/>

her current position she operates mainly throughout the EMEA region with multinational teams in several countries. (see Appendix 9)

The last expert that was interviewed for this research is Daniel Hayashi. He is a colleague of Elizabeth Purbrick working for *Vaco Japan*. Daniel was remotely interviewed on April 22nd, 2020 and completed the expert sample and therefore the interview process. In his position as the Regional Account Manager for *Vaco* he is responsible for the APAC region with his teams spread in the whole area between India and Australia. (see Appendix 10)

All of the interviewed experts can revert to multiple years of experience in the global tech-industry, either as a leader, follower or coach. Because their expertise was acquired in different regions across the globe, such as the EMEA, APAC and AMER regions, they can provide a broad range of diverse knowledge regarding the topic under investigation.

3.4 Data collection and processing

The process of data collection started by deciding on the quantity of expert interviews as well as the acquisition of mentioned experts in the field of remote collaboration and leadership in the tech-industry willing to participate in this research. After setting the number of interviews to 8, the author started drafting the interview guidelines (see examples in Appendix 1 and 2) and contacting potential interview candidates. The approached experts were surprisingly cooperative and excited to support research in this field, especially during times of COVID-19. The scheduling process in turn was more of a challenge due to the experts being increasingly engaged in reorganizing their daily business in consideration of the COVID-19 safety precautions and regulations. This resulted in an extended interviewing period starting in February 2020 and ending in the end of April 2020.

Before the interview date the author sent a copy of the semi-structured interview guideline to the expert for them to be able to prepare. The experts were informed about the structure of the interview and the guideline being adjustable even throughout the interview. Six of the interviews were conducted remotely and either audio or video recorded depending on the supporting software. The respective recordings were subsequently used by the author to transcribe the conversations for the following analysis. The remaining two interviews with Tim Wiegels and Daniel Löffelholz could be conducted face-to-face because both of them are

located in Hamburg and at the time of their interviews COVID-19 precautions didn't yet restrict any kind of personal interaction. The interview lengths varied between a minimum of 40 minutes and a maximum of almost two hours. The transcripts of all eight interviews were then processed with *MAXQDA*¹⁹ which is a tool for computer-assisted data analytics. *MAXQDA* supports the evaluation of qualitative and mixed-method data and is available for Microsoft and Mac OS. The tool allows you to cluster and color-code the content of the interviews to facilitate the allocation and underline the importance of the statements for the respective part of the analysis. In the evaluation table (see Appx. 11) the statements are clustered in the following categories: leadership characteristics, leadership behavior/tasks, goal alignment, work environment, challenges and training approach.

4 Analysis of leadership skills

In the first step of this analysis the author is putting the *Five Components of Leadership Model* by McManus and Perruci (2019) into the context of globally distributed teamwork in the tech-industry. In the second step there will be an investigation to point out character traits that are desired for a global leadership position matching the demands brought up by the first step of the analysis. Taking into consideration the two perspectives McManus and Perruci examine in their research, namely the leader's and follower's angle, they describe leadership as either the leader's approach for personal development or their responsibility for their follower's development. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 215) These scenarios are both included in the following analysis and require the presence of certain attributes in leader behavior in order to be successful in a globally distributed team set-up.

4.1 Application of the *Five Components of Leadership Model* to the context of GDTs

The analysis is initiated with a closer look at the leadership position of a globally distributed team and respective leadership tasks and responsibilities which are brought up by the consulted experts during their interviews. While the interviews were structured after the

¹⁹ For more information on MAXQDA please consult <https://www.maxqda.de/>

individual parts of the *Five Components of Leadership Model*, the analysis itself is not. Due to the single components all being interdependent they are not separately observable. In the following the five components are put into context of a globally distributed team set-up before deriving desired leadership characteristics in the next step. Chapter five will then analyze how these characteristics can help face challenges of GDTs and detect potential training areas to foster leadership success.

The analysis starts with the leader component of the model as “servant leadership” is a term that appears in multiple conversations with the experts. Natalia Silveira e.g. describes herself as a servant leader who follows a clear vision and strategy to align and enable her team that works distributed from 14 countries worldwide. By applying a very personal leadership style Natalia creates a trust base that empowers autonomy within the team. (Appendix²⁰ 3, 38-51) Robert K. Greenleaf aligns with Natalia Silveira on the topic of servant leadership by saying that in order to be a true leader one has to be a servant first, so people are willing to follow. (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 6) The leader’s role therefore is to even out the path for their followers so they can do their jobs without hindrances. This statement finds approval among some of the experts interviewed. Tim Wiegels of *FREE NOW* e.g. explains that it is important to create a space for the team where they can interact, talk and collaborate with each other without limitations. (Appx. 4, 139-141) Lisette Sutherland shares this opinion and adds that the leader should act as a facilitator who removes roadblocks for the team. (Appx. 8, 149-154) She also stresses this in the context of conflict management, which will be addressed in more detail in chapter five. In her interview, Elizabeth Purbrick describes this task as freeing the team from manually heavy work, so they can focus on the tasks that require their professional expertise rather than spending time on e.g. administrative tasks which is why it is important to know about the team members daily business. (Appx. 9, 76-81) It is important to provide the team with freedom to do their jobs. In distributed teams there are highly skilled professionals who were hired for a reason and have the experience to autonomously decide how to execute their tasks, so micromanaging is not necessary and rather harmful. (Appx. 8, 247-252; Appx. 10, 142-148, 157, 240 f.) Lisette Sutherland and Daniel Hayashi here find another advocate in Elizabeth Purbrick, as she agrees to let the team act independently but adds the importance

²⁰ In the proceeding of this research the author will use the abbreviation Appx. when referring to content from the appendices.

of a leader having the skills and knowledge to support them in the best way possible should there arise task- or process- related questions. (Appx. 9, 451-453) Enabling the team to work without barriers includes the leadership task of ownership. Leaders in distributed teams should act as the voice of their team members to escalate topics through if necessary and take responsibility. (Appx. 9, 109, 123-129) Elizabeth Purbrick and Daniel Hayashi are aligning on this by stressing the necessity of a trust base that ensures team members that the leader will back their decisions, so they are not afraid to make mistakes and be more open and innovative. (Appx. 10, 403-407) The leader therefore sometimes takes a coaching position and empowers their team to be more adventurous. (Appx. 10, 235-238) Transferring these opinions into the context of the model, they provide information regarding the power distribution on the continuum mentioned in subchapter 2.5.

McManus and Perruci (2019, p. 32 ff.) use a power continuum scale to visualize the leader-follower relationship. They use four different leadership approaches along the continuum to describe the power distribution: Traits Approach, Behavior/Style Approach, Transformational Leadership and Servant Leadership. The author translated this in regard to this research by exchanging the leadership styles on the continuum with the approaches described in subchapter 2.4 by Goleman (2013) for better fitment to the context. The continuum therefore starts with the commanding leadership approach on the “I” side, followed by the pacesetting and democratic approach towards the center where we find the affiliative approach. Instead of transformational and servant leadership on the right side, the author places the coaching and visionary styles on the “WE” end of the continuum. As mentioned in subchapter 2.4 transformational and visionary leadership share attributes and are often used interchangeably, which validates the exchangeability to adjust the model’s continuum to better reflect the topic under investigation.

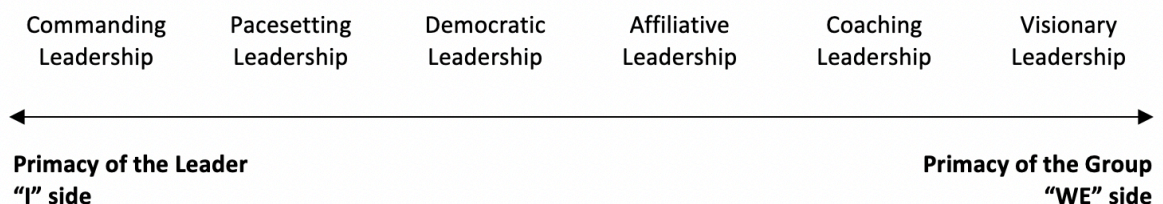


Figure 2: Own illustration of the power continuum after McManus and Perruci (2019)

On one end of the continuum there is the “I” perspective of the leader, stating the primacy of individualism, while on the opposing side there is the “WE” perspective representing the collective primacy of the team. The further a leader distances themselves from the “I” side of the continuum, the more power their followers gain. Therefore, character traits help the leaders to find the balance on the continuum where they feel most comfortable adjusted to the situation they are currently facing. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 33 ff.)

In his interview, Tim Wiegels mentioned the importance of distinction between management and leadership, especially when talking about remote teamwork. It is indispensable for the team to know their leader and to not only receive instructions from someone. (Appx. 4, 37-57) Anna Danes agrees and adds the notion that leadership is more emotional than management, which is more task related. (Appx. 7, 115-117) It is about connecting the two components leader and follower by creating a strong relationship and trust base, so everyone shares the feeling of belonging to one team even though they are geographically separated instead of being collocated, says Natalia Silveira. (Appx. 3, 292-299, 319-321) Her line of thought is supported through Tim Wiegels and Elizabeth Purbrick, who both follow the same approach to creating a sense of belonging and togetherness while being apart. Tim, as the director of a distributed data team, connects his team via video calls on a regular basis and Elizabeth, in her global leadership function, focusses on building trust and loyalty between team members and herself. (Appx. 4, 111-117; Appx. 9, 258-261) Daniel Hayashi opens up another aspect in this regard by mentioning the significance of equal treatment of all team members under close observation of the individual needs and preferences. A leader should treat everyone the same but especially when being distributed and having multiple cultures and characters aligned in one team, there is a need for careful consideration before approaching the individuals with e.g. ideas, tasks or even feedback. (Appx. 10, 411-416, 425-430) Culture is the component of the model that orbits all the other parts. As previously mentioned, this is not only with regard to the individual team members origin and culture but also the organizational culture. When a team is composed of professionals working together from numerous countries and even continents, instilling and retaining a shared corporate culture in the team is necessary to ensure alignment and create commonalities. (Appx. 6, 169 f.) From experience the corporate culture shapes the multicultural team whereas the multicultural team has no or small impact on the corporate culture, says Anna Danes. Companies need to be aware of that, so employees feel comfortable with receiving directions

instead of feeling overwhelmed. (Appx. 7, 251-260) By being present and executing corporate values the leader can familiarize the distributed team with the corporate identity and strengthen their feeling of belonging. (Appx. 10, 295-301) When discussing culture from an individual perspective, expert opinions align that every leader is influenced by the culture they grew up in. Coming from an heterogenous background, multiple cultural influences shape your personality over the course of your life. (Meyer, 2015, p. 24) The way individuals see the world, how they were raised and the experiences they made, these things are deeply rooted in their personalities and it reflects in their leadership. (Appx. 3, 257-261; Appx. 4, 217-219; Appx. 7, 238-246) Daniel Hayashi explains this by using the analogy of raising kids: there are certain values you want them to have but you still encourage them to have their own personality. For global teams this means to have shared values reflecting the corporate identity but still allowing the individuals to embrace their own personality within the team. (Appx. 10, 368-383) "Leadership is culturally contingent. That is, views of the importance and value of leadership vary across cultures." (House, 2004, p. 5) These cultural differences influence the leader-follower-relationship because leadership is viewed in numerous ways across cultures, whereas in one culture failure is accepted and seen as a necessity for growth, in other cultures it might be condemned. Another example would be a variation in leadership styles, while some countries are used to the coaching leadership style, in other areas a more commanding approach is common and appreciated. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 63) Leadership in a globally dispersed tech-team requires flexibility in the leadership style because the business is very agile and fast-changing. The work environment tends to have a start-up vibe even when companies are already well established because of the agile approach, general openness and innovativeness, flat hierarchies and a familiar atmosphere. (Appx. 4, 195-201) The agile approach also shows in the business operations where the focus lies on practices such as short stand-ups instead of hourlong meetings, which is something Anna Danes recommends to remote teams in trainings. (Appx. 7, 149-153) For Tim Wiegels from FREE NOW, Interviewee XY as well as Daniel Hayashi from *Vaco Japan* the agile approach is already common practice and well established. (Appx. 10, 116-119; Appx. 6, 136-140; Appx. 4, 195-201) This agility and flexibility cannot be provided by following a strict leadership strategy path. It requires spontaneity that is given by a situational leadership approach. Being able to decide which leadership style is most adequate in the current business situation under certain circumstances with different kinds of personalities to be led. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p.

17) Many factors influence the decision on how to lead which is why there should always be room to adjust. (Appx. 8, 26-30; Appx. 5, 165-174; Appx. 10, 135 ff.) It is not only the shared values that create alignment – people need a shared vision and a common goal in order to be motivated and connect with each other. Ambiguities about goals need to be removed in order to succeed as a team, especially when distributed. (Appx. 3, 164-171; Appx. 4, 101-107; Appx. 5, 140-145; Appx. 7, 137; Appx. 9, 171-177) Removing ambiguities requires extensive communication between leadership and team members but it's not only this task that requires amplified attention in a distributed team. Since the context in which a goal is pursued has strong influence on the realization of it and needs to be observed carefully, another challenge arises because there are different contexts and conditions throughout the dispersed team. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 71; Appx. 5, 167-169) The consulted experts generally share the view that all leadership tasks require more effort in order to be successful with the distributed team. (Appx. 6, 164-170; Appx. 7, 124-126, 204 ff.; Appx. 10, 191-195, 362 f.) Especially sensitive topics such as performance reviews, salary negotiations and disciplinaries are extremely hard tasks to be executed remotely. (Appx. 9, 86-88, 398-407; Appx. 10, 232-238) The context component includes fairness and equality in the sense that everyone on the team has the same basis to contribute to the goal. (Appx. 8, 128-137) Being physically available for everyone on the team at all times is not possible in a dispersed team but creating presence online and treating everyone the same is. (Appx. 9, 132-138) For followers to feel motivated and engaged it is important that they are treated equally to their team members. As a leader it is important to get the team together regularly, especially when working remotely, to be present and give people the opportunity to speak up, share feedback, ideas and concerns with the group and the leader. (Appx. 4, 49-57) Feedback-loops are a critical tool in dispersed teams for personal as well as professional development while they also create a constant opportunity for the leader and their team members to exchange thoughts. (Appx. 8, 92-99) Interviewee XY adds that feedback conversations are a great possibility to show appreciation but also to foster some change when processes are not optimal yet and therefore require critical yet respectful pointers and instructions. (Appx. 6, 183-188) Similar to the power continuum for the leader-follower relationship, McManus and Perruci (2019) demonstrate a followership continuum in their study. This followership continuum, which shows the followers' level of engagement in the general leadership and decision-making process, was inspired by Barbara Kellerman in 2008. Kellerman defines five types of followers who can

support or oppose their leaders in the achievement of their goals by behaving either actively or passively: Isolates, Bystanders, Participants, Activists and Diehards. (Kellerman, 2008, p. 91 f.) While moving on the continuum from the passive followership side towards the active followership side, the followers' engagement in the leadership process increases.

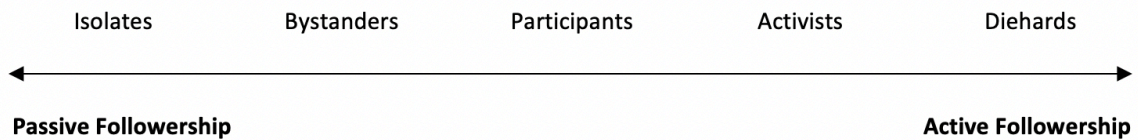


Figure 3: Own illustration of the followership continuum after Kellerman (2008)

As mentioned in subchapter 2.5, followers don't only receive orders anymore, they have a voice and actively contribute as they are a crucial part of the leadership process. Kellerman (2008) notes that this active contribution is accompanied by accountability – not only bad leaders are responsible for ineffective leadership; bad followers are too. (Kellerman, 2008, p. 73 f.) Therefore, in GDTs a minimum of Participant or Activist Behavior is desirable to ensure an equal contribution towards goal achievement. (Appx. 10, 179-186; Appx. 3, 164-171)

4.2 Characteristics of a global leader addressing GDT issues

To be able to succeed in distributed leadership, it is necessary to create a positive and inspirational environment that embraces the dynamics of the digital transformation. It is about laying the foundation for people of every level to take on responsibility, be brave and independent to achieve professional and personal growth. (Kühmayer, 2020) As mentioned before, the leader is a crucial person in the leadership process, nevertheless they are not the only main character. Their goal is to support their followers to be the best version of themselves and transfer this mindset into their work. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 36 f.) When leading remotely, not only the analogue leadership traits but also a variety of digital soft skills and competencies are required to succeed. (IFIDZ, 2019, p. 4) Goleman (2013, p. 255 ff.) assumes that the six leadership styles described in subchapter 2.4 are built on emotional intelligence which includes the following components: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Based on this assumption the leader of a

globally distributed team in the tech-industry should have a variety of classical leadership skills and characteristics alongside some more specific traits linked to the digitalized era which are discussed in the following.

Starting with self-awareness, which is the ability to perceive and understand personal feelings as well as understanding the potential influence of such on oneself and fellow humans. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 253 ff.) Natalia Silveira mentions the interdependence of self-awareness and international experience in her interview, saying that professionals that gather experience outside their home countries not only learn a lot about foreign cultures but also about themselves because they get the opportunity to compare their own values to others. (Appx. 3, 280-287) High self-awareness can be very helpful when a leader is aiming at guiding a team efficiently. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 215) Natalia Silveira adds that, nevertheless, you can't approach everyone in the same way because of the individual cultural habits. (Appx. 3, 229-230) The experts agree though, that in the tech-industry acknowledging cultural differences is something you learn automatically, without even having to live and work abroad due to the industry being so multicultural. Tim Wiegels shares that at *FREE NOW* it is the norm to have multiple cultures compiled in one team even when they are co-located (Appx. 4, 207-209), which is also the case at *Vaco UK*. (Appx. 9, 369-373) Daniel Löffelholz of *ThoughtWorks Germany* adds that it is not only about the cultural differences anymore but rather interpersonal differences because multiculturalism becomes the norm in tech. (Appx. 5, 130-133) Self-awareness also includes egoism, which is likely to occur in global teams due to e.g. the time zone differences. As a leader it is important to be aware that a meeting time suitable for yourself may not be suitable for a team member in a different time zone, therefore careful consideration and compromise are in order. (Appx. 9, 212-215) Appreciation, for oneself and other team members is an important competency for interpersonal relationships and therefore one of the most crucial factors to contribute to leadership success. Ranking third with a contribution to successful leadership of 33 %, this is the ability to focus on the people and their needs instead of prioritizing technical tasks. (IFIDZ, 2019, p. 5)

Self-management is the ability to control feelings and desires that might be disruptive in certain situations. This includes the ability to reflect behavior, discard judgement, provide transparency and have a positive mindset. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 254 f.) The openness to

the idea of being wrong is a strong and reflective character trait, that is important when leading a distributed team. Things can get lost in communication and team members, who are already experienced professionals, might outgrow your expertise every once in a while, and instead of feeling offended a good leader should accept and empower their followers' decision or advice. (Appx. 10, 171-178) The ability to accept criticism and tolerate fault contributes for 15 % of leadership success. (IFIDZ, 2019, p. 3) Being approachable and mutually respectful helps to create a trust base for team collaboration. (Appx. 9, 347-350) A good leader has a positive and optimistic attitude that reflects in their behavior towards their followers, the organization as well as customers or clients. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 255) Equally important for the work climate are honesty and transparency. (Appx. 4, 162-164) If nonexistent, their absence can lead to the so called free-rider problem where people only pretend to contribute while relying on their team members work which is a common phenomenon in work related partnerships where responsibilities and processes are unclear. (Kandel & Lazear, 1992, p. 803 f.) Besides the risk of accommodating a "free-rider" in the remote team, regular check-ins with team members are crucial to detect signs of mental illnesses within the team. Being distributed can be emotionally draining and followers are expected to self-manage their schedule and workload. Being geographically separated aggravates the monitoring of signs of exhaustion or isolation. (Appx. 8, 262-272) Employee motivation is an important factor for team success but also a risk for mental wellbeing because people tend to work more remotely, especially across time zones. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, pp. 85, 213 ff.) Transparency is attributed with a great relevance for leadership success (31 %) as it lands on rank four of the meta-study by IFIDZ. Transparency creates trust, decreases control behavior, empowers independence and motivates people. (IFIDZ, 2019, p. 3 f.) Goleman (2013) states that especially internal motivation is an invincible tool that is triggered by high individual expectations and the curiosity for certain topics. It drives people's desire to educate and further develop themselves and their team members. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 254) For Elizabeth Purbrick of *Vaco UK* this means having an interest in the industry and in the actual work of the team, as it is necessary in order to stay motivated and to be a supportive and approachable leader. (Appx. 9, 451-453) Daniel Löffelholz of *ThoughtWorks Germany* agrees that in order to be a coach and sparring-partner for the developers on the team, a certain level of contextual knowledge and respectively interest is necessary for the leader to advise in cross-functional areas. (Appx. 5, 46-54) Intrinsic motivation is not only

triggered by the interest in the context though, interest in the people can also be a great motivation and inspiration. Natalia Silveira of *ThoughtWorks UK* is always curious about the people on the team - who are they, where do they want to go professionally as well as personally? It helps her to develop a shared vision that everyone is encouraged to follow. (Appx. 3, 261-265) In her role as a coach for remote collaboration, Anna Danes also tries to understand where the intrinsic motivation comes from and which individual goals are pursued at the beginning of each training. (Appx. 7, 111-112) Showing a genuine interest in people you work with is also part of the empathy component of emotional intelligence which is explained in the following under social awareness.

Social awareness is defined as the ability to interpret the feelings of the surrounding people and to act in a reasonable manner according to their needs. Empathy is an important factor of social awareness and in general human interaction, especially while building and maintaining interpersonal relationships. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 255) For Natalia Silveira empathy is the main attribute for a good leader, as one can only connect with the team when they understand their feelings, even more so in a dispersed team where communication is primarily executed online. (Appx. 3, 226-228) In alignment with Natalia, Tim Wiegels explains the importance of empathy in a distributed, multinational team. Besides understanding the feelings of team members, leaders have to know how to approach each individual and make sure they understand them correctly. (Appx. 4, 204-209) Surprisingly, in the leadership competency ranking empathy only comes in 31st with a contribution to successful leadership of 15 %, but when only considering the digital-analogue competencies empathy comes in 21st place. (IFIDZ, 2019, p. 3) In a distributed set-up, team members sometimes need more time to adjust to tasks, tools or situations, therefore the leader needs to make time to individualize communication and show compassion to really support people. (Appx. 8, 291-296) Besides empathy and compassion the service concept takes an important role in social awareness as leaders need to monitor customer or client satisfaction in order to deliver high-quality work. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 255) Customer orientation as a competence accounts for a 15 % contribution to successful leadership. (IFIDZ, 2019) As a team-lead in IT-consulting, it is a desirable trait to think cross-functionally – ensuring performance scalability or quality of the delivered code as well as identifying knowledge gaps and trying to bridge these to provide maximum output for the client. (Appx. 5, 46-49) This awareness is not limited to external

clients or customers as it also benefits the own company when leaders acquire knowledge outside of their own field of expertise. Good leaders show a level of organizational awareness where they are capable of discovering beneficial social networks and crucial relationships inside the organization. Being politically astute as well as understanding guidelines and unspoken rules of the company will support the leader in establishing a comfortable standing and solid reputation to operate in. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 255)

There are a variety of other skills to compliment empathy in the process of building and maintaining relationships. Finding commonalities and building rapport within the team are crucial when establishing interpersonal relationships. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 255 f.) Strong communication and authenticity emanated by the leader creates resonance and makes work exciting. (Appx. 8, 69-74) The ability to communicate is by far the most important competency with a contribution to leadership success of 57 %, according to the IFIDZ meta-study of 2019. Categorized as a digital-analogue competency this is a competency that has changed with the digital era as there was a shift from monological towards dialogical communication, implying that giving feedback²¹ and listening to people gain increasing importance over communication skills such as rhetoric or storytelling. (IFIDZ, 2019, p. 3 f.) As a leader, being inspirational while remaining a persuasive and engaging personality will influence the group to collaborate and in turn contribute to the team achievements. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 255 f.) For Anna Danes in her role as a remote collaboration coach, being inspirational is the distinction between being a leader and being a manager. (Appx. 7, 115) By having influence in the team as well as in the organization the leaders are capable to contribute to individual development which includes understanding the personal goals of team members and getting to know their strengths and weaknesses by showing a genuine interest in them as a person. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 256) As a leader one should be able to maintain the balance between personal development and individual goal achievement while pursuing the collective team goal and the organizational objectives. (Appx. 9, 420-423) The prioritization of individual needs and tasks is a valuable asset in change processes where leaders act as catalysts. Change management is a process that requires people to question the current status quo, recognize potential for improvement and implement actions to overcome barriers. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 256)

²¹ For a more detailed assessment on feedback consult subchapter 5.4.

Natalia Silveira describes this as a vision to execution: What is the right team set-up and how are we achieving the goal? Especially when the team is dispersed across countries the leader has to evaluate every individual scenario and draft a strategy that includes every team member in every location, so that everyone feels comfortable throughout the process. (Appx. 3, 233-242) The IFIDZ meta-study identifies the ability to change as the second most important leadership competency with a 39 % contribution to leadership success, which includes changes in e.g. work processes, demographic change, business models, hierarchies and forms of communication. The ability to change is categorized as an analogue competence that counts for leaders with a local team as well as leaders with a dispersed team. (IFIDZ, 2019, p. 3 f.) Eventually these change processes all require the willingness to compromise, respectful interaction, helpfulness and the ability to cooperate which counts as much for the leader as the followers. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 256) Flexibility is the key attribute here since leadership is substantially situational and requires continuous adjustments. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 17) In the leadership competency ranking flexibility takes the 18th place with a 23 % contribution to successful leadership, directly following the ability to learn (23 %) and motivate (25 %). (IFIDZ, 2019, p. 3) Finding a common ground or a shared ideal scenario in conflict situations is a task that includes facilitation skills and active listening. (Appx. 8, 141-154) It requires even better communication and facilitation skills when the conversation happens online because the conflict is harder to detect when people are out of sight. (Appx. 5, 161-164) Nevertheless, conflict solving abilities are far down the ranking of general leadership capabilities and only come in 56th place with 7 % contribution to successful leadership. (IFIDZ, 2019, p. 3) In order to react in a fair and reflected way, not only in conflict situations, being honest and transparent towards all parties involved is crucial. (Appx. 4, 60-69) Open and authentic communication is necessary to reach people and by that raise awareness for ongoing processes. (Appx. 3, 346-356; Appx. 4, 77-80; Appx. 7, 120; Appx. 9, 293-297)

4.3 Interim conclusion

The preceding analysis of the modern leadership theory by McManus and Perruci and its application to the subject of globally distributed teamwork shows that leadership of GDTs is highly situational and requires continuous improvement through experience in many different

business situations. Because leadership is influenced by so many factors it includes a broad variety of tasks which makes it impossible to create a schematic best practice formula. Generally, in the tech-industry there is a rather modern approach to leadership. Employees or followers are highly skilled professionals that understand their business best and can work autonomously. The leader here takes over the role of a facilitator who builds trust relationships, guides through decision making processes and engages in conflict solutioning so the team is able to work without hindrances. According to the expert opinions in a globally dispersed team the leader should therefore find himself somewhere between the center and the “WE” side of the power continuum. By giving power to the followers, granting them autonomy and trusting their decisions depending on the situational demands a shared power balance emerges which also leads to shared responsibilities. In particular, this indicates that followers and leaders are equally responsible for successful leadership, all team members should contribute actively towards the same goal and engage in decision making processes.

Based on the special leadership requirements for GDTs, it is possible to derive character traits that enable the efficient and successful execution of leadership in a distributed set-up. “When equipped with desirable competencies, leaders can be effective contributors to organizations and society if they have an awareness of how these contexts influence their behavior. This level of awareness about contexts requires *personal* leadership development.” (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 217) Following the results of the IFIDZ (2019) meta-study, the five general competencies that have the greatest impact on leadership success are communication skills, the ability to initiate and execute change, showing appreciation and employee orientation, being transparent and to have innovative capacities. (IFIDZ, 2019, p. 3) From the expert interviews there is a much higher tendency towards empathy and cultural awareness which can be explained by the focus on international and remote collaboration whereas the meta-study only considers general leadership in the digital era. Besides these differences, the experts independently agree with the study results under the condition that in a remote set-up all of the above-mentioned leadership characteristics and competencies need to be intensified to have the desired effect and satisfy individual as well as team needs. Self-awareness is linked to international experience which makes the work in multicultural environments an advantage in personal development for leaders of a GDT. The openness to being wrong, accepting mistakes and acknowledging other peoples’ successes demonstrate

strength and integrity. Leaders build trust by being socially aware and approachable. Operating with compassion and empathy can help the leader to understand how the team or the organization as a whole functions and how different individuals contribute. These trust relationships are nurtured by a collective vision, inspirational leaders, honesty and respectful interaction.

Based on the interim findings of chapter four the author proceeds the analysis by investigating the underlying challenges of GDT leadership and discovering development training possibilities to improve the leadership success. Chapter five is approached by analyzing the difficulties that arise in a globally distributed team set-up and hence elaborating solution approaches with shared insights by experienced professionals in the remote environment.

5 Leadership Development: Everyday Challenges that turn into Training Opportunities

Development phases are beneficial to broaden the horizon and escape the comfort zone, this is not only valid on a personal level, but also professionally when e.g. undertaking a leadership development. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 34) People can learn to be a leader and grow into their position by training their ability for emotional intelligence that drives the execution of leadership. It is a time-consuming journey but will in turn be rewarded with exhilarating and profitable outcomes. (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 88) In order to prepare leaders for a global leadership role, Sendelbach and McGrath (2006) define three critical concerns that require consideration throughout the process. Firstly, the effectiveness of global leadership depends on the capability and willingness of the people to be led; secondly, the ongoing competition of short- and long-term outcomes and thus the prioritization of equally desirable achievements and lastly, the necessity of a global mindset when accepting this role. (Sendelbach & McGrath, 2006, p. 234) As already mentioned in chapter 2.4 there is an increase in awareness for the importance of leadership development noticeable. Leadership programs usually tend to focus on leadership skill-building which is now erupted by a trend that combines the skill-building component of leadership training with the knowledge component

of leadership education to achieve growth. Providing leaders with knowledge triggers their critical thinking and analytical reasoning that can then be applied in the execution of their tasks. (McManus & Perruci, 2019, p. 6) Therefore, when planning a leadership development training, the “first step is not action; the first step is understanding. The first question is how to think about leadership.” (Gardner, 1990, p. xiv)

The first part of the following analysis is about the importance of creating an environment in which distributed teams can be integrated and leadership development can be executed sustainably. Following this, there are four subchapters of training categories derived from challenges that the consulted experts shared with the author during the interviews. These challenges are clustered into the sections: Commitment, Communication, Conflict Management and Feedback, ranked using the frequency of referencing these topics during the conversations. Chapter 5.2 contains the analysis of communication which is further subdivided into the following topics: working across time zones, intercultural cooperation as well as communication and collaboration tools. The subject of discussion in subchapter 5.3 is commitment where the author investigates the topic of goal alignment and elaborates how to create a feeling of team belonging in a globally distributed team. Another important factor to analyze is the importance of feedback loops in globally distributed teams which is addressed in subchapter 5.4, whereas subchapter 5.5 is concerned about the detection and clarification of potential conflict situations in a remote set-up.

5.1 Creating the Environment for Remote Collaboration and Leadership

Studies show that almost three-quarters of leadership development initiatives fail to be sustainable in the long run due to the inflexibility and transformation averseness of the superior organization in which leadership takes place. (Beer et al., 2016) As already mentioned in subchapter 2.5 as part of the model introduction, the context of leadership can have immense influence in the respective outcome because historical, economic or political forces and the corporate culture can intervene with the leading strategy in individual teams within the organization. Change management and remote work set-ups require the openness to new ways of thinking because it is the context that decides whether or not the changes can be lasting. (Beer et al., 2016) Therefore, in order for distributed teams to be able to collaborate

remotely, the company structure must allow for it to function. When the company is not open to the idea of distributed teamwork and therefore not equipped and prepared for this type of collaboration, the strategy will fail. (Appx. 7, 272-283)

Many modern companies already enable work from home or other remote set-ups because they are aware of the advantages it offers not only to their employees but also to the organization. Considering the shortage of specialists in the industry and the scope of technological progress globally, IT firms are likely to operate across borders and have autonomously occurring demand for remote collaboration of different forms. (Appx. 5; 37-40) Also in emergency situations, where higher forces like e.g. nature catastrophes prevent people from working from the offices, being able to switch to remote work anytime benefits all employees and not only the ones assigned to a distributed team. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 127) Remote solutions open up the company towards a global talent pool where they can recruit the best available candidates. Additionally, they help companies to stay competitive in an environment where employees get more demanding and expect a certain level of flexibility in their work. The strongest argument for creating a remote environment though lies in the financials – by creating the option of remote work, the company can easily grow and shrink in alignment with project demand and simultaneously increase savings by e.g. reducing office space and recruiting offshore. (ibid., p. 27 ff.) The contrasting argument of implementation costs can be attenuated because IT companies are well equipped with technology and respective knowledge by default and by seeing it as an investment for long-term profit maximization. (Appx. 4, 121-131; Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 33 f.) The company insights shared by the experts reveal that most of the tech-companies consulted have a start-up environment, yet they are not start-ups anymore. (Appx. 4, 195-201) Another noticeable trend spreading through the IT industry is the agile approach, because it allows the companies to remain competitive in the rapidly changing and evolving world of technology. (Mendonca & Sachitanand, 2018) In contrast to the classical waterfall approach²² in project management, where every rigid project phase needs to be tangible as well as predictable, the agile approach allows for more flexibility to cope with the increasing complexity and interconnectivity within software development processes. (Hass,

²² The author refrains from an in-depth analysis of the differences between the waterfall and agile approach and further neglects the waterfall approach due to the limited scope of this thesis.

2007, p. 1) To increase the positive effects of distributed agile project management Anna Danes recommends limiting meetings to a minimum, people- and timewise, by replacing them with e.g. daily or weekly stand-ups²³ and relying on frequent usage of collaboration tools. (Appx. 7, 149-153) For *Company XY* and *FREE NOW* this approach works well in practice. (Appx. 6, 136-140; Appx. 4, 222-231) Daniel Hayashi of *Vaco Japan* agrees that a quick 30-minute catch-up is more efficient than hourlong meetings of reporting. (Appx. 10, 116-119) *ThoughtWorks Germany* is another company that follows the agile approach because they see the benefits, nevertheless, Daniel Löffelholz shares in his interview that it's important to consider the cost factor. Global alignments and coordination imply costs for the company, which evokes the leadership task of intensified cost monitoring and regulation in GDTs. (Appx. 5, 239-241) Calls for action and agreements easily get lost in virtual collaboration and are likely to be forgotten or misunderstood. Likewise, the lacking ability of individual team members to properly manage time and actions can hinder an unobstructed and therefore cost-efficient workflow. (Appx. 4, 168-177) Another beneficial factor to be considered in the decision-making process about generally integrating remote work is the level of productivity. Studies show, that by allowing employees to work from home or hiring remote employees, productivity increases significantly because people are e.g. not distracted, they log in earlier because they don't have to commute to the office, and they generally take shorter breaks. (Bloom, 2014) Tim Wiegels agrees that the performance of employees increases with virtual communication in the remote environment. He explains that by assuming that tasks and expectations are communicated clearer online and people are more up to date through the usage of collaboration tools. (Appx. 4, 135-138)

How the leader can intervene to achieve alignment across the distributed team, to foster productivity and simultaneously create a sense of belonging throughout the group will be the topic of the following subchapter.

²³ The author is referring to stand-up meetings; a closer definition can be found in the glossary of this thesis.

5.2 The Art of Blind Commitment

According to the analysis of the experts interviews the insecurity about alignment in a distributed team is very prevalent among leaders. How do you work with someone who you might have never seen before or barely see in person? How do you establish a trust base among team members and the leader? While subchapter 2.2 describes the necessity of a shared vision and goal in order to achieve collective success, this chapter is concerned about the development and integration processes of such visions and goals while establishing a sustainable and personal relationship with the team.

5.2.1 Relationship Building

Chapter 2.2 explains that teamwork requires the members of the team to collaborate and merge expertise to achieve results. Knowingly, this can only be achieved if the people have some kind of personal relationship based on trust and connectedness. This part of the research is concerned about the establishment of relationships within dispersed teams and the role of the leader in this matter. Practical advice of experienced leaders as well as tips on how to train relationship building in remote teams will complement this chapter to detect prosperous paths for the development of leader-follower relationships.

“We are a better team when we like the people we work with. And to like them, we need to get to know them.” (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 96) Natalia Silveira agrees, that a vital part of successful remote leadership is to establish the feeling of one team through connection. It is crucial to her to get to know every member of the team on an individual basis and connect them to other team members through common interests, personally as well as professionally. (Appx. 3, 132-142) Tim Wiegels adds, when there are no interpersonal connections within the team and between team members and their leader, the collaboration inevitably becomes one-way street for instructions and the leader becomes a manager. It is the leaders’ job to speak honestly with everyone and be very transparent to make sure that everyone knows the current status and responsibilities. (Appx. 4, 74-80) To start the interpersonal relationship building process, Sutherland and Janene-Nelson (2018) recommend the leader to share a bit of their own personality with the team members. If that

is not possible in person, at least turn on the camera for videocalls instead of writing emails and schedule some personal time to socialize into regular team meetings to feel more connected. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 96)

Daniel Löffelholz admits that relationship building is easier when team members see each other on a regular basis and have face-to-face interactions, which is something a leader has to be aware of and accept it. There will never be the same intensive bond between remote team members as there is in local teams who get to have coffee breaks together or after-work engagements to build relationships, but to a degree this is still possible to achieve. (Appx. 5, 155-160) In a globally distributed set-up leaders have to be particularly engaged to make everyone feel as part of one team and emotionally connect to everyone involved. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 183) Daniel Löffelholz further shares that in his opinion, roles that interact a lot in daily business should also meet face-to-face regularly to align and deepen their connection. (Appx. 5, 93-96) Whereas Interviewee XY thinks that bringing people from dispersed teams together is only reasonable, when they work on something really meaningful that creates an impact. (Appx. 6, 139-144) One way to bond with the whole team is shared by Tim Wiegels. Having his teams spread across Europe enables him to organize regular offsites to create a more casual environment for people to network. He intends to be present at the locations abroad as frequently as possible and includes team building measures such as dinner invitations or after-work drinks into his visits. (Appx. 151-156, 164-166) By following the same approach, Daniel Hayashi of *Vaco* spends a significant amount of his time on relationship building. Besides taking everyone out for dinner, he includes one-on-one meetings with every team member to his schedule because it puts a name to his face. Daniel believes that it not only strengthens the leader-follower relationship but also fosters the identification with the company and hence, it's worthwhile. (Appx. 10, 286-296) Another way to create a sense of belonging to the company though being distributed is presented by Daniel of *ThoughtWorks* who explains that there is a recurrent exchange of knowledge within the company, not only with employees of the same team. Daniel also agrees with Natalia (Appx. 3, 132-142), that within the teams at *ThoughtWorks* it is common practice to connect people with similar interests and expertise to increase both, the feeling of belongingness as well as the mutual learning process. (Appx. 5, 58-62) There are multiple ways to stay connected to the people you work with, at *Company XY* for example, the interviewed team lead relies on regular group calls, live chats, video conferencing and weekly stand-up meetings to stay connected to his

team. Being present at these shared times helps to create a feeling of “one team” even when people are spread across the globe. For company belongingness there are regular town-hall meetings for the entire workforce and an additional retreat to socialize for the whole company at least once a year. (Appx. 6, 83-111)

A lot of tools can be used to simulate a work environment in which everyone is located closely together. At Spotify²⁴ for example, some remote teams keep a Google Hangouts²⁵ Conference open with only the video on to recreate the feeling of sharing an office with team members. If there is a question for someone on the team, one simply has to un-mute their microphone and address that person. (Tsiridis, 2013) Having a video interaction feels more human than simply writing emails or talking on the phone because one can get insights to colleagues’ personal lives through their interior style or when a child walks by in the background. These things help to build emotional relationships and increase the community feeling. (Kilby, 2014) Seeing other team members contributing to the shared goal motivates individuals to follow their example. Diligence within the team creates a trust-base which is inevitably lacking when there is remote collaboration because not seeing team members work raises subconscious suspicion and can, at worst, result in a negative attitude towards the team. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 93 f.) To prevent this negative attitude from arising, team members as well as their leader, need to trust the productivity of their fellow colleagues, everyone needs to be transparent on their tasks and processes and they need to deliver results. (Montero, 2014; Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 94 f.) Creating visibility for ongoing work can be achieved through different collaboration tools, which will be further discussed in subchapter 5.3.3 of this research.

Some ideas to virtually socialize are playing Trivia online, introducing virtual book clubs, collective cooking sessions, adding social time before or after a meeting or similar. These activities may appear childish in a professional work environment, but they show great impact. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 190 f.) The key to teamwork, remotely or co-located, is caring for each other – supporting and empowering team members, showing genuine interest in their lives and respecting them. (Blum, 2015) Because in the end, the team follows

²⁴ Spotify is a global music streaming and media services provider from Sweden, <https://www.spotify.com/>

²⁵ An introduction of Google Hangouts can be found in subchapter 5.3.3

their leader because they like what they represent and who they are. In teamwork it's about personal and professional cohesion. (Appx. 10, 179-186)

5.2.2 Goal Alignment

This cohesion will support the team in their efforts to goal achievement. As mentioned before, a shared goal drives people to work together and collectively follow their leader on the path to success. Alignment can take place in multiple aspects of remote collaboration; it is not only about the goal and where the journey ends but also about how the path to goal achievement is designed. This chapter aims at describing these processes by including practical insights shared by employees with leading roles in global technology companies and also introducing the concept of team agreements.

A frequent question from leaders of remote teams is, whether or not it makes sense to switch from a time-focused approach to an objective-focused approach. (Appx. 7, 51-52) This question needs to be evaluated from multiple angles. According to the leadership competencies study by IFIDZ (2019) result orientation has a 13 % contribution to successful leadership in the digital era. This competency is ranked 35th out of 86 essential competencies for leadership success. Given the fact that remote teams in tech are composed of academics and professionals, a leader should be able to trust their judgement as long as they reach their objectives. (Appx. 8, 247-252) Even though time is always a factor, micromanagement is not appropriate in this environment. (Appx. 10, 237-241; Appx. 8, 251-257) Every leader makes this decision by themselves. For example, Natalia Silveira shared that she had to set up processes from scratch as she was new to the global leadership position when she started her role as Head of Global Mobility at *ThoughtWorks*. In this set-up she compiles alignment in globally shared documents where ongoing initiatives in their respective locations are stated to monitor all processes in the different regions. By providing transparency through shared documents, regular global calls, a clear structure and the usage of consistent tools her team is able to comprehend ongoing procedures and through that learn from each other. (Appx. 3, 55-70) For a leader it is important to accept that people have individual solutioning approaches and that the focus should lie on the outcomes and not so much on the procedure. As highly skilled professionals your team members should have the ability to assess how they

can achieve what has been agreed on and make reasonable choices for their individual tasks, so you as a leader can grant them this freedom of choice. (Appx. 5, 136-145, 180-184) Nevertheless, in distributed teams, the decision of including team members into the superordinate decision-making process is highly situational. As described in chapter 2.4 being a democratic leader has advantages such as increased trust and commitment from followers but at the same time results in a delay in the decision-making process. Natalia Silveira adds that as a leader of a GDT, there are always competing priorities and your job requires you to assess realistic lead times to accurately forecast project durations, to adequately manage your own, as well as your teams' expectations and therefore to prevent intensive pressure or the feeling of failure to occur and intervene with your goals. (Appx. 3, 199-220) For Daniel Löffelholz, a good decision process allows everyone on the team to either contribute to the outcome or at least be able to reproduce the process and refer information from documentation so that they can comment on a decision. Additionally, Daniel states the importance of decisions being made in one location so there is a centralized decision communication and no unclear responsibilities. (Appx. 5, 105-107, 124-126) A validated way to secure team alignment on processes and goal achievement are written team agreements which include sections for e.g. expectation management, ways of collaboration, the usage of collaboration tools, information and knowledge sharing, weekly goals and core working hours and expected response times for the team, which is especially important when working across time zones. (Appx. 8, 34-48) In an agile environment and to foster team activities the drafting of a team agreement can be executed as a collective task.

An exemplary team agreement roster is the *ICC Workflow* by Phil Montero. (Montero, 2014) The ICC stand for Information, Communication and Collaboration – The Information part is about which information should be shared, where it should be stored, which security measures are planned and the like. The communication part on the other hand e.g. records which communication ways are preferred, which tools are being used, which expected response times are requested and if there is a need for core working hours. The last part of collaboration is separated in four sections: scheduling meetings across time zones, task management and tracking of responsibilities, measurability of results and the frequency of such reviews and working time tracking as the last part. An additional clause about interpersonal concerns can be added to the team agreement, where e.g. feedback

agreements and conflict resolutions plans can be outlined. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 223 f.)

For *Vaco Japan* this type of agreement is called “Service Level Agreements” where they record tasks and their respective lead time in the cyclical period, accessible for everyone working on the project. For them, this is an established tool, so they know exactly what needs to be accomplished by whom in the given timeframe. (Appx. 10, 218-229)

As an example of inter-team instead of intra-team alignment, Daniel Löffelholz shares his current project set-up within *ThoughtWorks*, where different project teams are distributed, but the teams themselves are placed in one location. To create inter-team alignment between the dispersed teams, *ThoughtWorks* established so-called “guilds”, which are networks of internal professionals with comparable roles that exchange knowledge and plan cross-team initiatives for the project. These “guilds” are further responsible to deliver the outcomes of their meetings to their respective team members and ensure that every team is aligned on the same path for the client. (Appx. 5, 58-62)

The described scenarios lead to the next subchapter, where the recurring topic of communication is observed and examined in three different categories: time zone differences, the complexity of interculturality and the application of communication and collaboration tools to support distributed teamwork.

5.3 Virtual Communication

Communication is a crucial part of distributed teamwork, but it is also a field with a great amount of training potential because it is mainly executed virtually. In the following, the aspects of intra-team communication in a globally distributed network are viewed from three different angles, namely under the consideration of working across time zones, the team composition with members from different cultures and lastly considering the usage of communication and collaboration tools.

Howard B. Esbin once shared in an interview, that “Because we can’t see each other, and because we work from unique locations, there are plenty of opportunities for

misunderstandings. When we are clear about what normal behavior is on our team, we communicate more efficiently” (Esbin, 2014), therefore the integration of communication guidelines into the team agreement, as described in the previous subchapter, is a useful tool that has been validated in practice. Bad communication is not necessarily rooted in the dispersal of individual team members, just as a team composed of multiple nationalities might not be facing problems caused by the multitude of cultures. (Bloch & Whiteley, 2007, p. 49) Co-located teams face similar problems than remote teams, but communication issues are even more prevalent online. In addition, leaders of globally distributed teams maintain different relationships with each of their team members, which makes mass-communication impossible and general communication processes more time-consuming. (Appx. 3, 303-309, 335-339) Additionally, individuals need different levels of interpersonal work relationships. While for some team members the online presence through video calls is a sufficient amount of interaction, others might need the physical presence to feel engaged and motivated. (Appx. 8, 178-187) Elizabeth Purbrick feels that most people in her teams really miss personal, human interaction, while Daniel Hayashi agrees with Lisette Sutherland by saying that he had had both, team members that work amazingly on their own and people who severely struggled with the isolation. (Appx. 9, 147-151; Appx. 10, 317-344)

The overall challenge lies in finding the right tone with every individual, while providing transparent, honest and decent communication to the team members. (Appx. 9, 316-317) Facilitation online is nonetheless a different task when executed online and in no way comparable to co-located process coordination. (Appx. 8, 85-92) This goes alongside the difficulty of finding the narrow ridge between the adequate amount of communication and over-communication that might result in an overwhelming amount of information which puts excessive pressure on the team members. (Appx. 3, 90-97, 185-191) To support teams on this journey, Interviewee XY shares their corporate mantra on leadership, which is a five-step guide to foster courageous behavior, create an inclusive environment and to enable continuous growth: start by leading yourself, then lead forward, lead across, lead through and finally, lead within. (Appx. 6, 55-79) Leading yourself is comparable to the leading by example approach embraced by Elizabeth Purbrick. (Appx. 9, 273) It’s about demonstrating your best form of leadership in all interactions to lead forward by showing a clear vision and strategy alongside forward-thinking change initiatives. Leading across describes the wholesome approach of distributing these plans across all stakeholders, regardless of their geographic

location, to strengthen the feeling of identification with the corporate culture. Whereas leading through and leading within are concerned about the team composition. While leading through includes the executive processes of forming teams, functions and projects that deliver results and ensure growth potential, leading within is concerned about the emotional aspects of leadership by demonstrating deep care, commitment and generosity towards the involved individuals and therefore bringing the world closer together. (Appx. 6, 55-79, 175-181) A few benefits of remote communication and collaboration are mentioned in the previous chapters, such as the advantage of saving travel time and therefore money. (Bloch & Whiteley, 2007, p. 46) This, nevertheless, is linked to the effectiveness of remote meetings, which generally tend to be rather inefficient due to technical difficulties or even unfocused and distracted participants. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 229)

In their book “Work Together Anywhere”, authors Lisette Sutherland and Kirsten Janene-Nelson (2019, p. 230 ff.) share tips on how to prepare and facilitate seamless online meetings:

Before the meeting:

- Remove technical concerns by securing a stable internet connection, advising participants to choose quiet locations, drafting a back-up plan for potentially occurring problems, initiate recording for colleagues who are not present
- Choose a facilitator (can be the leader or someone else), attach a time schedule to the agenda visible to everyone, schedule time for questions at the end of the meeting to minimize interruptions, agree on non-verbal sign for interjections, use meeting time for discussions instead of updates, keep the presentation short
- Be aware of language barriers and time zone differences so no participant is in disadvantage

During the meeting:

- Test the technology in advance, ask participants to mute their microphones when listening
- As meeting host arrive early to include social time, use an opener for the meeting before introducing meeting rules, keep the participants engaged
- At the end: take on questions, summarize decisions and responsibilities and thank employees for their participation

When executed properly, remote communication enables the team to access knowledge and collaborate with people worldwide and facilitates the frequent exchange between e.g. employees and subsidiaries globally. (Bloch & Whiteley, 2007, p. 48) This knowledge exchange can be a great advantage for the organization achieved by the presence of team members in multiple locations where they obtain a specific and extensive understanding of the local market requirements. This is especially valuable for companies that are operating in highly competitive markets and industries. (Appx. 4, 87-89)

There are some bottlenecks for efficient remote collaboration which are elaborated in the following subchapters. One of the worst conditions for remote collaboration is the inclusion of multiple time zones into one shared schedule, which is discussed in subchapter 5.3.1. The dispersion across multiple countries comes along with diverse cultures working together, therefore the topic of subchapter 5.3.2 is intercultural cooperation. Another issue for remote collaboration is the decision on the right tools to support distributed teamwork. The last subchapter is thus dedicated to communication and collaboration tools.

5.3.1 Working across Time Zones

There is a natural occurrence of time zones through the global dispersion of team members. The degree of complexity in time zone management increases with maximized distance between the team members and the rising quantity of people involved. (Appx. 10, 36-44) Natalia Silveira shares that as a leader it is important to acknowledge the existence of time zones and accept that you won't be able to change that. Her advice is to instead embrace them, decelerate processes to increase response times and, if you can, relocate to a central geographic location that is beneficial for coordinating with your team members worldwide. (Appx. 3, 76-89) For her teams in the EMEA regions, Elizabeth Purbrick has implemented windows of overlapping working time to listen to her team members, collect information off them and to answer questions. (Appx. 9, 318-321) Daniel Hayashi and Lisette Sutherland agree that time zones are a leaders' nightmare. (Appx. 10, 355-356, Appx. 8, 121-125) Especially during daylight saving time, when various countries adjust their times and as a leader you have to adjust every meeting and rearrange team schedules. (Appx. 10, 355-362)

In order to prevent confusion after some countries have adjusted the clocks for daylight saving time, there is a need for increased awareness. In “Working Together Anywhere” the authors share some tips on how to minimize the risk of uncertainty. For global teams it is advisable to agree on one reasonable time zone to schedule meetings in order to avoid confusion and errors, further the implementation of a team calendar with the same agreed time zone supports the global scheduling process. Finally, as a leader, organize your team efficiently and fairly by e.g. pairing team members from similar time zones for collaborative tasks, develop an automatism by regularity checking time zones to naturally increase awareness, express this awareness to dispersed team members so they feel appreciated, make use of overlapping work hours and lastly, ask team members to share their preferences for meeting times. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 214 ff.) The perception of acceptable meeting times for example is also something that varies between cultures, as is the tolerance towards delays and tardiness. (Meyer, 2015, p. 219)

To bypass the challenges caused by time zone differences, the experts collectively advise to prevent them as much as possible from the start or at least keep them as small as possible. (e.g. Appx. 3, 84-110, Appx. 5, 193-195, Appx. 7, 170-187) Good self-management and intensive planning from the leadership side are really helpful to minimize delays in communication. Elizabeth Purbrick shared that for her team she always prepares for meetings. To do so, she sets up shared documents where her team members can deposit questions and to do's in advance, so that Elizabeth can answer them directly during the meeting instead of adding another response loop. (Appx. 9, 192-199, 218-227) For one of the interviewed technology companies, the time zones mean an increase in effort from all people involved but especially for the leader, who has to make sure that no one is worse off. They organize meetings between Germany and the United States in a way that they happen early in the morning on the U.S. side and at the end of the working day in Germany. The additional planning effort is undone by the time saved through not needing to travel back and forth and still being able to create face-to-face presence. (Appx. 6, 126-130) Observing fairness in deviating work hours and monitoring mental health of team members is even more crucial when there are time zone differences because most employees try to accommodate them and never turn off their computers so they can be available for colleagues around the globe. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 86) Personally being present to everyone one the team

is not possible in a distributed set-up, nevertheless the leader has to assure that every member of the team can reach him if necessary and that there is a fair distribution of attention towards team members. (Appx. 9, 132-138)

Depending on the type of company and their respective product or service, time zones can be used for “around the sun” service, where clear working times are assigned to the different locations to reduce delays in responses and ensure continuous support for clients or customers. (Appx. 7, 183-187) In case time zones are non-circumventable, the shared leadership approach might be an option for some organizations - by either creating a second leadership position or providing a team member with additional responsibility in a strategically expedient geographical position, the leaders can release one another and divide communication into time zone clusters that intervene less with peoples’ work routine. A separation also makes sense regarding the respective fields of expertise, so team members can directly address contextual questions to their leader. (Flynn, 2014; Goldsmith, 2010)

Besides contextual knowledge leaders of GDTs are required to also provide cultural knowledge to be able to collaborate and communicate with people having different nationalities as well as diverse backgrounds and cultures. The following subchapter therefore addresses the challenges arising through intercultural cooperation in a remote set-up and provides insights on how experienced leaders face these difficulties.

5.3.2 Intercultural Cooperation

The leaders of any global team aim at achieving cultural synergy while preventing cultural conflict, this counts for co-located teams as much as for globally distributed teams. The ability to recruit globally for distributed teams in tech necessarily implies that different cultures are being assembled in one team. (Appx. 4, 207-209) The multiculturalism of IT specialists paired with primarily virtual communication may lead to misinterpretations that are caused by communication and comprehension issues which, in turn, can have an impact on negotiations, debates and general alignments. (Appx. 4, 131-133) A lot of people are not aware that when humans are engaging in conversations, they read lips. For the people native to another language than the one spoken, remote communication might complicate the supportive lip-

reading process due to unstable or delayed imaging and audio transmission during videocalls. (Appx. 8, 159-165) Especially, when there are native speakers in the team, it is helpful to encourage them to pronounce words clearly and be thoughtful of non-native speakers that potentially experience difficulties in understanding. (Bloch & Whiteley, 2007, p. 52)

Leaders that are aware of these roadblocks can achieve great advantages through cultural synergies, because diversity, when managed efficiently, is a superpower for businesses. (Appx. 8, 190-193) Interviewee XY accounts this to cost related measures of success as by hiring international workforce, the HR cost can be potentially lower in comparison to where you are. (Appx. 6, 153-156) But it is more than the cost factor, because cultural diversity increases the number of diverse opinions and expertise which stimulates discussions and new ways of thinking. (Appx. 8, 190-198) Being culturally diverse opens up opportunities to the whole team by making use of various language skills, different educational and professional backgrounds and getting to know different cultures by talking to people and observing their way of working. (Appx. 9, 353-358) Having the possibility to pair on tasks with someone from another culture is a valuable opportunity to train language and communication skills and to remove biases and stereotypes, that a lot of people are not even aware of having, as to increase knowledge and therefore team cohesiveness. (Malhotra et al., 2007, p. 64)

The international team composition does not always match, and conflicts can arise, such as the example shared by Natalia Silveira where the team was composed of Chinese and Brazilians. This teamwork ended in a disaster because the people weren't aware of each other's cultures and therefore the Chinese were accusing the Brazilians of laziness, whereas the Brazilians accused the Chinese of not thinking things through before taking actions. These issues could have been prevented by getting to know each other prior to engaging in business activities, so that everyone is aware of the straight forwardness of the Chinese team members and the Brazilians being very emotional and harmony seeking. (Appx. 3, 369-392) Daniel Hayashi, who works in the APAC region, shares that Japanese are generally very risk averse and need an extensive amount of confirmation, before making decisions. This is valuable knowledge for the leader in charge, to be able to assess their personality and to know the needs of his team members. (Appx. 10, 398-400) These examples are suitable to demonstrate the extra effort intercultural cooperation requires in order to be executed efficiently. Referring to biases, unconscious or not, it is the individuals' task to unfold these biases and

engage in removing them to stay openminded and be a viable teammate for your foreign colleagues. (Appx. 6, 159-163) In the leadership position, making your team aware that everyone has biases and as a collective you can address them in a team training, can fall into your responsibility. (Appx. 7, 221-227) By getting used to each other and assuring mutually respectful dealing with one another, the risk of hurting someone can be evaded, because we don't know what we don't know about foreign cultures. The solution to this is putting aside prejudice and being open to getting to know the people on the team. (Appx. 8, 203-210) The capability to question own decisions in regard to cultural differences is a strong skill for global leaders because reflective thinking and critical consideration require courage and integrity. People from the U.S. approach tasks differently than people from Japan or Korea, to facilitate these collaborations therefore is a task for a strong global leader. (Appx. 10, 200-207)

Regarding potential language barriers within global teams, it is important to note that they can intervene with stakeholder communication, which then requires additional support from the team lead. (Appx. 5, 187-196) Tim Wiegels of *FREE NOW* shares, that even when there are differences in language levels between the diverse nationalities noticeable, the issue can be addressed easily (Appx. 4, 131-133) by e.g. offering language classes in business English. The general tone of communication needs to be clearer; abbreviations, idioms and colloquialisms should be avoided, as should the excessive use of sarcasm and irony, because you can't know how the opponent might perceive these forms of expression. (Appx. 9, 340-343)

Closing this subchapter with forms of communication, the next subchapter takes up the issue around remote communication in an international environment and introduces a selection of useful tools for globally distributed teamwork.

5.3.3 Communication & Collaboration Tools

Although technological advancement and the implementation of collaboration tools facilitate the virtual global teamwork, it attenuates the advantages a face-to-face collaboration offers, such as personal feedback, the recognition of body or facial language or simply the feeling of presence. (Dennis et al., 2008, p. 578) Howard B. Esbin once said in an interview that "A lot of tools will help you collaborate, but they won't necessarily help you get to know each other

personally. We've gone high-tech, but we also need to go high-touch and develop empathy for each other." (Esbin, 2014)

Co-located teams align on upcoming tasks while sharing an office, but for distributed teams this awareness of the status quo, responsibilities and general documentation had to happen online with the help of collaboration tools. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 176) The decision on the right tools is highly dependent on the individual team's needs and there are a ton of tools to choose from. Though it is recommended to choose media based on the reason and frequency of usage, the decision has to happen in alignment with the preferences of the whole team. (Bloch & Whiteley, 2007, p. 47) Lisette Sutherland and Anna Danes don't teach the usage of specific collaboration tools, unless the client explicitly asks for it, because the variety is too broad and dependent on the team's needs. When the decision of tools is made and accepted throughout the team, then they can implement a session into the training to ensure everyone is able to use these tools efficiently. (Appx. 7, 156-160; Appx. 8, 108-118)

Creating presence online through the usage of communication tools is advantageous for the team camaraderie and the leaders' task is to make work fun, so being dispersed doesn't make a big difference to working co-located. (Appx. 8, 58-74) With the implementation of agile methods into daily business, online stand-up meetings and retrospectives become a part of the team routine and constitute a good possibility to get to know your team better on a daily basis. (Appx. 10, 267-273) While stand-up meetings are mostly scheduled daily to share individual tasks of the day with the team and address questions that are quick to answer or require different opinions, retrospectives are hosted less often to recap on the last week or two. The topics to address in retrospectives are wrapped up as feedback on the time following the last meeting - what has gone well, where can the team improve etc. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 177 f.) They are a good opportunity to turn on the video for team building, since video conferencing is the virtual way of communication that comes closest to face-to-face interaction. (Weimann et al., 2010, p. 190) Understanding and acknowledging the opportunities that virtual collaboration tools offer to the modern business world is a valuable skill for entrepreneurs, as they can enable team members to work autonomously and self-organized which will reflect positively in the organizations' flexibility and adaptability. (Kappes, not dated)

In the following the author is introducing a few of the most commonly used online collaboration tools to give an insight on the possibilities these tools can offer. Some of the tools were mentioned or even recommended by the interviewed experts during the interviews, others are known by the author or are widely popular.

This section starts with the introduction of a virtual office space, where team members can meet, chat, socialize and work together or separately. Sococo²⁶ is a platform to create virtual spaces for the dispersed team to feel connected. It offers teams to overcome the physical distance by arriving at the online office every morning, moving to the community area during lunch break or brainstorming with team members in a meeting room while adding a fun gaming character to it. Clicking on your teammates' icon will open a chat window and instant messaging is enabled. Attached to the meeting rooms there are links for video conferencing, so everyone in the room can join the ongoing conversation. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 186 ff.)

Another way to emphasize team building and getting to know your team members is by creating character boards or personal maps. In her interview Lisette Sutherland shared that she is a huge fan of so-called personal maps, in which team members draft a mind map filled with information about their way of working, their goals, etc., but also personal insights such as hobbies, pets and values. These mind maps can be used to kick-off a collaboration and get to know each other, in case a face-to-face meeting is not possible, or as a bonding exercise while working together. (Appx. 8, 230-241) Most of the interviewed experts share their preference for physical meetings as a kick-off event but sometimes this is simply not achievable. (e.g. Appx. 3, 143-153; Appx. 4, 145-151)

The classical communication tools like emails and instant messaging, which are no longer indispensable from everyday life, are used by every company and team nowadays. In their globally distributed teams, the interviewed experts try to use email communication and shared documents as much as possible, so when they have video meetings everyone is up to date and ready to join a productive meeting. (Appx. 6, 179; Appx. 9, 214-215) Instant

²⁶ For more information on Sococo please visit <https://www.sococo.com/>

messaging is another widely used communication channel among the interviewed professionals. For some, this is due to the informal way of communication in comparison to other tools, while for others the rapidity of message delivery is decisive, especially in emergency situations such as the recent spread of COVID-19. (Appx. 3, 117-120; Appx. 9, 245-251) Nevertheless, written communication always bears the risk of misinterpretation or false translation, which is why the in-person approach via video or phone calls is still considerably better than communication via email or messaging. (Appx. 9, 144-146)

One of the best-known providers for communication and collaboration tools is Google. One of the interviewed experts declares Google's *G Suite* service as a lifesaver for remote collaboration. *Hangouts* and shared documents simplify the organization of everyday tasks for Elizabeth in her leading position. (Appx. 9, 201, 218-227) Google's *G Suite*²⁷ contains all the services a remote team could potentially need: from *Gmail*, to shared calendars, video conferencing and instant messaging, to cloud storage, shared documents and sheets as well as survey- and website building tools. (Google, not dated) For the companies that use *Gmail* as their corporate email provider, *Hangouts* is the obvious messaging service consulted. Daniel Hayashi and his APAC team, as well as Elizabeth Purbrick and her EMEA team use *Hangouts* to stay in touch and socialize. (Appx. 10, 287-289; Appx. 9, 226-227)

*Slack*²⁸ is a business communication platform by Slack Technologies, that offers chat rooms, file sharing options, video conferencing as well as direct and group messaging to its users. It allows users to streamline their work by connecting it to popular other services such as *G Suite*, Microsoft Office 365 and others. Interesting for companies of the tech-industry is that Slack allows the implementation and usage of own encryption keys for increasing data protection. (Slack Technologies, 2020) Anna Danes evaluates *Slack* as a valuable tool when used correctly, otherwise it stimulates confusion within the team. (Appx. 7, 163-166) Lisette Sutherland on the other hand is a big fan of Slack, while some teams use it as a way to communicate their presence by sending "Good Morning" and "Good Night" messages to their team chatroom, others make use of the community group in Slack, where people from the

²⁷ For more information on *G Suite* please visit https://gsuite.google.com/intl/en_ie/

²⁸ For more information on *Slack* please visit <https://slack.com/intl/en-de/>

same fields of expertise meet and exchange knowledge in an online forum-like environment. (Appx. 8, 65-66, 309-315)

In the comparison of video conferencing tools, there are also various options. In the interview with Lisette Sutherland no recommendation for a specific tool was made, but Lisette clearly expressed resentment against *Microsoft Teams* and *Skype for Business*, as *Skype* is simply outdated, and *Microsoft Teams* has too many disruptive factors. (Appx. 108-118) A popular alternative for video conferencing is *Zoom*. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 208) *Zoom* functions as one consistent enterprise solution for chatting, webinars, conferencing and internet phone calling.²⁹ It has been immensely criticized in recent times for having security issues, but with the spread of the COVID-19 virus and the respective increase in remote work, they have invested significantly in their data security for example by implementing default passwords for online meetings to prevent external parties from entering the call. (O'Flaherty, 2020) Tim Wiegels of *FREE NOW* explains in his interview that he tries to allow home office as much as possible for the team members based in the headquarters, so that during online meetings everyone is remote and able to provide the same level of attention to their respective colleagues. (Appx. 4, 159-162) By preventing the development of operational silos and isolated discussions during video meetings through separating every team member, the level of attention increases, and you get a closer look at people compared to when some share a meeting room onsite and are far away from the camera. (Appx. 5, 96-101) Adding to the issue of fairness, the leader needs to be aware of potential differences in technological infrastructure in some countries. Depending on where the offshore locations are, team members might not have the same level of technical equipment and requirements. (Appx. 3, 156-159) Insufficient technological infrastructure might therefore get in the way of seamless communication. (Appx. 8, 86-87)

Moving from communication to collaboration tools, a widely accepted and used tool is *Trello*. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 301) *Trello*³⁰ is a virtual pinboard for project management, where teams can collaborate and inform themselves on current statuses and tasks. By moving cards, adding and removing information, attaching documents and creating

²⁹ For more information on *Zoom* please visit <https://zoom.us/>

³⁰ For more information on *Trello* please visit <https://trello.com/home>

checklists with due dates, the whole team has the possibility to contribute and follow the progress without needing to actively communicate or being physically present. (ATLASSIAN, 2020) *Trello* is a tool that works excellently together with the agile approach and daily stand-up meetings, where cards can be discussed, adjusted or rearranged. (Kozinsky, 2017) Due to its visualization and design, team members and their leaders gain an immediate overview and the leader can simultaneously monitor the utilization of their team.

The last tool to be introduced is *Asana*³¹ – a project and task management tool that is fairly popular and combines e.g. the visualization of work processes, a detailed schedule to mark deadlines and track important milestones in real time, as well as a feature to prioritize tasks with a coding scheme. By filing a request with *Asanas'* forms function, team members can directly assign tasks to each other and indicate the demand for input. (Asana, Inc., not dated) The TechRadar reviewed *Asana* in November 2019 and categorized it as a collaboration tool rather than a project management tool because the built-in project management features are insufficient for most projects. On the pro-side, it functions as a workload tool to equally distribute tasks between team members, whereas on the con-side the initial set-up takes a lot of time due to infinite design options. (Graw, 2019)

Moving on to another challenging task that requires detailed investigation and bears potential training opportunities for leadership development, the following chapter addresses the recurring topic of feedback.

5.4 Giving and Receiving Feedback

As mentioned in chapter 2.2 all people have the capability for personal growth. (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003, p. 48) Giving and receiving constructive feedback is a crucial part of this development process, this counts for leaders as for their followers – the emphasis here is placed on constructiveness. Lisette Sutherland shared in her interview that this is one of the most interesting fields in remote training, which is why she usually dedicates a whole session to feedback and appreciation. (Appx. 8, 278)

³¹ For more information on *Asana* please visit <https://asana.com/>

Constructive feedback is a two-way street: there has to be positive intent from the giving as well as the receiving part of the feedback process. It is likely to connect feedback or criticism with negative emotions, therefore it is important not to interpret more into things that were said but to assume good will, always remain friendly and withstand the desire to express spontaneous eruptions of thoughts and feelings. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 98) In the leadership competencies study by the IFIDZ, the ability to provide feedback ranks 23rd with a contribution to successful leadership of 16 %. Especially in terms of feedback, it is crucial to have a relationship with the person you're reviewing or whom you are reviewed by, because it is harder to evaluate a stranger and even harder to receive criticism and feedback from a stranger. (Appx. 9, 138-142) Therefore, it is beneficial to gather the whole team physically on a regular basis to foster team cohesion, get to know each other and strengthen the leader-follower relationship. (Flynn, 2014)

Interviewee XY shares an example for implementing feedback into their business operations during his interview. His organization runs regular review cycles every six months with every employee of the company. Due to his sales position, those reviews take into consideration both quantitative as well as qualitative goal achievements. For the review cycles employees are asked to undertake a self-assessment, collect feedback from their peer-group and lastly, they contain a hierarchical element, where feedback is provided by another employee superior to them. (Appx. 6, 114-122) As for Elizabeth Purbrick of *Vaco UK*, these reviews take place every 12 months. In her leading position for the EMEA region, she is the one to provide feedback for her team members on their performance throughout the last year. Elizabeth bases these performance reviews on their relationship during the review time, on feedback provided by stakeholders and peers and their direct project lead. (Appx. 9, 103-108)

As mentioned repeatedly throughout this research, praise and recognition are huge motivators and important factors for a balanced and positive team atmosphere. Leaders should regularly take time to acknowledge their team members' efforts and achievements. (Appx. 9, 306-309) The IFIDZ study in 2019 declared appreciation and employee orientation as one of the top three leadership competencies to contribute to success. With a 33 % contribution to leadership success it is a strong indicator for the important separation of leadership and management through the shift from process optimization towards a more

human approach. (IFIDZ, 2019, p. 5) In turn, team members can show initiative by requesting constructive feedback from their team lead or teammates every once in a while, as receiving feedback is an important tool for self-assessment and self-development. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, pp. 100, 193 ff.)

In the tech-industry projects are a part of daily business and need to be evaluated at some point. One tool that can be used to ensure continuous feedback and prevent last-minute criticism on remote technology projects, is the 30/60/90 feedback framework by Lauren Moon (2018). This framework enables multiple people to contribute to the feedback process at three stages of the project. At the 30-percent stage this feedback should include the basic direction and scope of the project by sharing ideas, suggestions and general advice. The 60-percent stage is more advanced and requires precise feedback from all stakeholders. This stage is for expansion suggestions, hints on formatting and design, and monitoring if the previous feedback was implemented before moving to the last stage. Feedback at the 90-percent stage is collected closely to the project's end date to make sure all aspects are covered and final changes are being applied. (Moon, 2018)

Feedback is not only helpful on a team-level - when there is a general discomfort in her team, Elizabeth Purbrick sees herself in the responsibility to escalate those team concerns to the senior leadership level of the organization to give the team a voice and encourage them speak up when necessary. The reason for her to address these things is that it is perceived with divergent importance when a leader provides team feedback to the superior levels than if there are many small complaints from individual team members. (Appx. 9, 112-120)

Sometimes these feedback conversations come too late and anger has already built up inside the team. In this case the leader needs to facilitate a clarifying discussion with the involved parties, unless the leader himself is a subject of the conflict situation. The last topic for this research therefore is conflict management – how are conflict situations approached in a distributed set-up?

5.5 Conflict Management

Approaching the last section of leadership development subjects, the author covers another crucial part of distributed teamwork, namely the execution of conflict management.

Being able to successfully handle conflict situations is a necessary ability for professionals holding leadership positions. When individuals collaborate on a shared goal this includes a variety of different approaches, experiences and opinions to collude and therefore a multitude of potential conflict situations. (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003, p. 110 ff.) When the leader and his team don't share the same office, arising issues are even harder to detect but a thought-through team structure might help to minimize these potential risks by providing clear guidance on responsibilities and contact persons. (Appx. 5, 161-163) Straight-forwardness, constructive and open communication and the bravery to admit mistakes, imperfections and weaknesses, especially from a leadership perspective, are a solution to problems arising through ignorance and selfishness within the team. In turn, these can cause a range of problems for the team effectiveness such as wasting valuable time, creating intra-team tension and disappointments that negatively influence the atmosphere and in the worst-case cause teamwork failure. (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003, p. 110 ff.)

As mentioned, the team structure is important in conflict situations. The team needs a responsible and approachable person as a first point of contact in these situations, someone that is respected throughout the team and obliged to escalate issues to other levels if necessary. (Appx. 7, 207-216) Lisette Sutherland adds, that as a leader you have to give people the space to clarify conflicts by themselves before intervening. When things escalate, the leader should be informed and ready to engage either as a facilitator, or as the person inviting a third party to take on that job. (Appx. 8, 141-145) Knowing the people on your team and their respective personalities is a huge advantage in conflict situations because as a leader you can then intervene by explaining the involved parties that some reactions might have been due to an individuals' pre-load or a current stressful situation in their private life that led to an overreaction. (Appx. 9, 299-306) Sometimes an additional explanation on how someone meant what they said can defuse a situation and change perception. (Meyer, 2015, p. 218) Doing research in advance and listening to every perception of the story before approaching a solution will support the clarification process and ensures that no one feels left unheard and

unfairly treated. (Appx. 10, 244-250) Elizabeth Purbrick agrees with Daniel Hayashi, continuous listening and talking things through is the best way to remove conflict. (Appx. 9, 382-386) Discussing problems with positive communication can stifle conflicts before they accumulate to a serious issue that affects the whole team environment. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 97 f.)

Another aspect that arose during the expert interviews is the delivery of bad news, which is a hard task in person, but even harder when you're not speaking face-to-face. (Appx. 9, 322-332) For conflict situations a personal environment with physical presence is generally the best suitable. Therefore, leaders should refrain from written communication when trying to resolve a heated conversation. Negative attitudes can be softened easiest in a one-on-one environment via a phone- or videocall when there is a calming voice or a friendly face present, but never in a group environment. (Sutherland & Janene-Nelson, 2018, p. 102)

Susan Scott, author of *"Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life One Conversation at a Time"*, created a seven-point approach to address difficult conversations such as conflict resolving disputes. In her guide, the first step is to name the issue at hand, followed by the denomination of a specific example to demonstrate the problem to be resolved. The next two steps create room to express the emotions triggered by the underlying issue and explain the importance of clarification to minimize consequential damage. A self-assessment on problem contribution is the fifth step before indicating the adequate solution approach from the speakers' perspective in step six. Only at the last stage of this process, others are invited to contribute to this conversation and share their thoughts on the procedure. (Scott, 2004, p. 189)

6 Concluding Summary

This last chapter is divided into three parts, starting with the concluding summary and respective answer to the underlying research question in subchapter 6.1 where the author guides the reader through the key findings and leadership development implications thereof. Following the conclusion of the preceding analyses the author presents a statement about the limitations of the presented thesis before finally providing an outlook on potential research development and continuous study gaps.

6.1 Answer to the Research Question

The underlying research question of this thesis is *“What are the main issues to be considered working with globally distributed teams in the tech-industry and how can the leadership address these to operate successfully?”*

To answer this question the author conducted two separate analyses in chapters four and five and presents the results in the following. By analyzing the *Five Components of Leadership Model* by Robert McManus and Gama Perruci and bringing it into the context of globally distributed teams, the particularity of the leadership role can be demonstrated. In a GDT the leader functions as the voice of the team that escalated concerns if necessary and otherwise removes roadblocks so the team can work without hindrances. The followers or team members are not only executing directives but actively engaging in the decision-making process which balances out the power continuum. This stresses the importance of the distinction between leadership and management. In a remote set-up, delegating tasks is not sufficient, the team requires situational leadership to be guided through projects successfully. To address these particularities a set of special digital leadership skills is beneficial alongside the ubiquitous leadership characteristics advantageous for every person in a leading position. Communication skills, the ability to execute successful change management and the ability to provide positive and negative feedback while being transparent and innovative are the competencies that have the greatest contribution to successful leadership. As for remote teamwork, empathy and cultural awareness gain increasing importance. Generally, every

character trait has to be demonstrated to a greater degree for the dispersed team members to recognize them. The leadership style, character traits and the varying tasks through the dispersion are intermediately concluded in subchapter 4.3 and then integrated into the proceeding analysis of this thesis.

Through the insights shared by experienced professionals throughout this research, it is possible to detect everyday challenges in GDTs in order to prepare future leaders of such teams for their role and to raise awareness for these potential bottlenecks. The author summarizes the feasible issues into five categories, namely: creating a remote environment; ensuring team commitment through relationship building and goal alignment; virtual communication including the topics of time zone differences, multiculturalism and the usage of tools to facilitate teamwork; providing constructive feedback and lastly the sensitive topic of remote conflict management.

The first step to be able to successfully lead a team of dispersed professionals is understanding what this actually means in terms of work processes, requirements and potentially arising issues. Therefore, starting the analysis at the very foundation is a necessary step for leadership development. Three quarters of development measures fail due to an organizational environment that is simply not suitable for remote collaboration. The leaders' task is to escalate the importance to the responsible hierarchies to constitute and justify the execution of possible investments for e.g. technical equipment and infrastructure as well as restructuring. Given the study refers to the tech-industry a sufficient technical endowment is an evident assumption and therefore rather negligible in terms of leadership training potential.

The issue of ensuring commitment from individual team members can be approached by combining two important factors: relationship building and goal alignment. Through creating the feeling of one team the leader can increase the commitment. Team members develop a sense of belonging when their leader shows a genuine interest in them as a person, acts as an example and opens up to the individuals as well as the group. By planning unofficial social time before or after a meeting or even after work, by turning on the camera as much as possible and if possible, even visiting team members regularly, the feeling of belongingness and mutual trust will rise and therefore strengthen the bond between leaders and their

followers. Cohesion is the key to success in regard to commitment as goal alignment and a trustful relationship are crucial components of international cooperation. Goal alignment can be achieved through creating team agreements which outline the general conditions of collaboration and serve as a mean for expectations management. As a leader one must trust their team members and give them the freedom to operate independently, as micromanagement is highly counterproductive and virtually impossible in a remote set-up. To ensure alignment the focus should lie on fostering a shared vision as well as contentment with the team agreements and the choice of collaboration tools throughout the whole team. In case of unsatisfactory commitment, general team building measures and a training on the conception of team agreements can be useful.

The problem of virtual communication also decreases when the team operates cohesively. As facilitation is different in person than it is remotely, a frequent, clear and honest communication style is appropriate in GDTs. Of course, this has to happen in alignment with the team agreement sections regarding core working hours, preferred communication channels and the similar. If possible, time zones are to be prevented or reduced to the minimum span possible. In case it is not possible to prevent or reduce time zone differences, the leader must ensure fairness among the team members, so no one is worse off by always staying late or starting very early in their day. Creating awareness inside the team and thoroughly preparing meetings help to minimize the effort of organization. Raising awareness is not only helpful in terms of time zones but also regarding the multiculturalism of the team. When managed properly, multiculturalism can be a superpower that catalyzes diverse ways of thinking and different fields of expertise and therefore stimulates innovation. Instead of seeing it as a problem that needs solving, approaching multiculturalism as a chance to remove biases, to learn about different cultures and habits and as a chance to exchange knowledge, fosters positivity and increases output. An open mindset, a clear yet respectful communication and the awareness of varying language skills are necessary to collaborate globally. To facilitate this International collaboration the team can choose from various tools. Choosing a tool for the team requires a unanimous vote from everyone, since partial usage of multiple tools does not lead to the desired collective results. To train intercultural communication the dispersed team and their leader can undergo a cultural awareness training which positively influences the team environment and possibly helps to prevent potential conflict situations. The drafting of team agreements and the usage of collaboration tools can

be part of a team or leadership training if the framework is already decided on, otherwise it is difficult to keep the extend within reasonable limits.

To receive and provide constructive feedback is another crucial aspect in the leadership of globally distributed teams. For teams to collaborate successfully and for personal development, the ability to process feedback is a necessity. This process has to take place on a regular basis in order to support individual and group development. When sharing feedback, it is important to name precise examples for successful contribution as well as for areas with room for improvement. Praise and recognition are great motivators and form an integral part of feedback conversations. Facilitation and communication trainings can support with addressing sensitive topics such as soft criticism and negative feedback online. It is important to always address sensitive topics in a personal conversation outside the group, so for remote teams this means at least through one-on-one phone conversations or video chatting, but never in a written form unless defined otherwise.

This links directly to the topic of conflict management. As mentioned for feedback, conflicts should not be resolved in writing but in a personal environment. If face-to-face is not an option, turning on the video camera or picking up the phone makes all the difference. A soothing voice can help to minimize the tension in conflict situations so the leader can facilitate a clarifying conversation. In a distributed set-up conflicts are harder to detect; therefore, it is helpful to have a contact person within the team that is responsible for managing conflict situations. This person can be the leader or any other trusted and respected person that listens to the problem and takes time to talk it out with the involved parties. A positive mindset and having background knowledge about the people on the team can support this process a lot as the objective is to continue working together as a team and ignorance will only accelerate the issue. There is a variety of trainings to choose from for managing conflicts and facilitating difficult conversations on leadership level and attending one of them will have a positive influence on the distributed teamwork.

Leadership is a learning process and growing into the distributed leadership role takes time and experience. The essence of successful leadership of dispersed teams lies in the thoroughness of preparation and excessive communication. By relying on the teams' professionalism and enabling unobstructed workflows the team members can succeed as a

team as well as individually, own the distributed team challenge and collectively make this set-up a great benefit for the organization.

6.2 Critical Acclaim

The tech-industry includes various types of businesses with again different set-ups and demands. To get a more precise image of the individual requirements for the successful leadership of a distributed team within a certain company, an in-depth case study analysis is probably more adequate to deliver the desired output. Critically reviewed, this research covers the difficulties of remote collaboration more superficially but still gives a valuable insight on potential training subjects that influence the leadership and respective team performance. The topic of distributed leadership is further complicated by the fact that all aspects are interdependent to some degree which makes it hard to compress a wholesome overview into the scope of a master's thesis. This circumstance can justify the incidental superficiality and also the omission of e.g. the D&I analysis which needed to be reduced to mainly cultural diversity instead of providing an encompassing analysis by demonstrating the entire variety of diversity. Given the fact, that recent literature on the topic is limited and it is highly technological, the resources accessible were non-academical in large parts. Most recent information regarding distributed teamwork can be found in blog posts, interviews and online articles which is most likely due to the technological focus of the research topic in a digitalized environment. In online forums a vivid community of remote experts can be found which indicates the actuality of the topic. The recent outbreak of COVID-19 most likely had an impact on this development but nonetheless, remote collaboration is a current topic and the tech-industry is fast-changing, therefore the demand for an update on this research will emerge in the near future.

To assure the methodologic quality of this research, the quality criteria after Merriam (1995) described in subchapter 3.2 are applied in the course of this thesis. Construct validity is given through the triangulation of various information sources. The complementing resources ensure objectivity and remove ambiguity about the authors' subjective opinion being a primary influence. The construct validity is further supported by a chain of evidence that continuously explains the importance of provided information throughout the process. The absence of external validity and the minor application of internal validity is explained in

subchapter 3.2. Due to the limited scope of this research and the restrictions of releasing the results before the official grading, the author neglected the internal and external validity and only applied internal validation where the scope allowed it. This decision might lead to a decrease in quality. The last quality criterion is the reliability of the provided data which can be declared as accurate due to the cross-validation of multiple expert opinions. By repeating the study in the future, the reliability can be further increased.

6.3 Outlook

This study only represents a timely section of the ongoing development in the area of remote leadership. The current exceptional circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic will presumably increase the research and development in this particular field, therefore the presented results and examples are likely to change at some point in time and will require a revision. As more companies are allowing remote work and even traditional companies start to realize the added value and possibilities that remote work can offer, the demand in research and respectively in training will increase in the future.

As the scope of this thesis is restricted many parts are covered only superficially but can potentially be converted into advanced topics for individual research. By using the findings of this study, it would be possible to create a “toolbox” for customizable leadership trainings which includes thought through and outlined training sessions that are based on the first-hand experience and shared bottlenecks described by the consulted professionals.

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Appendix 1:

Interview Guideline for Leaders and Team Members

Leadership of Globally Distributed Teams

Interview Guideline

General questions:

- Introduction of Interviewee (Who am I talking to?)
- Details about company (What does company do? How many employees? etc.)
- Touching points with topic under investigation?
- On which market does your company mostly operate? (geographically)

Leadership behavior:

- Can you describe the team set-up you are working in?
- What is the basic structure of your company - are there strict hierarchies?
- How would you describe your/your leaders leadership style?
- In your opinion what are general attributes a good leader needs to have?
- How do these change in a globally distributed environment?

Approaches to reach goal:

- How does working distributed contribute to reaching your goal?
- How does your team keep track on targets and responsibilities?
- How are you coping with time differences especially in terms of deadlines? (local public holidays, office hours, etc.)
- What are the main reasons for establishing distributed/virtual teams in your organization?

Leader-Follower relationship:

- How do you create a feeling of 'one team' when working distributed/no face-to-face?
- In your opinion, how does exclusive virtual communication influence the team performance?
- Did you start working together out of the blue? (e.g. was there a kick-off, meeting in person?)
- How does technology influence your interaction with others/team members?
- What do you think are the three most beneficial factors to ensure productive teamwork in a distributed set-up?
- What do you think are the three most challenging factors in a distributed set-up?

Culture norms/value – Globalization impact:

- What are your experiences in working within a diverse/multicultural team?
- How do you share company or team vision, mission, values?
- How have different cultural norms and values shaped your own thinking about leadership?
- In your team – Do you follow global norms/values, or do you feel local norms are more dominant? (code of conduct)
- In your opinion, how does culture shape the leader-follower relationship?
- What do you think happens when a leader tries to impose certain cultural values on their followers?

Client relationship:

- Can you describe your general team-client-interaction? (remote set-up/face-to-face/both?)
- Do you think the organizational culture on client side influences the way you work as a team?

Final questions:

- If you could attend a leadership workshop for GDTs, which topics would you expect/like it to address?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix 2:

Interview Guideline for Trainers

Leadership of Globally Distributed Teams

Interview Guideline

General questions:

- Introduction of Interviewee (Who am I talking to?)
- Details about company (What does company do? Touching point with topic?)

Guidelines/Goals/Feedback

- How is it possible to ensure goal alignment across the team?
- What do you think are the three most beneficial factors to ensure productive teamwork in a distributed set-up?
- What do you think are the three most challenging factors in a distributed set-up?
- What role does feedback play in a distributed set-up?
- How can teams keep track on targets and responsibilities?

Communication / Collaboration Tools

- Do you recommend and train the usage of specific collaboration tools? Why?
- How to cope with time differences especially in terms of deadlines? (local public holidays, office hours, etc.)
- How can a leader carry out effective conflict management when distributed?
- How to cope with ambiguity?

Team Building / Intercultural Awareness

- How does one create a feeling of 'one team' when working distributed/no face-to-face?
- In your opinion, how does exclusive virtual communication influence the team performance?
- How do you deal with emergence of stereotypes/unconscious bias inside the team?
- Do you feel a distributed team needs a common team/organizational culture?
- What is your opinion on character profiles for kick-off of a remote team?

Final questions:

- From your experience, what is the most important factor when training a leader for a global role (distributed or not)?
- If you would attend/hold a training for globally distributed teams – what would you expect to learn/what would you teach?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix 3:

Transcript Interview – Natalia Silveira

Transcript of the Interview with Natalia Silveira, Head of Global Mobility & Immigration at ThoughtWorks UK

Conducted on Wednesday, February 19, 2020, 02:00 PM

Interviewer: Lisa Engel (LE)

Interviewee: Natalia Silveira (NS)

- 1 **LE:** Okay, so why don't we just start with the first question. So, yeah... thinks about
2 ThoughtWorks in general - why don't you tell me about that?
- 3 **NS:** Okay, so I'm Natalia Silveira, I am from Brazil and I started at ThoughtWorks in 2011 –
4 so eight years and a half. I'm going to start my lunch now so I'm sorry... I hope that's
5 okay.
- 6 **LE:** [laughs] That's fine.
- 7 **NS:** And I moved to Manchester in 2016, end of 2016. I started as Global Mobility person
8 for Brazil and Latin America for four years in a bit. Then I was the head of people for
9 our TechOps IT function for four years and now for five months I took on the role of
10 Head of Global Mobility and Immigration looking after the regional teams and the
11 strategy for Global Mobility in general.
- 12 **LE:** Okay that is really, really helpful. So, you have touching points, obviously, with the
13 topic under investigation. So, you are leading a globally distributed team. You said
14 there's multiple locations - are you responsible for all the locations that
15 ThoughtWorks has?
- 16 **NS:** Yes, I'm now going to talk a little bit about how ThoughtWorks is organized, as you
17 know, our structure is quite flat which means that is quite messy. So, this is really new
18 to putting some global structure to the function of Global Mobility. So far it has always
19 been quite regional, each region will have like a leader who will look into the needs
20 and demands from that region. So, five months ago my role was created and now is
21 the first time that we are thinking about how to bring a consistent vision and strategy
22 for all the regions together.
- 23 **LE:** Okay, so how would you describe the team set up, the GloMo Team setup that you're
24 working in?
- 25 **NS:** So, currently we have regional teams - each region has at least a regional mobility
26 lead. And depending on the size of the region or complexity of the work you are going

27 to have as well, like an extended regional team. Most of the regional teams are
28 composed by immigration specialist and mobility specialist or combined in one
29 person. And now we are moving to a structure where we also have a Center of
30 Excellence that connects all the dots and connects the regions, along with what we
31 call a hub or shared services that are starting with [unclear words] going to take on a
32 lot of the manual work to ensure better reporting and compliance. But the biggest
33 part of our structure is still the regional teams.

34 **LE:** Okay, and you are kind of the head of those teams and trying to connect all these
35 teams together?

36 **NS:** Yeah, I try to connect the dots.

37 **LE:** Great. So how would you describe your leadership style?

38 **NS:** Hmm. Interesting. In ThoughtWorks we have this definition of servant leadership,
39 which is all about enabling the team to get to something. So, my style of leadership
40 and this is very personal, is to ensure that I translate what are the goals of the
41 company to what our teams are doing so that people can actually have some
42 autonomy by understanding what they are doing and not only do what I tell them. So,
43 it's really about understanding what the challenges of the different regions are, what
44 the people want to grow on and do all those matches between goals, needs and
45 preferences and enable people by giving them the resources for them to achieve it.

46 **LE:** Okay, so for me, that sounds like you're trying to give them as much freedom as
47 possible to still go their own way, but you try to keep them compliant with what
48 ThoughtWorks wants to achieve?

49 **NS:** Yeah, I believe that if we have a vision and a strategy that are clear, people will have
50 more autonomy to make their own decisions on a regional level, keeping that
51 alignment.

52 **LE:** Yeah. So, how are you monitoring those visions and missions that you're following
53 across the global mobility team. How do you keep track of things that are being done
54 by all the different teams that are spread all over?

55 **NS:** So, because this is quite new, you know, five months, right, that we have this setup.
56 Things have to be built from scratch. So, I would say that and here I'll give a little bit
57 more detail, I started as a new person in a new role, getting to know what is going on
58 first, what is going on in the different regions. What is important for each of those
59 regions and this I do with my team members, also like with regional stakeholders,
60 because they are the people that we are serving to. So, starting from there, building
61 that region together and presenting it and iterating on it to bring that people connect
62 to it. After that, and you see all the emails that have been sending, I'm putting
63 together a place where I can map like what are the initiatives that we are doing in the
64 different places. So, that not only I can connect those dots in my head, but that people
65 can connect those dots as well. And for example, you have your own initiatives there
66 in Germany that you can see what people in China are doing and say, hey, like I want

67 to do that too. So, I can learn from them. We don't need to duplicate work. So, we use
68 Google Spreadsheets, we use global calls, but this is at this stage. Of course, like six
69 months from now, I would like us to have a more established structure and maybe in
70 different systems as well, where we can have this visibility.

71 **LE:** So, like you said, it's really difficult to organize something that is distributed across the
72 world and you try to improve those processes. How are you generally coping with time
73 differences in terms of meetings and deadlines and things that you have to do as a
74 global mobility team, worldwide, not only the regions?

75 **NS:** So, it's been a long way to get here and because I was doing this kind of work with
76 TechOps before for four years I had time to figure out what works. So, first is having
77 the mindset that time zones exist, and they are a blocker, but you won't change them.
78 So, just embrace it. Right. You can't define a deadline of two hours for something that
79 you require alignment across all the team because you will need a minimum of 24
80 hours then. Another thing is for my own time management. As I started in Brazil in a
81 global role that was extremely painful. It had a hole in my personal life, I was waking
82 up like at 5am for doing calls, that was just not sustainable. That was one of the main
83 drivers for me to move to the UK. So, that was a big life change that was led because
84 of this need. Being in the center of like in between San Francisco and Sydney makes
85 my life much easier and makes it much easier as well for me to do this liaison between
86 the different team members because I can't... Normally, I would go to the team and
87 say: "Hey, talk to each other" but I can't expect people in India and Brazil to have
88 communications like frequently because it's much more difficult for them. So, for me
89 to be in the middle and having this comfort, it's easier for me to make this connection.
90 Plus, over-communicating, when I was looking into the questions here, there was a
91 pattern there which is around over-communicating, nothing is obvious. It can be
92 obvious for me at that point in time talking to someone in the US. Is not just for the
93 person in China, who is sleeping right now. So, even if everybody was in a call, I like to
94 have something written and shared, so that people can see it later because come on
95 - some people were awake at midnight to have that call, some people are waking up
96 just now. We can't expect that people were with the same level of attention. So being
97 conscious about that.

98 **LE:** Okay, so, you kind of summarize things that you talk about in calls for the people that
99 are not present or can't be present at that time?

100 **NS:** Yeah. I don't know if I'm jumping questions here.

101 **LE:** There's no rule here. So that's fine.

102 **NS:** Because I quite like your structure. So, yes. We record calls, we make sure that those
103 are available, so people can either see if they are not there or re-watch it in a moment
104 that is better for them and make sure that there is some preparation before the calls,
105 as much as possible. People should have some idea of what is going to be talked about,
106 so that they are ready to bring their inputs, mainly if they are just waking up five
107 minutes before to get on the call. At the same time, like, and this is something that
108 you mentioned here... Although it's difficult because of time zones, it's really

109 important that people get on video, because then it's the only moment that we can
110 see each other. And what I miss the most about this with the teams, is going for a
111 coffee with people, going for lunch with people and having the moment where we
112 just have a small rant about the company and you know, like just talk through things.
113 This doesn't exist in a in an obvious way when you have a distributed team. So you
114 have to create this. You have to push people to be comfortable with each other. So,
115 having people on video as much as possible for sharing a bit more of what is going on
116 with you and giving space for people to tell like what they are thinking - out from a
117 structure of a meeting. Having the chat. Right, I can send something on the chat at
118 any time and it doesn't have to be so formal as an email or a meeting. And people can
119 look at it at any point, so it's bringing this informality to the digital space. But is
120 important.

121 **LE:** Yeah, so like you already said, it's like you have that need to create the feeling of one
122 team, even though you're not in the same place, which is obviously hard when
123 working distributed. In your opinion, how does the only or rather the exclusive
124 technological communication that you have due to the different regions... how does
125 that influence your performance as a team?

126 **NS:** Hmm. Okay, I'll tell you what came to my mind. I don't know if I'm answering the right
127 question. But then you pull me. I think when you are in a party, you can decide... you
128 can map the situation like which people are talking to whom, you can see straight
129 away like what are the connections that are happening. This is not happening,
130 obviously, when you have a distributed team. So, you have to create them. Sometimes
131 I feel that having been a people lead before has helped a lot because then I think I can
132 understand and empathize very naturally with people. So, I can push for people to
133 connect in a way that they would do naturally, if they were the same place. So, if I'm
134 talking to Jing in China and I know that she's super excited about taxes that's great,
135 but she will not be in a party with Carla, who is also excited about tax. So, I'll need to
136 find ways, either like obviously putting them both in one call or in one email and
137 letting them know about this and create that connection or create opportunities for
138 this to happen naturally. So, I can bring up a topic which is about that and say: "Who
139 is interested in looking into this, we could create a working group about that?". Even
140 if they don't answer I know that they are interested in that, so I can go there and say:
141 "Hey, I think you find a partner here." So, it's almost like recreating the party
142 environment in a distributed environment.

143 **LE:** That's great. So, when you started your role five months ago - did you have kind of a
144 kick-off where you met in person or have you ever had everyone in one place the
145 same time?

146 **NS:** No and that's super tough. At the same time, I did have an advantage which is I've
147 been on this team before as a mobility lead for Brazil and Latin America, so I knew
148 many of them. And as I was in TechOps before I had always been like a liaison between
149 the people team and TechOps. So, it's not like I was completely new for them. For
150 some people I was fairly new. Many of them I didn't know, I used like my vacation
151 time because I passed through Singapore to meet one of the people I didn't know. So,

152 I tried to push as much as possible to meet people in person. But no, there was an
153 official communication, of course. But the real first time that I got in touch with the
154 team was... I was doing my last role and I knew that I was going to get to this role. I
155 was already working with the head of global people support, who I report to, and I
156 was working on something with her. We went to a global call with this team and her
157 internet connection was terrible. So, I had to come to do her part on her behalf. So, I
158 said: "All right, I'm going to work with you." So, it was kind of going straight to action.
159 But then again, I think it's going to be different because I do have ten years in the
160 company, so I'm known. It's not so easy if I had just gotten into the company.

161 **LE:** Okay, so what do you think are the three most beneficial factors that you have for
162 productive teamwork in a distributed setup? So, what are the three key factors that
163 are really important to a distributed team?

164 **NS:** Just three... I would say having a shared goal is a must. If people cannot think of one
165 thing that connects them, there's no reason for them to connect because it's just more
166 hassle. It's much more difficult to work distributed, so I'm gonna continue working
167 with my leader in the region here who is close to me and I can see the results. I can
168 see the need of what they are telling me. So, I really need to create this space and
169 almost like create a visual in a way that everybody can connect to it. So that can be a
170 vision, that can be a strategy, a goal, you know that there are many different ways of
171 defining those things but a vision, I think, is most important. The other thing is
172 empathy/cultural awareness. My university degree is on international relations. I love
173 this kind of thing. Absolutely love it. And I feel that when we come up with a goal from
174 ThoughtWorks I need to make it relatable to other people and for that I need to be
175 curious about them and their culture. So, I'll go into stereotypes a little bit here just
176 to exemplify, but I'll take Laura. Laura loves structure – so German. If I come up with
177 something completely loose, that has nothing that she connects with, where she can
178 see this is going to help me, this is going to help my function in Germany. You're never
179 gonna buy into that when you have no good reason like or to enjoy working towards
180 that. At the same time, back in Brazil, people are not so keen about structure. If I go
181 right away saying: "Okay, this is the structure you're going to work with", people are
182 going to be like: "Whoow I want my freedom". So, I think, you know, this
183 empathy/cultural awareness, understanding how to tailor the message to the people
184 based on their personality, but also in their culture is super important. And the other
185 thing is, what I mentioned before, overcommunicate. It's something about change
186 management. Everything that we do in this company is about change management
187 and nothing is obvious. Ever. And according to a friend of mine, April Johnson, who is
188 the lead for Change Management here at ThoughtWorks, you have to say the same
189 thing three times at least, for it to stick. So, I don't mind repeating a lot. Even if people
190 say: "Okay, I know that already" - great. Yeah, those are three things, but I collected
191 a lot of stuff together because I don't know how to do 1, 2, 3, sorry.

192 **LE:** Yeah, that's why I kind of just tried to limit the amount of information. So, for me it's
193 like, what is the most important thing. Then on the other hand, there are also
194 challenges that you have. So, what do you think are the three most challenging factors
195 that you have?

196 **NS:** Let me see my notes, so I don't go too far away on this one. Is it on the leader follower
197 relationship? Where is it?

198 **LE:** Yes, it's the last one.

199 **NS:** Okay, I've got here competing priorities. Because, at least in our structure you have
200 regional and you have global and people often are going to have demands coming
201 from the both sides and unless they are pretty structured themselves and diligent,
202 they will be very messed up in terms of "what do I do first" or "what is more
203 important". So yeah, competing priorities is one. Another one is being realistic about
204 lead time to get stuff done. So, we have a big initiative right now, which is named
205 GETS, which is the expat tax service and it's centralizing this effort. There was, of
206 course, like a roadmap and we are doing quite well according to the roadmap, but you
207 need to be realistic, because you will depend on every single region to buy in and do
208 the changes they need to do. So, you really need to understand the basics from each
209 place in order to comply with your goals and timelines. And it's gonna take longer than
210 if it was in one place. And you have to be comfortable with that. Can I say three? I
211 think the other... the last one, it's aligned with those two, it's expectations
212 management. It's much easier to set expectations with someone who is sitting by your
213 side, because you can... if you see them going out of the bathroom, you can quickly go
214 and have a conversation and bring them back. You are not seeing your team every
215 day. You have no idea, if someone is bringing like a huge demand for them at that
216 point and they are losing complete control of their timelines. So again, nothing is
217 obvious. You cannot wait for the moment when people are going to escalate
218 something to you, you need to be proactive to go and learn what is going on in your
219 region right now. What are the adjustments that we need to do? I am clubbing so
220 many things together here but... expectations management.

221 **LE:** Okay. So, regarding to that... I'm going to jump now. Jumping back to leadership
222 behavior: What do you think are general attributes a good leader needs to have in
223 order to cope with those challenges and achieve those benefits?

224 **NS:** Um, I'm going to repeat myself a little bit.

225 **LE:** That's fine.

226 **NS:** I have put here like four things. First one for me, main one, is empathy. And if you
227 can't understand what your team members are feeling, you cannot connect with
228 them. You are not going to get them a 100%. In a distributed, global team that also
229 means cultural awareness. So, I can't... I just can't go to someone in China or in
230 Germany or in Brazil in the same way. Vision to execution. I read a book, not long ago,
231 that was so interesting to me. I hope you don't put that in your research. Because the
232 book is not 100% good, it has very bad stuff as well. But it's "Move" from Patty
233 Azzarello. It talks about the big middle and you have, you know, you have the moment
234 that you start on a new job, let's say, and you have to figure out, like, is it the right
235 team, what is the right setup in general, where we are going. And then at the end, like
236 you have to figure out - what is your idea, what is your vision? And that's great and
237 people normally get well to that, but you have a huge middle. Which is the strategy,

238 right, which is how you drive to that and I feel that a lot of people are good on doing
239 the first part and the last part. But many people forget about designing and
240 communicating and making it clear how the big middle is going to be, so people get
241 lost very easily. So, I think it's incapable – the description of this competency like this
242 vision to execution. How do you make this big middle?

243 **LE:** Right. So, let me just... because we jumped a bit, I'm trying to... I think we covered
244 most of that until leader-follower relationship and then... maybe that's just since
245 we're both really into cultural awareness... to that part. So, like you said, you have
246 already lots of experience in working in a global environment. So, working with
247 different cultures, with diverse multicultural teams. So, generally, how have those
248 different cultural norms and values that you have experienced so far, shaped your
249 own thinking about leadership? So, has that influenced you as a leader or in your
250 thinking about leadership?

251 **NS:** That's a tough question. Yes, very. It's amazing how... Let me tell you a quick story.
252 When I joined university for international relations, I had never traveled abroad. So,
253 throughout those four, five years, actually, like, I could see my horizon expanding
254 like... where do I go from here? And then I had like a six months experience where I
255 did an exchange program in Uruguay. And there I could see already see I know nothing
256 about life. I really need to learn all from the beginning whenever I meet someone new.
257 I think it's a little bit about being humble enough to understand that the view of life
258 and how things are done are very specific to you and to your values and your values
259 relate to the environment where you grew up. Even if you go against everything that
260 your parents have said, they somehow shaped the way that you see the world. So, I
261 realized that, for being a leader in a global team, I needed to first be curious about the
262 people in my team to then try to understand them. But coming from this place where
263 I don't know, there is no right or wrong, it's just different. And if I want them to come
264 on the journey with me, I need to understand where they are coming from as well. I
265 think that but also, like... how do I say that... I only took notes until that point.
266 [laughter] I try to find the streams on the different cultural aspects. So, and this is
267 borderline to stereotypes, which is dangerous, right. I know that if I asked for
268 something to my team "Oh, I need this to be done in five days", the first person to
269 complete it, is going to be Laura, then Jing in China. Probably, Amy in Australia, is going
270 to put a time with me to have a discussion on that because she's not sure if I said
271 exactly what she understood, and she wants to go through the details. You know,
272 Yvette in Spain is going to ask me why that's now. I'm just going through... but like...
273 yeah, I lost my train of thought right now because...

274 **LE:** I see where you're getting.

275 **NS:** You know? It's different. Yeah, I totally lost my train of thought.

276 **LE:** So, is it generally, when you decide something or when you want something to
277 happen, is that that you still have that... Do you still follow your own expectations and
278 own values in order to getting something done or do you see it from a global
279 perspective and try to always manage everything so it's best for everyone?

280 **NS:** I get the question. I think, self-awareness is really important at that point. And that's
281 an interesting [unclear] about how people who go on international assignments or
282 have an international experience, actually have a much better level of self-awareness.
283 Because it's not only about how much you know about the others, but you end up
284 knowing a lot about yourself, because now I can compare my values to others. Before
285 it was absolute - those are the values. Though I feel that with my experiences I became
286 more self-aware of my own values, I still have them. But just try to be aware of when
287 I am using only them or when I should be more flexible. This is where having a diverse
288 team and diverse in any level of diversity - gender, age, cultural - makes a lot of sense,
289 because then you can challenge those values all the time and approaches. But try to
290 find out what are the strengths of my values. So, um, I come from Brazil, that's a very
291 relaxing place. So, people are very warm and very informal. I normally connect to
292 people in a deeper level. I don't like superficial relationships, which makes it really
293 difficult to have relationships with people in North America, where it's much more
294 common to have those like workplace relationships. It's much more superficial and
295 more to the point, we have this objective - we do it. I won't become your friend. My
296 husband is from ThoughtWorks, so you know where I'm going. For me, like, I know
297 that I have this strength that comes with my cultural values of creating strong
298 relationships. So, I'm going to use that. But I'm going to be aware, that for some
299 people it doesn't work this way. So, I'm going to turn it down.

300 **LE:** So, how do you think does culture shape the leader-follower relationship? So, like you
301 said, you're working together with different cultures, do you think that has an impact
302 on the relationship you're in with your team members?

303 **NS:** Definitely, because it's totally different relationships that I have with each team
304 member. I cannot use the same approach with each. So, it's really difficult for me, for
305 example, to think about what the right approach is when I have a global call. I have to
306 think a lot about the words and how they are going to impact different people. This is
307 one of the reasons why... I know that I can't count on mass communication to reach
308 goals. I need to do... Like, if I have a big piece of change coming up, I need to do the
309 work on going one to one. And then having a communication to everybody, where
310 this is consolidated, but I can't present it to everybody like this. So, yes, having this
311 awareness changes the way I do things and... yeah. Does that answer?

312 **LE:** Yeah, yeah. So, on the other hand, what do you think, or what would you say happens,
313 if you had that approach and just put it on the global team instead of doing the
314 individual consultations with everyone? Like, what happens when you impose your
315 opinion in that moment on the people in your team and just tell them here's what it
316 is and now make something off it.

317 **NS:** In ThoughtWorks, I think, I would just be completely ignored.

318 **LE:** Probably. [laughter]

319 **NS:** I think, if I did that, that would mean that I wouldn't have built that trust that, I believe,
320 I am being able to build with the team members. Hence, I wouldn't know what they
321 are doing or what is important for them. Hence, very difficult that they are going to

322 connect to what I'm saying. So, for example, I'm doing a big change on the structure
323 of global mobility right now, where we are going from regional teams to having a CoE
324 and having regional teams and we have shared services. This is big, right? And people
325 may ask themselves "Are the regional teams going to still exist?", "Am I going to lose
326 my job?" and things like that. I think that if I didn't have the one on ones before,
327 people would feel afraid about their job, people would not feel comfortable with
328 asking questions and would assume things and would probably like communicate
329 wrongly within their region and so on. Nobody's going to lose their job like this, no.

330 **LE:** [laughs] I'm just seeing that the client relationship part we can maybe skip... I think,
331 because you're not really working with clients in your setup.

332 **NS:** Sorry, can I add something to the previous question?

333 **LE:** Of course, you can.

334 **NS:** I realized that by having these more tailored conversations with people, which is
335 something that I had to change because of the setup, only then I can have a view of
336 what is actually going on in the regions. If I didn't do that, people would not
337 proactively tell me what is going on and I would create strategies that actually don't
338 fit the reality of the regions. Hence, it would be... It would fail.

339 **LE:** Thank you for that add-on. So, final questions. You know that I'm trying to organize
340 this training for people taking on such a role. So, I'm interested to know if you could
341 attend such a workshop or training, what would you expect it to be like? What would
342 you expect them to teach you? How to do better or improve in or advise you on? What
343 would be general expectations that you have on such a workshop, what would they
344 look like?

345 **NS:** I think... Broadly, it is around understanding the aspects of change management and
346 how to tailor this message to different audiences. And then, when we say different
347 audiences it's like people with totally different values than yours. So, there's
348 something about cultural awareness. And there's something about an effective
349 communication that reaches people. So, something that people do really well in
350 ThoughtWorks and if you have the opportunity to talk to someone from the TWU
351 team because I think they are great at that. They have 100 people from a lot of
352 different places going to attend training for five weeks. You need them to understand
353 the message - they have different languages, different ways of thinking things
354 through. So, they have to draw like... actually they can't expect that everybody's going
355 to understand things like compliance. I love to take this example. This is a word that I
356 don't know how to translate to Portuguese, my own language. Like, I understand what
357 it means. But if I don't use examples to explain it, if I don't show like the difference of
358 what is compliant and what is not compliant - my idea of compliance is going to be
359 different from someone else, because they will draw their resources from their own
360 experience which is different. So, there's something about effective communication
361 and visuals, that is quite powerful to ensure this alignment between people. So, yeah,
362 I think those are the main things I would expect.

363 **LE:** Right and to sum up... Is there anything I forgot, anything you consider important that
364 I haven't included or anything else that you'd like to share? A story or experience,
365 something that happened, just additional information that you'd like to share.

366 **NS:** Yes, let me see. I think... have you missed something? Probably and I can't imagine
367 anyone who will be able to have a comprehensive view of how this can look like
368 because it depends. It's just like staffing, right, it depends on the match. On the mix
369 of each team. One situation that I thought was quite like a milestone for me was when
370 I was in TechOps. I was the Head of People there and I went to China. China is like...
371 changes completely the way of working. They were having an issue. It was a
372 distributed team between China, India and Brazil – it was a mess. With the leaders in
373 North America. Nobody could understand each other. Everything was taken
374 personally somehow, they tried to share feedback with each other, and it always
375 backfired. It was horrible. And what I was hearing in summary, the Brazilian people
376 were saying that the China team didn't think through things they just went ahead and
377 did things. The China team would say the Brazilians were lazy and they take too long
378 to get things done because they keep discussing. There was a brilliant designer trying
379 to figure out how to put them together and to some level it didn't work. In general, it
380 didn't work because you don't set up something like that. But also, I remember that,
381 I had a conversation with the China team where I try to think, maybe they take too
382 long to get stuff done. So, let me tell you how I think they are thinking through this
383 and then I try to use some structure, like the Hofstede... to explain things and I
384 remember I gave a training to them about cultural differences. And I told them “you
385 can see that I'm Brazilian, I'm very Brazilian, I'm here and you can see everything that
386 I'm thinking and feeling from my face”. And then they started smiling and I told them
387 “if I tell you a joke right now and you don't laugh, I will feel very sad and you will see
388 that in my face”. And then one of the girls was like... she was so sweet. She was like
389 “we find you funny, but we are laughing inside” and that was so sweet. Because like...
390 I knew that the connection was there, but they are not going to hug me and take to
391 their houses for a barbecue like they would do in Brazil.

392 **LE:** Mm hmm.

393 **NS:** I don't know, that experience for me was super important. Because people, people
394 can understand each other, it's just going to be different.

395 **LE:** Yeah, just also the way of how they communicate, how openly they communicate.
396 Like you said, and she said “Well, we think you're fine. But we don't express it the way
397 you're used to it.” Yes. That helps so much for not taking things personally and just
398 except that's just how they are.

399 **NS:** Often we will take things personally, even if it's about work. You put the work
400 together. You think it's great. It's now your child, someone gives a feedback on that.
401 It's very common for someone from Latin roots to take that personally. So, this
402 combination was deadly.

403 **LE:** Yeah, that's a nice story though. It kind of sums up what is happening in different
404 cultures when you put them together without anything - just work. Yeah.

405 **NS:** What I would like to see like... I'm very, very interested to see the results of this
406 research and I think you have a very good ground for experimentation in
407 ThoughtWorks.

408 **LE:** Yeah, I think so, too. I hope. I have two other interviews in ThoughtWorks. I also have
409 some with other Tech firms. It's booming at the moment. So yeah, and then also have
410 a call tomorrow with a woman from Barcelona. She works for a company that does
411 coaching for distributed teams so that's also going to give me another perspective to
412 look at it. Um, I also like to have like the mix of leaders and team members that I have
413 all the perspectives included so... yeah. I'm really excited to see the outcome. And of
414 course, if you're interested, I'd love to share that with you when once it's done. Will
415 going to take me a while since I'm just at the beginning so...

416 **NS:** Yeah, I would love to see that. I really like the structure you put together. I think the
417 questions are spot on, very comprehensive. If you want more interviews, like I can
418 always refer more people.

419 **LE:** I'd like to have seven. I think that's what my professor said, she wants me to do seven
420 and I think I'm doing eight. In case someone... like there's always someone that can
421 cancel or whatever. I'll gladly come back to that offer. I'm trying to not bury myself in
422 transcription work.

423 **NS:** I love the topic.

424 **LE:** Yeah, me too. I'm so excited about my topic. It's good when you have to deal with
425 something for like six months here, you have to be excited about this. And I love, I
426 love talking about culture and different cultures mixed together and It's great. So, I
427 really enjoy that. So, thank you so much for sharing.

428 **NS:** Thank you and good luck with your research.

429 **LE:** Thank you. Bye.

Appendix 4:

Transcript Interview – Tim Wiegels

Transcript of the Interview with Tim Wiegels, Director of Data at FREE NOW

Conducted on Thursday, February 27, 2020, 5:00 pm

Interviewer: Lisa Engel (LE)

Interviewee: Tim Wiegels (TW)

- 1 **LE:** Thanks for having me. So, why don't we start with just some general questions, maybe
2 you introduce yourself and the company first?
- 3 **TW:** I'm Tim, I am the... I think director, we are still in the title finding phase, so for now it's
4 director of data at *Free Now*. Free Now, most people still know it as *mytaxi*, is the
5 biggest retailer in Europe, not Free Now itself but the Free Now Group and with the
6 Free Now Group, Free Now and two or three other verticals we are available in almost
7 all European countries. I think the fifteen countries in total, 200 cities and we also have
8 another vertical that is actually doing ride hailing in Latin America. My job is pretty
9 much I take care of all the data teams, so data engineering, data science, machine
10 learning/AI, all this buzzword stuff, business intelligence, market intelligence and
11 anything that has anything to do with data.
- 12 **LE:** Great, so... you said you're the head of or director of data, so what are you touching
13 points with globally distributed teams? Do you lead all the teams that are based in all
14 the subsidiaries you have?
- 15 **TW:** Well, yes and no. So, we have data teams in two other subsidies which are in Berlin
16 and in Barcelona. Then there's also a company that we work very closely together with
17 which is *Captain* which is in Paris. The thing is, I don't lead anyone directly, but due to
18 the fact that I'm the leader of the department I just travel to all locations at first to
19 understand what they're doing also to be available to be available to other
20 stakeholders in those locations.
- 21 **LE:** Okay, so like you said, you don't really directly lead them, or they don't really directly
22 report to you... can you maybe explain a bit more about the set-up of the company, so
23 I understand the hierarchies better?
- 24 **TW:** So, the structure and my team is I am the director, I have heads off positions for data
25 science, for data engineering and for data analytics and below the head status are the
26 leaders. For example, if you look at Berlin there's a data science team, with a lead and
27 a product owner and they're both actually reporting to the Head of Data Science. Due
28 to the fact that I actually lead them before, I still have connections to them. I lead the
29 Berlin team, the Paris team and the Barcelona team before and the projects are very
30 important for the company, so I've always been involved in this and am still working
31 with other stakeholders. So, I'm still very closely attached to the teams. Actually,

32 because I'm the one that actually explains it when anything happens and has to be
33 there when things go... when there is change and change is something that happens in
34 our company very, very often.

35 **LE:** Okay and in that set up, which sounds to me still like a startup kind of, how would you
36 describe your leadership style?

37 **TW:** As a leadership style... so, I think there's always a big difference between leader and
38 manager. We don't do management. Well, we do management but it's more like we
39 lead people. So, hierarchies are there, hierarchies are also there for like three or four
40 levels now. But the idea of how I lead the team and also expect everyone else to lead
41 the teams within my department is that hierarchies exist, so you have someone to talk
42 to directly, which is also very important with the distributed teams. So, for example
43 Barcelona, they need to have someone sitting there they can talk to, someone they
44 can talk to about when can I take holidays something's happened with my family, so
45 also very personal stuff but also having someone who's the connection to connect all
46 the different locations with each other. Because it's going to be quite a... if you're an
47 analysts in Barcelona it's going to be quite tough to always get the feedback and
48 contact from Hamburg to really know what they're doing so it's also something that
49 the leadership level above them has to do so their main responsibility is to get all the
50 locations together. Even more so for the Head of Data Science for example, because
51 he has people in every location, so he really has to get everyone together very closely.
52 That being said, since the leadership style is lead and not manage, I also expect
53 everyone from all the locations to know me, that's really important to me. That
54 everyone... there should be any location where there's only like five people that think
55 like "We are here in the middle of nowhere and no one cares about us" so, everyone
56 should be treated the same, everyone should have the same possibility to make
57 themselves heard and to push down ideas, fears, comments or whatever.

58 **LE:** Okay. So, to sum that up... what would you say are the general attributes that a good
59 leader in your opinion needs to have.

60 **TW:** Transparency, honesty to the level where you can still say something because there
61 might be things you are not allowed to say and also understand what people are doing.
62 So, I think in Data it's also very important that if you are the director of this whole
63 team, that you know what a data engineer is doing or a data scientist. So, you should
64 still have some kind of... you don't need to be very, very deep into the topics but at
65 least understand how their daily work looks, what kind of topics they're working on a
66 high level and be able to align what they do with the company priorities and that's
67 also, I think, the task of the leads. That they really understand. We know what you do,
68 not just because it's something you have to do, but it actually plays into this, this and
69 this part of the company priorities and is actually taking us forward.

70 **LE:** Okay and do you think that there's like a change in those attributes or in the
71 importance of attributes when you look at a globally distributed set up, when you take
72 transparency, for example?

73 **TW:** Yeah. So, I mean if you get this old style of management where you actually just have
74 a boss, the boss tells you what to do and that's it. That would also work in distributed
75 teams, but if you don't have any kind of personal, open connection to the people, what
76 I said before, that you are just sitting there and follow instructions, will happen very,
77 very quickly. So, I think attributes like really talking to people and being transparent
78 and making everyone at all the locations know, not just the head of positions, what's
79 going on, but everyone should be aware of what's happening. That means that
80 transparency is really important.

81 **LE:** Great, how do you think that working distributed contributes to Free Now's goal or to
82 Free Now's purpose?

83 **TW:** Actually, quite easy because if you look at the markets, we are available in... so, for
84 data it isn't that many but for the company and so there's at least a team in every
85 market we operate on, on the bigger ones. So, I think we have fifty-ish different driver
86 services in all the countries because they have to know the market properly and that's
87 also the same... if we have teams in more different locations, it's much, much easier
88 to understand what each market needs. Because mobility is not really generic, it's... I
89 don't know, stuff like e-commerce people just buy stuff everywhere that's easy, socio-
90 demographically it may be a bit different but the difference with mobility is, that the
91 laws are really different. We have different offerings in Berlin and for example in
92 Stuttgart. So, Berlin is right, which is a PHV style, which is pretty much the same as
93 what Uber does, but that doesn't exist in Spain, that also doesn't exist in the UK at the
94 moment, for example. Which means, the more people are distributed in all functions,
95 the more they can really understand what the problems of the markets are and, first
96 and foremost, we are a company that needs to be operational and product related, so
97 the more distributed the better you understand really what the problems are and the
98 more you can bring this back to the whole team to build the right things.

99 **LE:** Right, so in this distributed set up, how do you keep track of your targets and
100 responsibilities?

101 **TW:** OKRs (Objectives and key results). So, this is also something we just started I think in
102 the middle of last year. So, first time was Q3 for 2019. Actually, we as data started this,
103 because we realized there is a team in Berlin, a team in Barcelona, there is some teams
104 in Hamburg and there are obviously struggles. If you look at the data in general: there's
105 always people that use data, which is data science and analytics, then there is data
106 engineering which actually provides the data which immediately makes them a
107 bottleneck. The thing is or what we realized is, that we have to get common goals. We
108 have to plan properly: what are the things that the data science teams in Berlin and
109 Hamburg, who work closely together, have to do next and in the next quarter? How
110 can data engineering support this, so everyone is on the same level and everyone is
111 really understanding what's going on. At the same time, we also try to live this one-
112 team-approach. Data science is a good example again because of the Hamburg, Berlin
113 and also Barcelona distribution they act as one team. So, if there are projects, it's not
114 like this project is only being executed in Berlin, only in Hamburg or only in Barcelona.
115 It's also the case of people working together, so we try to find out when we have a

116 project who is the person most applicable to this and then we also do a lot video calling
117 and all these kinds of things. That's actually a good point, because video calling is
118 important. We started this two years ago the first time with the data science team with
119 two people in Berlin and six people here. Video calls every day went totally idiotic
120 because people in Berlin obviously were like: "We're sitting there discussing on the
121 screen no one listens to us". So, what we're all trying to do is actually doing more home
122 office at the headquarters because this whole distributed teams and talking to each
123 other becomes much, much easier if people sit in their home offices and everyone
124 actually has to look at their screen has to give the same attention to the other people
125 on the screens.

126 **LE:** So, you try to create the feeling of one team by actually not being together at all, by
127 being completely distributed?

128 **TW:** Sometimes by being even more distributed, yeah, and that that works quite well and
129 that's also something where we have gotten the feedback, since we started this home
130 office thing, the discussions over zoom or any other video calling system, got way
131 better. People understand each other better and it's also... there is sometimes still a
132 little bit of a language barrier when we talk to the people in France for example, but
133 this is something we're trying to emend at the moment.

134 **LE:** Do you think that this virtual collaboration of the teams does influence the team
135 performance?

136 **TW:** Yes. It gets better by this because things are clearer, things are more logical for
137 everyone. It's not that someone doesn't get anything from the other side and if they
138 do this, there is this virtual interaction more, they are more up to date. So, it wouldn't
139 work for example if you don't do video calling, so you really have to do this. You have
140 to find a way that people, that are one team, can actually talk to each other every day
141 without any kind of limitations and hindrances.

142 **LE:** Okay, so when you talk about creating teams in, for example, Barcelona, Berlin, Paris,
143 wherever, do you just start working virtually out of the blue or is there a face-to-face
144 kick-off for the projects?

145 **TW:** There is always a face-to-face kick-off, so, that's also something we're trying to do. For
146 example, the Hamburg-Berlin thing is easy because people can just go back and forth.
147 I do the same with Barcelona. So, if there is anything... new people usually come to the
148 headquarters for a few days, so they get to know everyone. The thing is always, if
149 there's a new person at data starting, they should be here for a week to understand
150 how everything is going and it's also easier to onboard them for everything. So, that's
151 something we do for sure and for any kind of a bigger projects we also do offsites
152 regularly, we do kick-off sessions together. I try to fly around, not too much, but as
153 much as possible. That's just a general feeling... that we know who we are, and we also
154 do a lot of team building. If you are in one of the other locations, you will have to go
155 for beers with people in the evening. It sounds corny but it's actually the thing that
156 works best.

157 **LE:** Okay, so what do you think are the three most beneficial factors that you need to
158 ensure productive teamwork in a distributed set-up?

159 **TW:** Allow home office for everyone, so if people are actually working with each over the
160 screens, it doesn't matter where they are, that's important. That's also something you
161 really have to push because that makes everyone in the small locations feel much
162 better. As much transparency as possible, as much communication as possible, that
163 everyone really also feels as involved as the people that sit here next to the
164 management in the HQ. Yeah, and actually doing kick-offs, going offside, going out for
165 drinks together. It's just... have some kind of personal interaction. Not every week, not
166 every month, but at least twice a year or something like that. That is very necessary.

167 **LE:** And on the other hand, what do you think are the three most challenging factors?

168 **TW:** The three most challenging factors, at the same time... is also video calling because so
169 many things still get lost in the fold so you have to be very diligent, really be clear about
170 what you want, to document what you want, to communicate what you want properly.
171 I would say probably two of the things I just said were really positive, are also very
172 negative, because... also transparency, if you're transparent and you might have
173 messages that make people uneasy, it's also way harder if you are very open about it.
174 Then you have to go there and be there available for them. And the last thing which
175 will be very bad for teams is if the people don't manage themselves properly, so it's
176 really just like you do this, you do this and you do this, that would never work out.

177 **LE:** Okay, so in your experience in working in distributed teams is there also a... do you
178 have experience with working in multicultural teams?

179 **TW:** We don't even need distributed teams for that, if you just look around this company.
180 I have about 75 people in data now and of these ten are Germans, 59 German speaking
181 but even in Hamburg HQ we are talking multicultural. I think Free Now has people from
182 65 nations now or something like that and my team is obviously, since it's data, it's full
183 of people from India, people from Russia, from actually anywhere, but Russians and
184 Indians are a big part. And that's something, yeah, intercultural things are interesting.
185 Also being German... sometimes it's very hard to be open, to be transparent, because
186 for some people in your team that's just something they are not used to. So, what I
187 really try to do is also get the culture of the people and the culture of the company on
188 one level, so that everyone fits in a way. You still have intercultural differences but that
189 is something which is actually going to the background for us. That is not apparent
190 because we've always been working like this and that's normal for us.

191 **LE:** So, you say you have like a common organizational culture that you rather pursue than
192 individual cultures?

193 **TW:** Yeah, rather than individual culture or German culture or whatever. And it think that's
194 a very start-up'y culture because being open, being transparent, being flat in
195 hierarchies, trying to be as open as possible to everyone and... familiar atmosphere, I

196 think, you cannot say anymore today because we're getting to big, but that's still
197 something we try to do. That everyone talks to everyone and people find friends here
198 a lot, I think, which is also quite nice. Especially for people coming from god-knows
199 where to Germany or Spain or wherever.

200 **LE:** And do you think that those cultural norms and values, that you still have due to that
201 multinationality here, shaped your own thinking about leadership?

202 **TW:** Yeah, yeah, because one thing that is really important with being a leader of many
203 different nationalities is that you have to be very, very empathic. You have to really
204 understand how people feel, how people understand you, how people want to be
205 treated, because that's totally different with everyone we have here. If you already
206 have this in your own location, it also makes the distributed team situation much
207 easier, because there is no difference. I mean, for me, if I see someone sitting in front
208 of the screen here or somewhere else, if I go to another office, there is not much
209 difference between being here or there. So, that's helping a lot.

210 **LE:** So, what do you think would happen if you as a team lead would try to impose German
211 values, in that case, to people that are from all over the world?

212 **TW:** I would lose half of my team, I would think. It depends on what you mean by German
213 values. I would say stuff like you always have to be punctual, yes, we try this, but I
214 would say we also have Germans that are not 100 % living German values. Otherwise
215 I would say you would go mental. I think any start-up company, that's the thing... No,
216 we have to live values which are international and not directed towards anything
217 specific, that's not possible otherwise. Not at all.

218 **LE:** Can you describe your team-client interaction a bit? How do you work with clients, or
219 let's rather say stakeholders, are you also working remotely with them?

220 **TW:** Yep. I mean, if you look at our calendar... every calendar invite has a zoom link. So,
221 rooms are book, people meet at a location but in 90 % of the cases it's the case that
222 people are sitting there, looking at you from the screen and that's normal. For us it
223 doesn't make a difference whether we're talking to stakeholders from other
224 companies or our teams, it's all remote and distributed. So, we don't make any
225 difference there. We still try to have some face-to-face time and what we also try to
226 do, if we have a project with the main stakeholder in Berlin, the team can still be
227 distributed, but we try to have someone in the same location who can interact with
228 the stakeholder directly. This person is then the main contact and has the ownership
229 for the project and also takes care that the distributed work is working out.

230 **LE:** Okay. So, final questions. If you could attend a leadership workshop for globally
231 distributed teams, which topics would you expect or like it to address?

232 **TW:** Good question. I would think a big thing would be communication. How to
233 communicate properly, how to... maybe not communication, maybe more something
234 like knowledge sharing, that's more important. That you have good tools, how to use

235 tools, to really have the same knowledge level, the same information level in all
236 different locations. Just how to talk to people in general. How do deal with different
237 cultures, how to deal with the fact that you don't see each other very often. How to
238 still keep a personal relationship with people.

239 **LE:** Is there anything else you would like to share regarding this topic, maybe an
240 experience you made? Could be anything.

241 **TW:** An experience... well, if you do this, you have to really keep track and be diligent that
242 you visit all different locations at the same level, at the same amount. So, I think...
243 when I started at Free Now, I had this of 15 people. Two or three people were sitting
244 in Berlin, which made me think I should be in Berlin every week for at least a day. That's
245 a nice idea, but it doesn't work. You have to be very honest with yourself about what's
246 possible and also plan your calendar in advance. If I want to be in all four locations at
247 least once a month or every two months, plan it at least half a year in advance. Put
248 blockers in your calendar. Also be honest to your people about what you can or can't
249 do. Don't promise too much. Every time I promise I will be there in the next two weeks,
250 it's not going to happen. Also make people aware that when you don't show up it's not
251 because you don't care about them but because there are other things going on in the
252 company that need your attention at the moment.

253 **LE:** Okay, great. Then I guess... that's it.

254 **TW:** Cool!

255 **LE:** Thank you very much!

256 **TW:** Anytime!

Appendix 5:

Transcript Interview – Daniel Löffelholz

Transcript of the Interview with Daniel Löffelholz, Lead Consultant Developer at ThoughtWorks Germany

Conducted on Monday, March 2, 2020, 02:00 PM

Interviewer: Lisa Engel (LE)

Interviewee: Daniel Löffelholz (DL)

- 1 **LE:** So, first question. Can you maybe just quickly or briefly introduce yourself? Who are
2 you, what are you doing, what is your position at ThoughtWorks?
- 3 **DL:** I'm Daniel. In ThoughtWorks I have the role... I mean, we have the BA (Business
4 Analyst) and Developer category. The role on the project that I had last was Technical
5 Principle, that means kind of a technical project lead for a larger account. So, that have
6 been four teams: two onshore teams and two offshore teams. We have this role in
7 ThoughtWorks for every account. Often it's one person out of the team, the special
8 case here is that it's a separate role because of the size of the account.
- 9 **LE:** Okay, and what is your touching point with the globally distributed team in this role?
- 10 **DL:** So, I'm there to guide and support all the teams in technical decision making and tech
11 strategy. I'm trying to develop the strategy together with the client to find out also
12 the pain points of the plan, the requirements and then have the teams to develop
13 accordingly to it and also as a support or sparing partner for the tech-leads in the
14 teams.
- 15 **LE:** Okay, this account - is that an international or national account? So, is that for national
16 company or for an international company?
- 17 **DL:** For an international company but for the german department of an international
18 company.
- 19 **LE:** Okay, great. So, can you go a bit more into detail about the team setup that you're
20 working in?
- 21 **DL:** So, we are four cross functional teams, plus a few roles outside of the team that are
22 there to support and lead the teams. So, kind of leadership team in product strategy,
23 tech strategy and general project management, delivery aspects. The teams, like I
24 said, they are cross functional - they have full-stack developers, therefore also
25 infrastructure consultants, BAs, QAs and XDs in them. They are responsible each for a
26 part of a larger application. One component or multiple components, multiple micro-
27 services out of this larger application.

28 **LE:** Okay and can you maybe, just so I get an overview, briefly say the percentage of
29 distributed work and non-distributed or centralized work that you do in the account?

30 **DL:** Correct me when... I don't know if I understand what you mean correctly but we have
31 maybe like 25 people offshore and maybe about the same amount of people onshore,
32 but a few more leadership roles. So, maybe a few less developers onsite, but the
33 amount of work overall is roughly the same.

34 **LE:** Okay, and how would you describe the lead in those teams that you have, like, how's
35 the leadership style in this? Is there a difference between leading centralized teams
36 and leading teams that are partly distributed?

37 **DL:** So, the team as such is not distributed. Every team is in one location because there
38 are multiple ways how you can implement distributed delivery, either you have teams
39 that are distributed or a distributed team, so the individuals are distributed, or teams
40 on different locations. We chose the teams and different locations approach because
41 it is easier for the inter-team communication, but then the challenges are between
42 the teams. Obviously because they're not the same time zone and only remote
43 available but... so, the leadership style in the teams doesn't really change. Should I talk
44 a bit about how that would look usually?

45 **LE:** Yeah, sure.

46 **DL:** So, as the tech lead of the team you're also supposed to – in the team – to help all
47 developers or be a sparing-partner and coach for all the developers. Also, obviously,
48 think of cross-functional requirements like scalability, performance, security, quality
49 of your code, identify knowledge gaps in the teams and find ways to solve them.
50 Supporting the BAs in requirement analysis and then adding the tech perspective,
51 managing technical risks. Yeah, maybe also shaping the, let's say the architecture
52 approach inside of this team aligned with the account tech strategy or tech-principles,
53 so that they are account wide or project wide technical principles and that all the
54 teams have to stick to or align to it.

55 **LE:** When you say you have... in this account the teams are centralized in one location,
56 but you cooperate in between the teams. How does that work, how do you organize
57 this?

58 **DL:** So, we have guilds... a guild is a temporary group of people that usually have a similar
59 role to exchange information or drive cross team initiatives, for example, there's a
60 security guild and then in each of the teams we have a security champion that would
61 join the guild and they would then together maybe identify problems or gaps or tools
62 that we want to implement across all teams. Or maybe some of the teams say: "Oh,
63 we've just introduced this tool that was very helpful, so maybe you other folks also
64 want to use it." So, like I said, both information sharing and also driving across team
65 initiatives and we also have, more pointing towards the leadership aspects, we also
66 have a tech-lead guild. All the tech-leads would join that, for example, to discuss
67 certain project wide decisions that could be efficient. Use a different continuous

68 delivery tool or a new way of writing contract tests that we want to establish across
69 the teams, that would be a typical discussion that we have in these forms.

70 **LE:** So, would you generally say that having these distributed teams cooperating at some
71 point is definitely a benefit or is that rather challenge?

72 **DL:** It's a challenge but it needs to happen because the solution that we are building in
73 this particular project - it's one big platform, one big product - and so we need
74 alignment for multiple reasons. First of all, the end of the day, we have to hand over
75 this application to someone, another company, the customer or the client. So, we
76 can't allow to have dozens of technologies everywhere. Also, it helps in onboarding if
77 we have simpler tech stack. Lesser to learn when you're onboarding the project,
78 obviously, every developer joins just one team, but sometimes you want to exchange
79 developers between teams, that is more difficult if you have a completely different
80 tech stack in this other team and also the learnings can't be shared, or many of the
81 learnings can't be shared if you have different tech stacks. You need some alignment,
82 and this is why teams need to communicate and collaborate, also sometimes you have
83 dependencies between the teams. So one feature that is touching all of the teams and
84 you need to coordinate these dependencies, that's why these collaborations are so
85 important.

86 **LE:** Okay. So, how do you generally create the feeling of one team in your account? Like,
87 do you have regular meetings with the whole group as well remotely or face to face?
88 Is there some kind of foundation that you try to maintain?

89 **DL:** I think getting some time or having some sessions with the stakeholders is important,
90 so that they can highlight how this product is helping them. So, kind of aligning
91 everyone under the same goal. On the tech side, having these like principles or
92 development or architectural principles, that helps. I think it's good if key... or like
93 roles that have to interact a lot, that they also meet each other face to face, so flying
94 over and meeting each other - that's important. There's an all hands once a month,
95 every six weeks. It's not the best. I mean, it doesn't really help a lot for creating that
96 feeling, it's more like an information radiator. What helps is that you're trying to not
97 operate in silos, like when there's a meeting, that there's one meeting room in India
98 or wherever else, and one meeting room in Germany. Then you have these automatic
99 silos. It's then better that everybody's remote so that everybody has the same
100 conditions for communication and you also see the person larger than if you just have
101 a video camera in one large room. These are some tricks. It's a challenge, it's not easy.

102 **LE:** So, what would you... generally, not only in your current setup, say are the three most
103 beneficial factors to ensure productivity in a distributed network or in a distributed
104 set up?

105 **DL:** The three most beneficial... I think a good decision making process, so that everybody
106 is able to contribute to this decision or read up on this decision and comment on a
107 certain decision or repel information. I think that's important. Second important thing
108 is, like I said, to make sure that there are no or less silos. So make sure that everybody
109 can also listen to conversations and can contribute to conversations. That's often

110 more of a technical challenge. And then, like I said, have guiding ideas or some shared
111 common values, can be technical, can be about the process, that everybody kind of
112 has aligned on and that everybody understands. That, I think, will be the most
113 important ones to me.

114 **LE:** And on the other hand, what do you think are the three most challenging factors in a
115 distributed set up?

116 **DL:** The most challenging or the risky ones, the traps. A trap is, again, you forget how the
117 other people in the other locations actually feel, in the sense of... if they are really able
118 to listen, if they really can contribute. Sometimes you're discussing in one location and
119 then multiple people are speaking at same time, you don't pay attention if somebody
120 raises their hand on the other side. Then you're excluding them from the discussion
121 and from the context. And then it's often because one location has more face-time
122 with the client usually, so you will naturally have more context. And I think you often
123 miss to share that. It's very important that the party that is closer to the client, that
124 they also make sure that this context arrives at the offshore location. Yeah, and it's
125 along the same or similar lines that all decisions are being made in one place and not
126 in between both places.

127 **LE:** Also, a more general topic... it's more about culture now. So in general, how are your
128 experiences in working within a diverse or multicultural team? Can be that project,
129 can be previous projects.

130 **DL:** I mean, there are always... I think there are cultural differences, but I think they don't
131 weigh in as strong as other differences or personal differences between people,
132 between experience they've made or other differences or challenges that come with
133 diversity or very diverse setups. Again, what helps is having an understanding that
134 there are differences. First of all, making clear that you are working on the same... you
135 have the same intentions, you have the same goals, trying to remove any ambiguity
136 about what the goals are. Then leaving room for individual solutioning, people might
137 have different ways of how to arrive at a solution. What is really important are the
138 outcomes and if the outcomes are not helping the goal, then I think there needs to be
139 some discussion. But if one teams decides to estimate a little be different but still the
140 estimate is sufficiently correct or precise, then that's fine. So, me to allow this freedom
141 of the teams or individuals, having empathy for everyone, understanding their point,
142 but also make sure that people understand the overall goal and what outcomes you
143 want to achieved and then ideally establish effect based way of measuring outcomes
144 so that there's also no ambiguity, no interpretation of the results, just facts. That
145 would help. So, I think the culture doesn't play that much of a role but different ways,
146 maybe different teams, different locations, different companies, different countries
147 have sometimes different ways of communicating, collaborating or dealing with
148 things. So, they are, like I said, supporting folks in the outcomes. Let the teams have
149 this freedom of deciding on how they want to arrive at these outcomes.

150 **LE:** Do you generally thing that diverse team or the diverse multicultural team set-up
151 changes the leadership task for the team leader? Instead of having a team just

152 composed of Germans or sitting in one place in Germany. Do you think that changes
153 something for the leadership?

154 **DL:** It's obviously easier to establish a close relationship with people that that you see
155 every day, who you can talk to face to face every day. So that makes it harder to build
156 that trust in this relationship across, you know, the time shift or long distance. It's
157 important to have some face to face time but it will never or rarely be the exact same
158 just because you meet the people like every day, and you can talk to them over coffee
159 and you observe more what's happening in the teams. So you can address that. Maybe
160 there's some conflict in the team, you see that, you can talk with this person about
161 the conflict and you will never see this conflict when the team is just out of sight. So,
162 the objectives are a bit different... not the objectives, but the the options for you. And
163 in some cases you need to figure out who would play that part in the offshore
164 locations. The leadership style is probably more situational, so we really have to see
165 what is the kind of support that the person needs. Have a custom tailored approach
166 to the individual. Also, like I said, because offshore teams don't have all the context,
167 share more context, support more, ask more about what they need. There are often
168 blockers because they don't have access to certain client stakeholders, while onsite
169 the people can have easier access to the stakeholders, so they can maybe reach out
170 to them themselves. So, yeah, depending on the project set up it can be different, but
171 then you have to just accept the situation and see what is the need of the team, what
172 are the needs of the people that you're connected with and then try to resolve that.

173 **LE:** Speaking about needs. How do you think it influences the client relationship when you
174 say that some of your teams are working more closely together with the client,
175 because, obviously they are onsite or closer to the client, but how does working
176 remotely influence the client relationship if you communicate to your client remotely?

177 **DL:** So, ideally, we want to empower the established relationships from the client or with
178 the POs, for example, from the client to the offshore teams that this communication
179 just works and doesn't need additional support. That is a goal, we want to have
180 empowered teams that are responsible for an outcome regardless of them sitting with
181 a client or sitting remotely. But the nature of easier communication, that if the client
182 sits, I don't know, somewhere else in Germany, it would be the exact or almost the
183 same experience. But if the client sits in the same room, then maybe also the ways of
184 working together with the client would change a little bit. Maybe to clarify questions
185 very quickly and maybe you don't need to do a lot of in-depth planning. But maybe
186 the teams offshore want to have a bit more information up-front, so they can just
187 work more independently because it's harder to just ask the question to the
188 stakeholder just at any point in time. But this is very specific to the setup and of course
189 not all the stakeholders are capable in that way to collaborate very efficiently with
190 people offshore. This can be because of language skills, can be because of time zones,
191 maybe they have already a lot of meetings in the morning or every afternoon, or
192 maybe there are other constraints that don't allow them to have this close
193 collaboration.

194 **LE:** Okay, thank you. We already arrived at final questions. So, there's one general
195 question. So, if you were to attend a training for leadership of globally distributed
196 teams - What are general topics that you would expect it to address? What would you
197 wish to learn in such a training?

198 **DL:** One thing is to establish... like I said, this common goal, common vision, that is one
199 thing. Yeah, speaking of technical leadership, establishing architecture principles,
200 guidelines for the teams. Another topic is decision making or getting information or
201 letting a lot of people in the account contribute to a decision without having a huge
202 meeting with 50 people, so kind of asynchronous decision making. Letting
203 everybody... giving everybody a chance to continue, to be informed about what's
204 going on. Then maybe also something about establishing remote... establishing
205 relationships remotely, like via video, you know, instead of just sitting with the person.
206 There might be good questions to ask or how to shape this 1-on-1. I'm wondering,
207 since we do have weekly 1-on-1s. But I think that it's good if you have some questions
208 in mind how to approach these 1-on-1s. Maybe they are also in that context about
209 the situational leadership - identify what kind of leadership a person needs. Um, what
210 kind of support the certain teams need. I think that's probably the most important
211 ones, most important topics. I mean, we want to enable that the teams are
212 autonomous in their work and therefore we just need this kind of establishing a goal
213 and providing teams involved with the information they need, setting up some
214 guardrails here and there and then that's all the most of the contribution that the
215 leadership needs to do apart from maybe managing some problems with the client or
216 helping the client establishing a relationship with offshore teams.

217 **LE:** Okay, final question. Is there anything else that you can share like, I don't know, an
218 experience regarding this topic or something I missed, which is important?

219 **DL:** I mean, there's this other set up if a team is distributed. So, some people in one
220 location and some people of the same team in another locations, this is different,
221 different challenges. I think it's more difficult. The big challenge is... I mean, in the first
222 setup that I was describing, where most of the teams are in different locations, it's
223 best for products, for different products or products that are composed of self
224 contained parts. Let's say you have an application and there are four natural parts of
225 this application and within all these parts they don't have a lot of dependencies
226 between each other. This is set up is kind of ideal because it mimics your structure of
227 your teams. You don't need that much communication between the teams. So, teams
228 can work self contained and autonomous, that is ideal. The more people have to
229 communicate between the teams, the more challenges you will have. So therefore, if
230 you have a lot of communication between the teams or there is a lot communication
231 between teams necessary, you might want to think about the other approach where
232 you have a team distributed, so that you always... some parts in the same location of
233 the team. So you can align there. On the other hand, the question is then why don't
234 you build the system or what holds you back from building the system in a way that
235 you cut it down for independent components because every alignment between
236 teams is expensive, more expensive than if you would have the team just develop this

237 functionality by themselves. So, there are multiple factors that come to play but that's
238 another question to answer.

239 **LE:** Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix 6:

Transcript Interview – Interviewee XY

Transcript of the Interview with Interviewee XY, Partner Manager at a Silicon Valley based technology company.

Conducted on Monday, March 9, 2020, 9:30 AM

Interviewer: Lisa Engel (LE)

Interviewee: Anonymized (XY)

- 1 **LE:** Okay. So then let's just start with general questions about you and your role
2 description - so what is it you're actually doing and in what kind of environment do you
3 do that?
- 4 **XY:** Well, I work for a company whose mission it is to give people the power to build
5 community and bring the world closer together. And we are a tech company that
6 connects billions of people around the world and gives them ways to share what
7 matters most to them. We are all about creating new products, helping small
8 businesses to expand their reach and we see ourselves as a company of builders. And
9 we kind of try to solve problems which are meaningful to building stronger
10 communities at the very end of the day. And our company is based on a revenue model
11 that is strongly rooted in advertising. So whatever data our users share is part of our
12 ecosystem to monetize that with advertising in a personalized way. My role at this
13 company is to serve as a partner and an industry thought leader around digital
14 advertising and my clients... really are looking for a partner that has strong consultative
15 sales skills and is able to develop and actually manage short and long term marketing
16 plans based on the client's brand and direct response marketing objectives. And in my
17 role, I am also responsible for accurately and effectively managing sales pipeline in
18 order to prioritize business opportunities and resources. And it's a sales role, so I also
19 take responsibility in reaching and exceeding sales quotas and what contribution to
20 overall vertical and team goals. And finally, I think it's really important to partner with
21 other vertical teams on structuring and executing operational and strategic initiatives
22 like developing work plans and sizing market related data or leading analysis on
23 defining the overall business approach, yeah.
- 24 **LE:** Okay, great. Can you maybe give me a bit more detailed information about where in
25 the world your company's operating, just like continent wise?
- 26 **XY:** Well, we are operating globally. Our biggest market is North America, then Europe and
27 Latin America and Africa and we also have a very strong presence in Asia except China.
- 28 **LE:** Great and could you give me like a a small hint on what you're touching points with
29 leading globally distributed team is? So, where do you find yourself in this topic?

30 **XY:** Well eighty percent or somewhere around eighty percent of the people who work at
31 our company are software engineers and working on products. And we have a number
32 of locations globally where software engineering work takes place so... especially when
33 it comes to interfacing the local requirements and developing products on a global
34 scale, you need to build an organization where even when you're not working in one
35 office you can still feed the relevant requirements over the local markets into this
36 global software engineering product team which is distributed themselves and that's
37 at the heart of what we do and we use a lot of software ourselves to make ends meet.
38 Namely we've developed our own software as a service platform where we
39 communicate with a corporate version of our own product.

40 **LE:** Great so can you describe the team set up that you are working. So, your your team -
41 how are you working, where are you working? A bit more in detail about your
42 experience.

43 **XY:** Sure, so I work in a German office of the of the global company. We are about a
44 hundred people and we are structured in industries all verticals and usually as a
45 partner I work with someone very closely on named accounts based on the book of
46 business within the vertical that we've defined and that other role that I really work
47 closely with is called a client solutions manager. Very close to the product was in my
48 role I am more responsible for the commercial and strategic direction of the partner
49 work.

50 **LE:** Okay great. Let me go a bit more into detail about leadership behavior in this regard.
51 Could you maybe tell me what in your opinion are general attributes of a good leader
52 or requirements a good leader needs to have in order to fulfill a more or less efficient
53 leadership role?

54 **XY:** So, basically, it's all about at **leading yourself** and bring your best form of leadership
55 to all interactions and we have a model that we like to refer to, to have a common
56 denominator when we talk about leadership. It's also a very good model to allow us to
57 focus on four different directions of leadership simultaneously so its **lead forward** - it's
58 strategic leadership basically crafting a compelling vision and strategy and showing
59 forward thinking planning and effective change management, so that's lead forward.
60 Then we have **lead across** - which is basically you know it's the cross functional
61 [internet connection frozen, audio paused] you doing locally and leading across the
62 company and external partners to continue to steward our culture and business and
63 then next to lead forward and lead across we talk about **lead through** which is the
64 organizational and executional leadership aspect. It's about building out teams,
65 functions, projects that deliver results and then ensuring that all you do as a leader is
66 healthy and growing. And in order to work on those three dimensions you also need
67 to be very aware of how to lead yourself. We call this **leading within**, which is actually
68 at the heart of this model and there are four things we continue to strive to do as part
69 of leading within which is basically showing deep care, demonstrating commitment
70 and generosity towards people we work with and towards our work and bring the
71 world closer together so it's very mission driven. Then it's secondly about bringing
72 courage, doing what's right for our community with humility, social responsibility and

73 high accountability. Third - it's all about inclusion so model inclusive behavior and
74 support system wide practices to ensure every person is respected and valued. And
75 fourth and finally it's continually growing, which basically means actively seeking to
76 develop, to show self-awareness, agility and resilience and these qualities are always
77 on states that's helped me as a leader to collectively lead in the most effective and
78 human fashion.

79 **LE:** Great, so you just kind of answered the next question already with that, that's great
80 so we can skip that one. Generally speaking, how does working distributed contribute
81 to... in your case, contribute to your goal? May be a company goal or your team goals.

82 **XY:** Well, I would say working distributed is all about the cross functional and the
83 collaborative leadership so... lots of our cross functional partnerships are not located
84 where I work in my office. Obviously, the clients I work with are obviously not located
85 in the office and then it's about defining ways of working that suit the clients but also
86 our cross functional partners in the most effective fashion. And we do this by... I mean,
87 let's first focus on our internal ways of working. If we have a distributed team not
88 located in the same place, we'd schedule at least one or two group call meetings a
89 week... usually one, and we invite interested people from cross functionals to join. This
90 actually allows us and our cross functional partners to connect and speak up if needed
91 and also get updated on tasks that need to be finished or done. And what's really
92 healthy when you have this kind of even remote team meetings is it makes the work
93 of your team members visible to everyone so you actually know what other people are
94 doing and you can actually pay respects and ask questions and tie it back to the overall
95 team goals. So we've tried a couple of things, we've tried regular automated questions
96 to allow and ask specific team members questions and post answers to that preferred
97 channel so, as I said, we work with our own product where we can share in groups and
98 we usually engage a lot and live chats and video conferencing. We allow people from
99 different departments to be part of this and if you are part of the group, we encourage
100 our employees to comment and post and like talk about the work as part of the
101 community and that works really well. Then we also invest in company retreats
102 basically gathering everyone at least [stresses importance of at least] once a year
103 globally including remote workers as a great way to form lasting relationships between
104 colleagues and obviously as part of our local team here we have weekly stand up
105 meetings where the management, the leadership, has a town hall meeting and talks
106 about the HR dimension - so who's joining, what job postings are available and we talk
107 about the biggest and most important developments in terms of our commercial
108 performance but also what kind of projects there are and what's on the agenda in
109 terms of a list of bigger events that we all work on. So, there is a high visibility on how
110 we show up externally.

111 **LE:** Okay great, so is there like a... do you have a special agreement on how you keep track
112 of targets and responsibilities or is that just happening?

113 **XY:** Sure, we have, we have... since I'm part of the sales organization obviously quantitative
114 goals and then we have qualitative goals and there is a fifty percent weightage.
115 [connection gone, audio pauses] six months...

116 **LE:** Sorry can you repeat that? You were just frozen for a second.

117 **XY:** We do reviews also of each individual's performance every six months yeah and there
118 is a self-review element in it, a peer review element where you can ask cross
119 functionals and your colleagues about feedback, work you've done and then obviously
120 there is an hierarchical element, so I have a line manager and that line manager also
121 reviews the individual's performance.

122 **LE:** Okay. And when you say you are working globally how are you coping with time
123 differences, so especially in terms of deadlines, if there's a local public holiday,
124 different office hours whatsoever?

125 **XY:** We try to accommodate for the challenges from both ends of... if you have a team
126 mate somewhere on the west coast in the U. S. obviously there is a time zone
127 difference of eight to nine hours so basically we try to do calls that need to happen,
128 video calls, very early U. S. time and towards the end of our workday here in Germany.
129 That works, it takes an effort on both sides but it's possible and if you are using video
130 conferencing techniques it's also amazing to see that you don't actually have to do all
131 the traveling these days, but face-to-face presence is also possible using technology.

132 **LE:** Okay and when you say you try to see each other face-to-face at least once a year how
133 did you start working together? Was there a team kick off or was that just "okay we
134 have a call with everyone"?

135 **XY:** Basically, you interface with lots of cross functional teams that are not located where
136 you are and then obviously there is a project plan and a goal and then there is a team
137 kick off and then use schedule how you want to be working and interfacing and then
138 you take it on from there. It's a very structured process basically. Yeah. Agile in the
139 best sense, you only get together if you actually work on something meaningful. It's
140 not just about socializing, it's about - okay what's the impact you want to create and
141 who's needed to help you along the way, so very collaborative. But also, how to
142 straighten and wouldn't it feel kind of awkward if people were stealing my time for
143 things that don't create an impact.

144 **LE:** Okay.

145 **XY:** And that's the kind of common denominator across whatever interaction you
146 facilitate.

147 **LE:** Yeah okay, just really briefly can you maybe give me like three factors that are really
148 beneficial to distributed work and three that are not helpful at all or like challenging
149 maybe?

150 **XY:** Well, on the pro side I would say it's really hard to find talent and if you can tap into a
151 global workforce and then the potential to finding the right people is much higher. So
152 that's a benefit, second one is diversity - so if you have a more diverse team then

153 research also proves that the results get better. And I mean if you curate a team that
154 is not only based where you are based then obviously you can also see diversity as a
155 dimension. And the third aspect is obviously also commercially driven. There are some
156 areas where you can attract talent for total cost of ownership in terms of HR costs that
157 are lower than if you try to find the whole workforce in one place. In terms of
158 challenges I would say diversity takes an extra effort to understand one another and
159 cultural differences are not easy to read and you need a trained muscle to really be
160 effective in such environments, that takes an extra effort and tied to that is each and
161 every individual has biases and you need to train yourself how to unfold those biases
162 and fight those biases in order to stay effective. And I would also say... [connection
163 unstable, audio paused] have as a company, to make the world more open and
164 connected and some of the things that we try to be, **be bold, be open, moving fast,**
165 **building social value and creating impact** - those five dimensions, the more you're
166 distributed, the more important it is to really keep those five cultural and central
167 elements alive, especially when you are in an environment where the company is
168 growing very fast. And retaining the culture is, I think, one of the key tasks and
169 challenges of any person who's a part of the leadership team.

170 **LE:** Great, so you already mentioned that multiculturalism and diversity are the crucial
171 factors when you are working distributed, that you have to be aware of. How do you
172 think the culture shapes the leader-follower-relationship? Do you think there is like a
173 special way of treating different groups of people and...? You know what I mean?

174 **XY:** I think if you get back to the four directions of leadership that I talked about earlier -
175 it's all about walking your talk, so you can be a role model if you lead within, you can
176 be a role model if you lead forward, so if you have strategic vision, if you have
177 operational excellence which we call lead through. And then, if you really tap into the
178 power of cross functional and collaborative work, which is leading across. And those
179 four elements are basically glue, that keep all of our leaders but also all of the
180 individual contributors committed.

181 **LE:** Yeah.

182 **XY:** Yeah. And I think one of the most important success factors in our organization is that
183 we really foster a feedback culture. If something works, you talk about it and you give
184 kudos and if something doesn't work you have a crucial conversation and you try to be
185 respectful but also have a conversation where you can actually foster some change. So
186 that keeps us on our toes and aware and we have a poster in the office that says:
187 "Always keep shipping" and that's also to do with the communication that we have.

188 **LE:** Do we have time for one more question, one last one?

189 **XY:** One final question.

190 **LE:** Great, so if you were to attend a leadership workshop for globally distributed teams
191 what would be the topics that you would expect it to address and what would you like
192 to learn about?

193 **XY:** I think distributed teams have challenges, as I said, and it would be really cool to talk
194 about the culture that keeps us together as a distributed team and how as a leadership
195 team can we help to keep that culture alive. And at our company it's all about showing
196 care, courage, inclusion and growth and you could easily structure a workshop to work
197 into those buckets.

198 **LE:** Great and then that's it from my side. Thank you very much for your time.

199 **XY:** Thank you, Lisa.

200 **LE:** I really appreciate you contributing.

Appendix 7:

Transcript Interview – Anna Danes

Transcript of the Interview with Anna Danes, Founder of Ricaris (Multilingual Services), Remote Teams Expert

Conducted on Friday, March 13, 2020, 05:00 PM

Interviewer: Lisa Engel (LE)

Interviewee: Anna Danes (AD)

- 1 **AD:** I have not been able to read or to prepare. It's been really crazy because you know
2 with the coronavirus going on, companies are asking us for tools, advice, how to, how
3 to, how to, so we are like "wuaaaah".
- 4 **LE:** Yeah. I was thinking about that. It's a crazy time to write a thesis about that topic right
5 now.
- 6 **AD:** Especially because a lot of things are going to change, I think in two months.
- 7 **LE:** Yeah.
- 8 **AD:** Like the way we perceive remote work is going to change and yeah.
- 9 **LE:** It's crazy. Don't worry, we can just go through it without preparation. I think it's an
10 easy one for you.
- 11 **AD:** Perfect, I am here with you, you have my full attention.
- 12 **LE:** So, that is perfect, let me check something. Okay, so just letting you know that I am
13 audio recording - I don't know if I mentioned that before?
- 14 **AD:** That's good. That's no problem.
- 15 **LE:** So, then let's just start. Maybe we start with you introducing yourself - who are you,
16 what are you doing, what company are you working for, what are you doing there,
17 touching points with my topic, stuff like that.
- 18 **AD:** Is it more... what's more interesting for you: that I talk from the perspective of
19 multilingual outsourcing company that's *Ricaris* or that I talk to you from the *Managing*
20 *Virtual Teams* as a consultancy company for companies that work with remote teams?
21 Which perspective is more interesting? From *Ricaris'* experience we created *Managing*
22 *Virtual Teams* so I can speak from both sides.

23 **LE:** Yeah, I think for you or for me with you it is more important to talk about leadership
24 of globally distributed teams, so about your training parts. But also, if you want to add
25 something else, just feel free to do so. Any information is highly appreciated.

26 **AD:** Perfect, okay let's go then. So, I will start from one angle to the other. We created ten
27 years ago a multilingual outsourcing company that was completely distributed. It was
28 a moment in time when the technology was there to make it happen, so we created a
29 hundred percent resulting. From that experience and based on all the tips and tricks
30 and all the strategies we have tried and what worked we later on created *Managing*
31 *Virtual Teams*. Also, now we are a consulting company which is a spin-off and we offer
32 courses and consultancy and team activities for other teams worldwide so that would
33 be a summary.

34 **LE:** Okay, great and can you maybe give me an insight on which markets you're operating
35 geographically?

36 **AD:** Geographically it's mainly US, Latin America and Europe. Some of these teams have
37 people in Asia but it's not that common. Unfortunately, we don't have any clients or
38 team members in Australia. North Africa, yes, certainly a lot of our clients have teams
39 in North Africa, the rest of Africa not so much and South Africa yes, so only the north
40 and the south. And yes, was that all you asked? The geographical question?

41 **LE:** Yeah. Okay, so the next question set is more about the structure of your trainings. So,
42 first question would be: What do you think are the main reasons for establishing
43 distributed or virtual teams, besides coronavirus obviously?

44 **AD:** Yes, so based on the experience we have from our clients they go for... are we talking
45 about a hundred percent virtual teams?

46 **LE:** Not a hundred percent, but just being distributed, being remote and different
47 locations, just generally.

48 **AD:** So, we have different kinds of clients. We have the clients who will allow for flexible
49 time and even though they might have offices they also use our services because it's
50 important for them to know what they need to provide to their workers and team
51 members and they... a lot of times they also have questions like "How do I know they
52 are working?", "Should I move to objectives instead of time?", "What happens when
53 I have a lot of work and my team is remote?". So, there is those claims and then there's
54 the other ones that... Let's say there is two other kinds. So, first kind is "I have an office
55 and I let people work remotely", second kind is "I have an office and part of my team
56 is always remote". So, they have particular problems, mainly the people who work in
57 the headquarters they have a very strong sense of team and they know each other
58 very well. The other ones, they feel like satellites and they feel really alone and
59 disconnected, so their problems are of a particular nature and then we have another
60 kind of clients which are completely remote and where communication is a mess and
61 they were not as good as they thought they would be. So, they come and say "Help us
62 put everything in order", so that would be the other kind.

63 **LE:** Okay.

64 **AD:** And the reason for that one... generally it's because they need talent from all over the
65 world or because the people that started it we're very aware that there was a
66 possibility of a business and they're very connected with the reason and the why and
67 maybe they're digital nomads or they like that philosophy and that's the reason why
68 they have these virtual teams.

69 **LE:** Okay, great. Generally, how do you structure your training? So, is that... Case to case
70 is that individually or do you use templates that you build upon? How do you do that?

71 **AD:** Okay. All of our trainings are what you can call experiential trainings. We do not believe
72 in sitting in front of somebody and telling them what to do, because... Well we tried
73 that, and it didn't work. So, we transport all our trainings to... very early still ... very
74 experimental trainings and they can be one-to-one and also, we have them in teams.
75 So, when we have like a group of people that work together and we want to work on
76 a particular issue then we have those. So, that's like the training part. They can be one-
77 to-one, or they can be in groups. What we don't do is, we don't bring together people
78 from different companies into the same topic. It would be super interesting to hear
79 the results of that, but this is just not how we have them structured.

80 **LE:** Okay, great. Did you just mute? Yeah, that's fine. Generally, when you have those
81 trainings how is the scope of them? Is that like daily trainings, do you say this training
82 is about two hours? You talked a bit about group size already, but are they mostly
83 remote training or do you do face-to-face trainings as well?

84 **AD:** Well, we do both and when it's face-to-face they are a little bit longer, because
85 companies like to say: "okay, this afternoon, or every Friday afternoon, we're going to
86 work on this and close the office and only do that training". There you can do more
87 physical things, so the training can be a little bit longer. Most of the trainings that we
88 do are virtual and the longest one we have I believe it's six hours and that's in three
89 days. So, we don't have trainings that are longer than. Two or three hours is the
90 maximum and by splitting them, what we achieve is that people have time to
91 understand what they have learned, they have time to do some homework and they
92 even have time to practice some things until the next session. So, I would say we have...
93 I think we have some trainings that are three hours long but then there's a long break
94 in the middle. Otherwise we always like to split them, there can be like a week in
95 between so people have time to experience things.

96 **LE:** Okay, so if you were to give a training for like the leadership or one leader of a globally
97 distributed team - what could a potential training look like? Like content wise. Is there
98 some things that you wouldn't necessarily put into that training?

99 **AD:** Leadership... other words, if I don't know the particularities of that... I would need to
100 know a little bit more about what that person is lacking, what that person is looking
101 for and then I would provide that. We don't offer anything that sounds like leadership

102 of a remote team. Probably I would put very, very soft contents in there related to
103 emotional intelligence, related to maybe some basic tools, basic communication,
104 understanding that the virtual way of working is not similar. So, it will be really on the
105 surface until I know what that person really needs.

106 **LE:** Okay, maybe just go into the more detailed part of the trainings. So, the next topic
107 would be leadership in general, talking about this: How would you define leadership,
108 like what is leadership for you?

109 **AD:** Leadership to me is understanding who is in your team, what they want to achieve and
110 helping them achieve that.

111 **LE:** And what do you think is like the biggest difference between leadership and
112 management?

113 **AD:** For me, leadership is a little bit more inspiring while management sounds more like...
114 oh man, I wish I had prepared this. I would say management is more task related while
115 leadership is more emotional.

116 **LE:** Yeah. In your opinion, what do you think a good leader needs to have in general
117 attributes, what is important for a leader?

118 **AD:** To be able to listen, have a clear vision, good communication skills, empathy.
119 Yeah, these four.

120 **LE:** And do you think those attributes change when you go into a remote or distributed
121 set up?

122 **AD:** They get amplified by ten. So, if you think you normally need to listen, if you're remote
123 you need to listen times ten. If you think you need good communication skills, you
124 need ten times better communication skills. Everything gets amplified, yeah.

125 **LE:** Okay and what would you say... I don't know if you know that, but what would be
126 essential topics in the leadership training? It's probably related to the attributes that
127 you just mentioned.

128 **AD:** So, yeah understanding who your team is. Listening, yeah, I think that I just said
129 everything.

130 **LE:** Okay, so next question set. What do you think are the three most beneficial factors to
131 ensure productive teamwork in a distributed set up?

132 **AD:** Can you say that again?

133 **LE:** Yes. What do you think are the three most beneficial factors to ensure productive
134 teamwork in a distributed set up?

135 **AD:** So, communication, motivation and clearer tasks or clear goals let's say.

136 **LE:** Okay and on the other hand, what do you think are the three most challenging factors?

137 **AD:** Communications, clear goals... what happens is, I think, that people get unmotivated
138 very easily. They get bored because their goals are not easy, and they get somehow
139 depressed or lost because of this bad communication. Yeah.

140 **LE:** So, it's basically the same just the controversy. What do you say, how is it possible to
141 ensure a goal alignment across the team in a distributed set up?

142 **AD:** If the team chooses the goal together there is some alignment. If it comes from above
143 strictly to the detail, there will hardly ever be an alignment or the manager or the
144 leader is going to suffer a lot trying to motivate people, yeah.

145 **LE:** Okay and what do you think is the best way to keep track on targets and responsibilities
146 working distributed?

147 **AD:** I like some techniques that come from agile, for example I like the daily stand ups. I
148 think that we have wonderful tools to keep track of tasks and I like the minimum
149 number of meetings. I would not put the heart of all these issues in the meetings, I
150 think that daily stand ups of 10 minutes should be enough and then rely on the tools
151 for the rest.

152 **LE:** Okay and in your trainings do you recommend and teach the usage of specific
153 collaboration tools for example and why?

154 **AD:** Why - because our clients want that. And I think it's useful and they tell us about their
155 specific needs and based on that we choose two things and if they choose one, then
156 we train them on specific tools and on how to use them. So, it's almost as important
157 as anything else. That everybody in the team is very familiar how to use the tools
158 otherwise it's not going to be useful even if it's superficial.

159 **LE:** Yeah, and is there like specific tools that you have a really good experience with or that
160 you recommend everyone, like the classic ones?

161 **AD:** There's many that are good like the classic of the classics – Slack. It can be very good if
162 it's used correctly, it can be really bad for the team if some things are not clear. So, it's
163 good to know how to use them, yeah. But there is many that we recommend,
164 depending exactly on what the client needs.

165 **LE:** Okay, what do you tell the people you train on how to cope with time differences
166 especially when they have deadlines, when there's local public holidays, different
167 office hours. What is your recommendation on that?

168 **AD:** Don't do it – that's my recommendation. My first recommendation is don't do it
169 because if you can choose a team member in the same time zone don't choose one on

170 the other side of the world, it's really easy. Sometimes it's not possible because so we
171 were talking about like large companies and there's people in other places. I don't have
172 a magic solution. I do think that there should not be meetings that happen in hours
173 that are not office hours, that is very hard on people. So, to avoid that as much as
174 possible, that's one thing that they can do. In terms of replying times, we can try to be
175 flexible and play a little bit with it. You know, have pretty clear expectations about how
176 things are going to work. And the more you use software to communicate and to
177 work... and drop email as much as possible. If you're using software to keep track of
178 how far you got, and that people can see and access the work you did and maybe pick
179 it up from there. That makes things much easier rather than the classic email or
180 another communication channel. So, sharing full information with the others, the peer
181 that's on the other side of the world. It can even be beneficial, like we work with
182 translations on the other company and we have this around the sun type of service
183 and it's super beneficial because it's very clear where the person stopped and where
184 the next one is going to start. It's really almost seamless. So, it can be beneficial having
185 teams in different time zones.

186 **LE:** Okay great. So, the next question sector is team building. What would you say how
187 does one create a feeling of one team when you're not really working together in one
188 office, like when you're not face to face?

189 **AD:** Trust. If you build trust, if you do things so people can first get to know each other. We
190 don't trust the people we don't know. So, first is that they get to know each other and
191 that you can then establish dynamics, real dynamics during the work and then all the
192 activities to build the trust. Then you're good.

193 **LE:** And how would you say that can be achieved if you're not working together face to
194 face at all, like in a remote set up, how do you establish trust? Are there any tips that
195 you can share?

196 **AD:** Time. You need to spend time with the other people. Time talking to them, time doing
197 activities, time learning what they did before, time knowing what they are about, what
198 their wishes are...

199 **LE:** Okay and in your opinion how does exclusive virtual communication, so not seeing
200 each other face-to-face, only communicating via email, Skype, Zoom or whatever,
201 influence team performance?

202 **AD:** Makes things harder because you need to put more effort into everything you do
203 around it. It's just harder, yeah, so the performance is the lower because you are
204 putting your attention not only on the work that you're doing, but in many other
205 things. So, it's harder, yeah, but it's beautiful too.

206 **LE:** And do you have special advice regarding conflict management in a distributed team?

207 **AD:** I think the team structure is very important when we talk about conflict management.
208 If the team has a person who is able to see and to connect with those people beyond

209 the egos and has the responsibilities, no has the... everybody respects the person as a
210 reference, then it's easier. So, we would need to have this role almost, I don't know if
211 that would be like a team manager, not human resources because human resources
212 think also about money but a role that people agree on. And the person has a
213 sensitivity to do that, to do that conflict management. Probably, because it's harder.
214 Everything is harder and so is conflict management.

215 **LE:** Okay, great. Next hard part - intercultural training. What are your experiences in
216 training diverse and multicultural teams?

217 **AD:** They're really beautiful and very hard. It's the experience is really, really positive
218 because there's an exchange of people. Generally, people tend to be very curious
219 about other cultures. When it comes to work, that's when we get into the tricky parts
220 and the hardest part is to be aware of your own biases, if you want, your own ways of
221 doing things that are so much inside of the way that you function that you don't even
222 realize them. Making people aware of those - it's a lot of fun because it's like "Whaaat
223 – I do that?". The way people react to being aware of their own culture. It's like putting
224 a mirror in front of them and it's the first time that they see themselves like that.
225 Opposite to other ways of doing things, it's a really nice training.

226 **LE:** How do you approach those things, how do you... in a training, how do you include
227 that?

228 **AD:** The first thing, as I said, is to be aware - that's number one. And then to know what
229 others are doing and to project yourself into action and then to say "Do I want to keep
230 doing this?", "I learned something from another culture", "What is the culture of the
231 company I'm working on?", "Can I get that?". There is a lot of work.

232 **LE:** Okay, you also already mentioned a bit for the next question: Do you generally
233 recommend to follow global norms or values or and do you feel like local norms are
234 more useful depending on where the company is located and how do you decide which
235 is best?

236 **AD:** I think, in this case companies need to be very honest with themselves. It's not what
237 they want to be, like I said, "Oh, I'm going to be a global company". No, just look at
238 yourself because... just be honest. If you are from Germany, you're from Germany,
239 right?

240 **LE:** Yeah, yes.

241 **AD:** You're from Germany and it's inside of you. Just... it's going to be part of your culture.
242 I'm talking about business owners, so it's going to be part of your culture. You just go
243 with the German rules and try to make them soft if you want, but just be honest with
244 each other.

245 **LE:** Okay. One last question for intercultural training: In your opinion, how does culture
246 shape the leader-follower relationships? Like you said, maybe it's a German company,

247 but they work distributed over multiple countries, headquarter is in Berlin. How do
248 you think the different cultures shape the leader-follower relationship?

249 **AD:** I think it tends to be one direction always and it's very, very hard for team members
250 to change or to be understood. If leadership and company culture come from one
251 place, team members are going to have a very hard time... not adapting but feeling
252 fully comfortable because it's always one direction. I haven't seen many companies or
253 any company where there's another direction that team members can influence the
254 company. I mean, there is values and all these exercises we do, how do we envision
255 the company and all these things. In theory and in practice but even little things like
256 being late for a meeting, two minutes, or other nuances, there's no movement from
257 the culture of the multicultural teams to the company culture. It doesn't flow that way.

258 **LE:** Okay and there's two final questions. We were really quick. From your experience what
259 is the most important factor when training a leader for a global role? May that be
260 distributed or not, what would you say is like the most important factor?

261 **AD:** That they have interests in the topic.

262 **LE:** That's a good one.

263 **AD:** We had many trainings where or when the person was sitting there because somebody
264 told them to go and there's no use in that.

265 **LE:** Okay and then the final question. Is there anything regarding this topic that you would
266 like to share, like a memorable experience that you had or something that is really
267 important when developing a training for distributed teams that I have to keep in
268 mind, some wisdom that you have and I don't?

269 **AD:** For me, the biggest challenge is when the company culture doesn't embrace what it
270 means to be remote. So, when a company already is remote or there's people are very
271 aware of it and the company culture is open to that - great things are going to happen
272 and all the trainings are going to be very productive. You know, there's always going
273 to be information that gets into action. But when the team, even if they're already
274 remote, feels like they need help from the outside and you bring that help and that
275 help gets demolished from above because they're not open to certain changes or are
276 using certain tools, growing difference and changing the way things are done face-to-
277 face. The management doesn't understand that things need to be done in a different
278 way because now we are remote that, then there is no use. So, I would say that the
279 change needs to happen from above. It can be produced by the team but above needs
280 to listen to that.

281 **LE:** So, since I'm doing a leadership training for remote teams, you'd say that adapting the
282 whole thinking of the company or rethinking the whole company structure is definitely
283 a point that should be addressed in such a training?

284 **AD:** Yes.

285 **LE:** Great, that is a really good hint. I haven't gotten that far back, so I didn't think it that
286 far back yet, which is a really good idea. Thank you very much for that.

287 **AD:** Yeah.

288 **LE:** And that's about it for now. Thank you.

289 **AD:** Those were really hard questions. [laughs]

290 **LE:** I'm trying to get the best out of the people I'm talking to. [laughs]

291 **AD:** That's wonderful. How many interviews do you have now?

292 **LE:** I have four already with team members or leaders of remote teams and now I have
293 yours and then I'm going to have one with Lisette next week.

294 **AD:** She's wonderful, you're going to love her. She's got so much energy, she is wonderful.

295 **LE:** Thank you for introducing me to her, it's been great. I'm reading her book at the
296 moment, which is also really, really, really helpful. And then hopefully I'll have one or
297 two more with remote workers or leaders but it's a bit hard at the moment due to
298 corona. To be honest people have different things on their schedule right now and also
299 my company is crazy about it. So, we'll see.

300 **AD:** It's going to work out. I'm certain. Good luck!

301 **LE:** Thanks again for taking the time. I really appreciate it.

302 **AD:** You're very welcome, Lisa. Talk to you soon.

303 **LE:** Take care. Bye.

Appendix 8:

Transcript Interview – Lissette Sutherland

Transcript of the Interview with Lissette Sutherland, Author of the book “Work together anywhere” and founder of the company *Collaboration Superpower*

Conducted on Thursday, March 19, 2020, 11:00 am

Interviewer: Lisa Engel (LE)

Interviewee: Lissette Sutherland (LS)

- 1 **LS:** Do you want me to record this for you?
- 2 **LE:** Yeah, if you want to that would be perfect.
- 3 **LS:** Yeah, I can record it and I think then I can just send it...
- 4 **LE:** On Zoom you get an email once it's done and then you can send it to me. That'd be
5 perfect.
- 6 **LS:** Okay great, that way you don't have to take super notes or...
- 7 **LE:** Yeah, thank you. So, then let's just dig right in. Let's just start by some general
8 questions maybe you introduce yourself, what are you doing and explain why you're a
9 perfect expert for it the topic of leading a remote team our distributed team.
- 10 **LS:** So, I don't know if I'm the perfect person for it. Let's see so. I'm not... I like to tell
11 [restarts sentence] What I say to people is I'm not exactly... like I'm not like the best
12 remote worker in the whole world or anything like that I would like the best remote
13 leader anything but I've collected a lot of the tips, so I have a huge collection of tips
14 that I could tell people but I'm not exactly myself I mean I'm far from perfect when I
15 worked on my remote team it was super hard for me as well so. So, the company
16 *Collaboration Superpowers* was founded to help people work together better remotely
17 of course and we do that through workshops and the podcast. So, we've got a podcast
18 where we interview remote working experts and just see what's working for them and
19 then all of those tips from the podcast got put into a workshop and that workshop is
20 online and it helps people of course because... I do do it in person, but it doesn't make
21 sense because you're trying to work online so, but a lot of people don't trust that the
22 workshop is interactive and engaging. They think it's going to be a webinar and so then
23 I say okay we'll do half day in person, then online. But these workshops just help people
24 and get a whole bunch of tips for how to work remotely. I'll just show you really quickly
25 - after the workshop people come out and they have this super action plan of ideas. I
26 was like what they're going to try and their team because what I found is there's no
27 one right way sadly. Otherwise I would have a silver bullet formula to sell and I would
28 make a million dollars but there's no one right way - what works for one team doesn't

29 work for the others so really it's a series of like "How do you take small things and
30 massage them in place to become high performing?"

31 **LE:** Okay great, so I kind of distributed the questions into boxes so to say or topics. The
32 first topic would be guidelines, goals and feedback - so first question is how would you
33 say is it possible to ensure a goal alignment across a distributed team?

34 **LS:** Yeah, it's always going to be difficult just like it's difficult in person. The way that I do
35 it or the way that I recommend teams do it is by creating a team agreement where you
36 outline what are the expectations and how are you going to work together. So, that
37 would include things like what are the expected response times, what tools are we
38 going to use, do we have core hours that we need to be talking to each other, where's
39 the information we need to share? You know, there is security protocols we need to
40 work about. So, you would just create an agreement together but also as part of that
41 agreement you can also decide like what are your weekly goals. So, you start out you
42 know and everybody... you know so you just have to... You just it's like – just, like it's
43 that simple – you create like a set of expectations for your work together and then you
44 need to define what are the results that we're looking for? And then what does success
45 look like and what does failure look like so that everybody has a really clear picture of
46 what success is going to mean so it sounds really simple but it's... that's the devil's in
47 the details of course but that's how I would do it, make two team agreements.

48 **LE:** Okay and what do you think are the three most beneficial factors that ensure
49 productive teamwork? In a distributed set up of course.

50 **LS:** Yeah, so the first one would be you want to make communicating with each other
51 easy. So, you want to have the right tools in place and to make sure that everybody
52 knows how to use them, and I always say it has to be like Star Trek, you know? You put
53 that communicator in your chest and it's like "bridge to Lisette, report" and that's what
54 you want to have, that... you want to make communicating easy. So, three factors
55 contributing to success that's what you're asking for? So... making communicating easy
56 one, the other to creating a team agreement for alignment because that's where all
57 the misunderstandings come into place and then the other one is how do you create
58 presence online? So presence is... you know like when we come to the office were
59 together but online how do you do it because most people don't turn their videos on
60 and all these things so there's a number of different ways of creating presence (1)
61 turning your cameras on, that's the obvious one (2) on the other, there's so many tools
62 there's virtual offices, virtual reality, you know. Even just the active working out loud
63 of making your work observable to others as a way of creating presence in the office.
64 Some people use their slack channels to say good morning and good night. Like that's
65 another way of creating presence but somehow... so that you feel people are around
66 you. I think the last ingredient - I mean its kind of a fourth because the team agreement
67 I used it to answer this – but the last ingredient I would say it's fun. You have to add to
68 some fun into the mix otherwise... I mean not every job is going to be fun and not every
69 task is appropriate for something fun, but in terms of its team... when the team likes
70 each other and they're having a good time that's where the magic happens you know
71 because like the skills yeah, yeah we've got the skills, you hired them for the desired

72 skills but when you really like each other that's where the fun, that's where stuff
73 happens.

74 **LE:** That's true and on the other hand what do you think of the three most challenging
75 factors?

76 **LS:** So, one communication. One, two and three are communication, communication and
77 communication just because we have so many different styles that get in the way but
78 also... so communication, people figuring out how to communicate with each other
79 and the lining on how to do that but then the other one I would say is... I had it in my
80 head, now I've lost it. [Thinking] We were talking about challenges and that's how you
81 know you're not getting enough sleep as one might need. It's just like puh... So, let's
82 see, I was going to say communication was a challenge. I mean there's so many of
83 course. There is conflict, when conflicts come up that super challenging and I just had
84 a really good one. Maybe I'll come back to... oh yeah, it's people that don't know how
85 to facilitate online. So, yeah that (1) infrastructure that... which gets in the way of
86 communication but also facilitation we are taking what we do in person and trying to
87 do the same thing online and it doesn't work. You can't facilitate an online meeting
88 like you do an in-person meeting, they're different. So, you have to have a different
89 set of facilitation skills. I think just the lack of awareness that that's important. How
90 are we doing as a team, how are we doing amongst colleagues, what's the manager-
91 colleague... you know employee relationship? I mean feedback loops are critical, they
92 are critical in an in-person team, but you can be a little sloppier with in-person working
93 then you can remote. At that remote team I recommend all kinds of feedback, there's
94 retrospectives, those are the... that's the most common one, there's 1-on-1 feedback,
95 there's 360-degree team feedback amongst the team, there's all the... I always say to
96 people it doesn't matter what kind of feedback you use but put feedback loops in
97 place. Your team's going to need it. There's going to be the need to blow steam or to
98 celebrate good things so yeah... super huge.

99 **LE:** Right. So, let's jump to the next category because we're a bit short time.

100 **LS:** I'm sorry.

101 **LE:** That's alright, no problem at all. I had the same thing with Anna the last week because
102 she's super busy as well.

103 **LS:** Either, yeah. It's like back to back today. I was like what was I thinking I just kind of let
104 everybody fill out this account.

105 **LE:** Next category is communication and collaboration tools. So, do you recommend or
106 train the usage of specific collaboration tools? And if so, which ones and why?

107 **LS:** I don't train any specific ones. I have one that I recommend people not use and that's
108 *Skype for Business* which is being phased out by next year but that's the worst on the
109 market and *Microsoft Teams* - I'm not impressed. So, there's some people that like it
110 but I'd say the majority don't think it's very good, so in terms of tools it doesn't really

111 matter what tool you use as long as the team is using the tool that everybody agrees
112 to use it. There's really no one right tool. There are tools that are better than others of
113 course but here's the thing: on the team if half the people won't use the tool it's not
114 the right tool. We got to find something that everybody agrees to use and so the only
115 ones that I really hate are *Skype for Business* and *Microsoft Teams*. That's the only
116 ones, the rest you can do almost anything with. That one is just too horrible to
117 mention.

118 **LE:** And how do you recommend coping with time differences, especially in terms of
119 deadlines, when there's local public holidays, office hours and so on?

120 **LS:** Yeah, I mean you got to minimize the time zone differences as much as possible
121 because it's just hell. I mean it, you know if you're working with... I did workshops for
122 an Australia team or a New Zealand team for all of February and it was just a
123 nightmare. We're either doing workshops at eight in the morning or eight in the
124 evening. Like they're just terror, who wants to do a workshop at 8 AM on Monday
125 morning like it's just the worst time for learning, you know. Nobody wants to do it from
126 8 to 10 PM at night either. So, the tip is (1) if you have to work with time zones that
127 are really far away you've got to be very focused on how you organize your team. So,
128 like who does what tasks and I would say the further away the time zones, the more
129 separate you want the team so that they don't have to overlap with each other
130 necessarily. And if you organize it, you can... you know you can organize from east to
131 west you can do the follow the sun, so that as one thing gets completed the other thing
132 gets taken over and so you have sort of a twenty four hour cycle. Those are really hard
133 to do. Yeah, time zones are just always going to be hard, but I think share the pain -
134 one somebody shouldn't always be getting up early or staying up late, organize your
135 teams as well as you can and take advantage of the overlap time. Time zones are
136 always hard.

137 **LE:** Yeah, [uhm] next question is how can a leader carry out effective conflict management
138 when distributed? You mentioned it before, but like what are your hints and tips on
139 this one?

140 **LS:** Oh man, one is as a leader you've got to make space for conflict to hash itself out
141 because it's going to come up and it's like... you know, there's going to be some people
142 that are super passive aggressive. I would say like a lot of 1-on-1's, like with a focus on
143 fairness and in some cases on some teams what I've noticed is they need a facilitator
144 to facilitate the conversation and maybe it's not the leader but it could be the leader's
145 job to go and get a facilitator to help people work something out. I like that option a
146 lot because sometimes the leader is biased, or we've all had a manager that didn't like
147 us and so we're already at a disadvantage in terms of the of the conversation so I would
148 just... The leader is there, in my opinion, to keep the team aligned and to remove all
149 the roadblocks so that the team can do its thing. So, if conflict starts becoming a
150 roadblock then the leader needs to step in and figure out how to resolve that conflict
151 as best as possible. Whether it's organizing a time for those people to sit together or
152 getting a facilitator or something, but the leader needs to be there. Yeah, taking away
153 all the roadblocks.

- 154 **LE:** Okay so that leads us especially... that leads us directly to the next category which is
155 team building and intercultural awareness. How do you think does one create a feeling
156 of one team when working distributed I'm not seeing each other face to face?
- 157 **LS:** [Uhm] Video. Video is important, it is number one. So, turning the videos on so you
158 can actually see each other, it humanizes people more. So, there's lots of teams that
159 work in different countries and the problem with not seeing each other is not just the
160 sight but also we tend to read lips and a lot of people don't know that we're reading
161 lips but we're reading lips and so when the language being spoken is not the common
162 language of the group, then it's difficult for you know... If everybody is speaking Dutch,
163 then it's harder for me to understand and if I can't see the lips it's extra hard for me to
164 understand. So, take video is number one and then you have to be deliberate about
165 the team building, you have to schedule it, because unless you're in virtual reality or
166 some sort of virtual office you're never going to accidentally bump into people online.
167 So, schedule your time together - so virtual coffees, virtual hang outs like just like
168 lunches, quiz nights, all of those things can be done remotely but somebody has to
169 schedule it or they won't happen.
- 170 **LE:** That's right. How do you think does exclusive virtual communication influence the
171 team performance?
- 172 **LS:** What do you mean by exclusive?
- 173 **LE:** So, if you're globally distributed and it's likely that you only see each other maybe like
174 in person once a year or not even. If your main source of communication is virtual
175 online, videos, calls, emails - how do you say would that influence the team
176 performance?
- 177 **LS:** Different people have different levels of humanness that they need, for some people
178 the virtual is plenty. I don't know... you know, it takes... I would say this, it will take
179 longer for people to get to know each other and for people to become really solidly
180 friends than it would if you're just hanging out over a pile of nachos one night. It's not
181 like people just become friends instantly like when you're hanging out, you know, you
182 just get that connection. I would say online it takes a little bit longer to form that
183 connection, but it is still possible to form that connection so the fact that something's
184 online I think it might take longer for a team to gel but doesn't have to. That's
185 depending on the team. It just takes a little bit longer and needs more attention, just
186 needs more attention. You can't be sloppy online, that's the problem.
- 187 **LE:** That's true. What would you say how should you deal with the emergence of
188 stereotypes, unconscious bias, things like that in the team?
- 189 **LS:** Yeah, I'm not an expert in this at all. You know, one of the things I've always said about
190 remote is that it increases diversity on a team and diversity is a superpower. We want
191 more diverse teams, you want old and young, male and female, cat people versus dog
192 people, no you want like a variety of different opinions on the team. Because we

193 normally can't see each other it's said that remote takes away biases, but video is so
194 prevalent that I don't think that that matters. I don't know how do people do that on
195 a an in-person team? How do people deal with that in person? I would say first get rid
196 of all the racists, like number one get them off your team because they're not going to
197 be useful really. I don't know, in one way I would just say... because culturally were so
198 different like e.g. looking somebody in the eye in one culture. Like in the US looking
199 somebody in the eye is a sign of confidence and strength, in another culture it would
200 be rude. You know... and I know in the Netherlands people are just awfully blunt, like
201 brutally blunt and for Americans or people from the U. K. it's considered rude but here
202 it's not considered rude. So, it's almost a matter of getting used to each other and
203 forming the norms of respect. You know, we don't know what we don't know about
204 other cultures so sometimes I think it's hard but I think what we need to do is make
205 less assumptions and ask more questions. Like bring out your curious - why are you
206 doing it this way like I don't understand. You know. Yesterday you said yes or you
207 nodded your head yes but you meant no so, you know, you can just ask questions. It's
208 super hard. How do you get rid of it in person? Yeah, by forming a norm of respect in
209 your team agreements. I don't... yeah. That's a really hard and I don't really know the
210 answer to that.

211 **LE:** That's okay.

212 **LS:** How do we do it in the world? You know, like how can we get people to be less racist
213 and respect each other? I don't know.

214 **LE:** Work in progress, definitely.

215 **LS:** Work in progress yeah, for sure, for sure. And hopefully with the younger generation
216 we're seeing it now, we got to get the old dinosaurs out. And that the younger
217 generation... I think has more hope.

218 **LE:** Okay and, coming from that actually, what is your opinion on... [rephrases] Do you
219 think it is helpful to set up character profiles for kicking off a remote team? So, saying
220 "I want you to communicate with me like this" or "I can't deal with that" or you know...
221 and then kind of introducing one selves character to the other team members before?

222 **LS:** Love it. In fact, I even have it right here, it's in my workshop materials. I show people
223 this as an example. I will show it to you, sorry for all the papers rustling... [background
224 noise] It's funny that you ask because I just ran into a woman – oh, here it is – who
225 sees all these clients, and this is her character profile. So she basically has on there like
226 her bio, some of her goals, her language skills and her proficiency, the time zone she
227 works in and the tools she likes to use, you know stuff like if you're going to work with
228 this woman, this is what you need to know about her. So, she gives this to all of her
229 clients so I can imagine... and there's also in management trio... oh there's a practice
230 called - management trio is a company about modern leadership practices, so that's
231 maybe something for you also - but they have an exercise called personal maps and
232 basically make little mind maps of yourself and then, you know, with your hobbies and
233 goals and values and friends and bla, and you hold it up and then people ask you

234 questions about your mind map. So, you don't just like give a presentation about
235 yourself, but people ask you what's on and then it becomes more two way. Yeah, I'm
236 a huge proponent of it. I think it's an awesome team building exercise, you can do it in
237 a variety of different forms I would just say like... yeah do it. It's part of the team
238 agreement right, it's like "working with me means a little bit of chaos, I'm over
239 enthusiastic". You know, these are the things you need to know about working with
240 me and the things. Yeah, I'm all for it.

241 **LE:** Great, so we already reached final questions. That was a quick round.

242 **LS:** We're like speeding up like talking super-fast.

243 **LE:** Yeah, that's perfect. From your experience, what would you say is the most important
244 factor when training someone for a global leadership role? Distributed or not, so when
245 someone takes on this global role what is important?

246 **LS:** I would say get out of the way of your team. Like, you've hired professionals, they know
247 what they're doing, like, you've got to make sure the team agreement is in place, make
248 sure that everybody knows which direction they're heading in and then let them go. I
249 would really... I think that the role of leadership is to take the road blocks out of the
250 way so that your team of professionals can rock it. You know, in the remote space
251 leaders can't micromanage anymore. You can't stand over somebody and be like
252 "Hey". That whole idea of working eight hours a day like what if somebody gets
253 something done in two hours? Like, shouldn't that be rewarded instead of being like
254 "well you have six more hours in the day"? I mean, I think well you know, what if they
255 just have like a super release and then they've got to go rest for six hours like that's
256 also okay. So, I would say it's the leader - like stop thinking about how much time things
257 take, instead think of results and deadlines. Then set your team up for success and get
258 out of the way so that they can achieve it. So because most [rephrasing] a lot of
259 managers are in the way and they don't trust their remote employees. And then the
260 other thing yeah there so much for leadership... But I would say that's a big thing but...
261 So many leaders are afraid that people are going to be lazy and the opposite is true.
262 It's that burnout is a far bigger issue than laziness and I think that's something that
263 managers need to look at because now we're hyper connected and the only thing
264 keeping us from turning off our notifications and all the stuff at the end of the day is
265 ourselves and I always say it's analogous to weight loss like we all know what the
266 formula is but for anybody that has ever tried losing weight you know that eating less
267 and moving more is way harder than it sounds, right? It's the same with remote work
268 like all these things are like super little things but doing it, turning off your phone at
269 the end of the night, you know, like I'm turning off the notifications of the internet, are
270 so hard for most people. For leaders I would just say having an awareness about like
271 looking for signs of burnout is big.

272 **LE:** Okay, what did you say again... when you're training or when you're having a workshop
273 for distributed teams what are the essential topics that it has to cover?

274 **LS:** Team agreements is the first one. How to host and facilitate great online meetings is
275 the second because that's how we communicate as remote teams and asynchronous
276 of course. Third is how to do team building and fun online and my fourth session this
277 feedback and appreciation - how do we do so? All the buckets that you basically have
278 are the ones that are covered so that those are the four sections of the workshop that
279 I teach and I still think that those... and also in the book those are like the four main
280 chapters that are in the book because I think those are the key ingredients, everything
281 kind of goes around those ingredients. Yeah, that's what would be my answer and then
282 infuse fun wherever possible it doesn't have to be a drag.

283 **LE:** Yeah.

284 **LS:** So.

285 **LE:** Okay great, last question. Just basically, is there anything that you would like to add,
286 to share, something I forgot or something that is extremely important?

287 **LS:** Well, usually my advice to everybody is start small. Don't have your whole workforce
288 go remote at once, so like do an afternoon or a day week or something like that but in
289 the age of coronavirus where everybody has to go remote overnight like you know...
290 that advice is out the window. On top of that advice I would then just say be really
291 patient and be willing to train people 1-on-1 because so many people, especially
292 leaders, are embarrassed to show how little they know about some of these tools and
293 so they'll hold the rest of the team back because they're too ashamed to admit that
294 they don't know how to use it. So, I would just say like have lots of compassion for
295 people and really help. Like 1-on-1, I learned that actually from NASA - whenever they
296 get a new scientist on the team they assign one support person per scientists so that
297 they really get the help they need to on board because they might be good scientists
298 but they're not good IT people. They don't necessarily know, you know, how all the
299 systems work so I would say the same for organizations. Really train your teams to
300 learn how to use the tools and whatever it is that you need, your process needs for
301 your business.

302 **LE:** Right, thank you. And then we've reached the end.

303 **LS:** Where are you using this? This was for?

304 **LE:** So, this is for my master thesis. I'm studying International business in focusing on
305 intercultural communication. And I'm currently writing my master's thesis, like you
306 know, on the leadership of globally distributed teams. And yeah, so that's my final
307 project.

308 **LS:** It's great that this is happening and hopefully in the virtual team talk group... Did you
309 did you introduce yourself in the slack group?

310 **LE:** Not yet, because I'm still... like I was busy working because I was full time working now
311 at my firm and now, I just reduced to 20 hours again so I can focus on writing master
312 thesis, but it's coming now, so...

313 **LS:** Okay, right, like I said, because there are there are a number of intercultural trainers
314 in that group that I think would be great.

315 **LE:** Yeah.

316 **LS:** For interviewing, so yeah definitely. And I'll help you try to find people. I can think of
317 like five off the top of my head that would be good for you to interview.

318 **LE:** That's great. I currently write on my theoretical part, so it's a lot of books, citing some
319 models and stuff like that, but once I get to my analysis in the next couple weeks I'll
320 probably need lots of input there.

321 **LS:** Yeah, that slack group is the place to get it I'll say.

322 **LE:** I thought so, I've been reading some of the articles shared there and stuff like that and
323 really helpful already so.

324 **LS:** It's a lovely, lovely group of people. I'm so lucky about what that turned into.

325 **LE:** Yeah, also if you're interested, I can send you a copy of the work once it's done, so...

326 **LS:** Oh my god, I would love it.

327 **LE:** I plan on like end of June, the middle of July some like sometime in summer it's going
328 to be done and then, once it's submitted for grading, I can send it to the people I talked
329 to.

330 **LS:** Awesome. Well good luck with that. I mean, after writing my book, I can only imagine
331 what it's like to write a master's thesis it's a nightmare but speaking.

332 **LE:** Like, writing it down is fun but since it has to be academic and you have to cite
333 everything and it's like this annoying proof of where did you get it from and don't make
334 a mistake because then you're going to be done because there's like well you copy
335 pasted it and now you're out. It's just all of the formalities around it is really annoying.

336 **LS:** Yeah but once it's done it'll be awesome. Super nice to meet you stay safe thanks stay
337 healthy stay home yeah and we'll see you online. Bye!

338 **LE:** Yeah, I hope so. Thank you so much. Bye.

Appendix 9:

Transcript Interview – Elizabeth Purbrick

Transcript of the Interview with Elizabeth Purbrick, Senior Operations Manager at YouTube Music (via Vaco)

Conducted on Friday, April 17, 2020, 11:00 AM

Interviewer: Lisa Engel (LE)

Interviewee: Elizabeth Purbrick (EP)

- 1 **LE:** Let's just start with some general questions about you, so I can get an understanding
2 about what you do, in what set up you do it and where you do it.
3 So why don't you just introduce yourself, your job, what is your job and what does the
4 company do you work for, where do you operate - geographically and why are you
5 someone to talk to for a leadership of globally distributed teams?
- 6 **EP:** Okay, so at the moment... so my background is I got a degree at Newcastle University
7 and then I moved down to London and started working in media and it was very much
8 like tape based media and post-production and I just moved all the way through to
9 digital platforms so I've worked as a producer. And it was like digital workload, so I was
10 sending files to Apple, Google and Sony. All the platforms that put-on movie and TV
11 content and then I got a phone call... and I did that for about ten years... post-
12 production, producing, bookings, you know, everything and scheduling went through
13 most jobs. Then I got called to say that there was a role going on the Google Play
14 Movies and TV team, to work on the News and TV App and would I be interested in it?
15 So, I said yeah, and it was a contract position so it was just three months or six months,
16 I can't remember but I said yes and I took that and basically it was growing a team of
17 two and it grew to a team of fourteen. I went from like a content specialist side so
18 coding with the clients which where movie studios aggregated throughout Europe and
19 I kind of then grew to a team lead for a team of about six movie content specialists and
20 then we brought in a team of QA people, so quality control and they would watch the
21 movies and TV programs. So, I just kind of worked my way up from this content
22 specialists to like a movie lead role and then like team lead, as the team got bigger. So,
23 I was doing that in the capacity of... working for a company called VACO who are the
24 vendor for this particular team, for the Google Play Movies Team. So I was like an Ops
25 Manager in the end, or a team lead Ops Manager for them within the Google Play
26 Movies Team. Does that make sense?
- 27 **LE:** Yeah. I think I can follow.
- 28 **EP:** Like because their team got bigger in the end they needed someone who could take
29 on that kind of team lead/management role, the HR, you know that kind of element of
30 it, like an Ops Manager while I was still doing my movie... like you know my background
31 my movie and content specialist role. We were called Movie Partner Managers back

32 then, so we were managing the relationships with the movie studios and TV companies
33 getting movies delivered to the Google Play platform. And then that would be digitally
34 released on the platform, so we've been doing that for the whole of Europe and the
35 Middle East. There were many slight clients like Disney, you want entertainment, you
36 know, just like movie and TV labels as partners all over Europe basically. And then,
37 after about five years of doing that, the YouTube Music Team needed a Operations
38 Manager because they had a team of roughly... around 25 people in the constituted
39 EMEA team and but then my road turns like into a global role when I moved over to
40 YouTube music and it was purely Ops because I'm a music content specialist but it was
41 very leadership, management, HR kind of role for a global team. So about 25 people in
42 London and eight people in New York, four in Los Angeles, one in Nashville, one in
43 Miami, three in Toronto, two in Mexico City, three in Sao Paulo, two in Bogota, one in
44 Buenos Aires, three in Sydney, one in Singapore, three in Seoul, one in Kuala Lumpur,
45 two in Jakarta, one in the Philippines, one in Bangkok, three in Gurgaon which is in
46 India, two in Hong Kong and three in Tokyo. So that's pretty much what the team is
47 now as well and so it is very global but like small pockets of people all around the world
48 but with two kind of major teams one in London and then the other one... like the
49 biggest team is throughout the US and Latin America. And then... okay so people like
50 all over APAC, so Australian Pacific and Southeast Asia. So, my role then changed from
51 my background which was like content and media delivery to very much operational
52 and just like people management basically just wide enough.

53 **LE:** Great.

54 **EP:** I've also written down some notes for you so when I'm rambling... it will make sense
55 of what I'm saying. I've made a doc on some of the key stuff that you sent over so I can
56 send that to you as well it might help with the...

57 **LE:** Yeah perfect, thank you. You said it already or you told me a bit about the basic
58 structure of your company so... Is the whole company organized in this kind of
59 distributed way or is this just your team?

60 **EP:** The company is based in the US and we've got the CEO and the partners and then there
61 is HR and Finance. So we can break it down to like senior leadership and management.
62 The management being more the HR and Finance and then you've got the engagement
63 team which is kind of where I fall into. We've got Program Managers, Operations
64 Managers and then... under me would roll in the like team leads and the content
65 specialists and also, I manage the recruiters, global recruiters as well, with about six
66 people. So, my role is really... so I'm the Ops Manager so I roll into the Program
67 Manager. The Program Manager really runs the kind of finance side of things it's called
68 a SOW, service of work and they really just manage the budget and they work with
69 stakeholders to get an agreement usually for twelve months, there is a budget there
70 and they really manage that element. My program manager, I think she manages quite
71 a few different programs within Google and YouTube. So, I would then... I'm very much
72 the "hands on" part. So I manage the teams all throughout the world on the YouTube
73 Music side. I also manage another team at YouTube Events. They run all the pop-up
74 events for the YouTube creators but they're quite low touch. So, my role really is

75 operationally heavy - for some teams it's really getting into the workflow, like what's
76 the issue for them, the tools [bad connection] It's like really understanding the
77 workflows, what they do on a day to day, how much time it takes up, how it can be
78 more efficient, you know, is there a lot of manual heavy work that we can kind of cut
79 loose and have them focusing on more music related projects that will benefit the
80 products more. They can really get into a level, really work on the playlist inside of
81 things, they're setting gaps on the music app in relation to music genres allowing the
82 specialist to get out of the manual heavy administrative work and really focus on the
83 music, the playlisting and making the actual music experience richer. And that's just a
84 knock-on effect, with subscriptions and the business generally, so there's that element
85 to it but then there is also the HO element so disciplinaries, pay rises, performance
86 reviews and I don't just wait for that to land on my lap. I have one-to-ones and when I
87 started, I had a one-to-one with every single person in the team but then in the end
88 that became really just too much and my whole world was... Like fifty percent of my
89 time I was just talking to everybody and having a one-to-one and obviously I would
90 have that in person in the London team but then via video call, Google Hangouts for
91 all the regional teams. But in the end, what I do is... I found out it was too much, so I
92 put a lead in place for US, Latin America, Australia and obviously London. I would then
93 however have a one-to-one with them on a biweekly basis and I have put in office
94 hours every day for an hour for the London team so that you could meet me in person.
95 It's just an hour I put aside everyday so they could just drop in and we could book a
96 room and have a chat. The same is for the US team. I have office hours for the US team
97 for three hours a week, so it is US, Canada and Latin America if they want to drop in
98 and I do the same for the APAC team. Sometimes no one does, but often – depending
99 on what projects I have – people need to talk it through you know. So, I try and be
100 available to the team on a weekly basis and as much as I can via video call or in person.
101 So, you've got that element of it like, you know, just keeping in touch, listening, one-
102 to-ones and then performance reviews come up once a year. So, because I've checked
103 in with them all year my performance reviews are often based on our relationship for
104 the year and then I'll check in with the stakeholders and the people that they work
105 with, their lead, Google Management and get more of a product based performance
106 review on them. Then I can deliver it as a whole. [Break] I am trying to think what else
107 I do... It's really hard to just break it down. I am often just the voice of the team, if
108 there is a project and they feel that it's being executed really poorly, or they feel like
109 they have to work extra time, or the deliverables were just too much for the timeline
110 the project required. If there's anything like that they can come to me. So, we've got a
111 project at the moment and a lot of people just really wanted to talk about it and I could
112 feel that I was just getting like pings, emails and stuff and it felt like something I should
113 take on. Because then the whole global teams feedback in really intelligent way rather
114 it being like a ton of complaints and moans and - you know – I thought this could be
115 an opportunity where we really present feedback in a coherent way that actually
116 would benefit future projects, so that's what I am working on at the moment. And it
117 goes a long way because often I think in a big team in a big corporation people feel like
118 they don't have a voice. I feel like that is actually a major point of my role as well just
119 like getting the voice of the team collectively, just being able to deliver that to senior
120 leadership without them feeling scared or concerned, maybe they said something they
121 shouldn't. They can be very candid and honest - I can do that, so I'm kind of like there

122 to support them and really take responsibility for the team. Not serve them, in a way I
123 am just like a PA and I just say yes to everything they want but - you know - I often say
124 no and push back. If I feel like what they're saying is valid, you know then I'll take on
125 that cause because again we're doing in a streamline way rather than like a mock
126 mentality [?] of the whole team. Does that make sense at all? I'm there to kind of
127 escalate things through.

128 **LE:** That's great - would you generally say that people in the London office that can like
129 talk to you face-to-face that they have an advantage over the people that can't?

130 **EP:** Definitely. I actually fed this back and it got to the point where I felt like a bit
131 disappointed because I felt like I was being 80% there for the team in London but the
132 teams in the in the US especially - the company is very US centric - so in a way... they're
133 kind of... I wouldn't say more important but often decisions are made over there and
134 the projects are obviously executed over there so strategically it didn't make sense -
135 you know - to not have someone in person over there. Now I'm going to hire another
136 me over there, which is great and but yeah definitely. Often feedback... when they
137 send out feedback, the London team will give out amazing feedback for me and it's
138 great but I know the US, because they don't have someone, like a physical body, that
139 they can just go to and there isn't that relationship there, it's all just video call and I'm
140 far away and it's all very... Sure, messages but you can't really talk. Frankly, I think
141 when you've got someone in front of you know you read body language and stuff, you
142 can just have a better conversation and also like culturally... things can get translated
143 incorrectly or just like differently via Hangouts or pings, emails. I feel like we really
144 need that in person approach when you've got a global team. Only then you can
145 manage a team effectively online. You know, I feel like... I mean right now the situation
146 everybody's being managed online. If you ask people how they feel about it, I would
147 say they really miss that human kind of element. Although it's possible to manage a
148 team online I wouldn't say it's particularly a 100% effective. I feel like you definitely
149 need someone in person. I mean, I recently went to Seoul and Tokyo and back in
150 February before all this kicked off and actually while I was there it was all happening.
151 Which was a bit weird. I went to see my teams in Tokyo and Seoul and they're like the
152 furthest away, apart from Australia, but culturally it's so different. There's such a
153 different way of communicating in Japan it's very... you know with leadership it's quite
154 submissive and it was really important for me to go over there and show that we're
155 peers, we're actually the same and we can't do our jobs without each other and you
156 know... we're all kind of the same age, same backgrounds, you know, we just do
157 different jobs. I'm just trying to explain that a manager or whatever isn't someone you
158 should be scared of. [Dog is interrupting] Hang on.

159 Do you know what I mean? You should feel free to say what you want to say and there
160 won't be negative backlashes or negative implications by just having a very frank
161 conversation about your work. You don't always have to say what you think people
162 want you to say, you know. It was really... it was such a great experience for me to go
163 over there and explain this is my job, I'm here to support you and I'm not just someone
164 that signs off time sheets. You know, gives pay reviews and disciplinaries or has a very
165 administrative role. I'm very hands on and I'm actually here to help your day to day as
166 a music content specialist. I'm not representing the company; I'm actually representing

167 the team as individuals but as a whole global team as well. Obviously there is the
168 projects or the product in mind there as well, but it's a balancing act of getting the
169 work done but I do feel the only way you can do that is by having a really solid
170 relationship with the team as a collective of individuals and really understanding them.
171 And then as part of a team moving towards the same goal. So, it's really great for me
172 to go there in person and to get that message across and really deep dive into their
173 work, experience what they're doing, just get to know them. Things like their family
174 life, if they have kids... do you know what I mean? Just really get to know them as
175 people. I don't think you can do that quite so well on video.

176 **LE:** I'm just trying to figure out where to go next because you have already answered quite
177 a lot of the questions I had. So that's great, I'm just trying to figure out which ones are
178 still open, so I don't forget anything. So, you talked a bit about having this goal
179 alignment and making sure everyone's on the same page. Like, when you know...
180 obviously you can't be there all the time face-to-face, so how are you coping with
181 things like time differences, especially when you have deadlines, when you have the
182 local public holidays, office hours and stuff like that?

183 **EP:** When I first started, I was literally up all the time and it was terrible. I was so tired; I've
184 sat with the recruitment as well for every region. I think it's really important to be in
185 every interview, where ever it is across the globe and to kind of strike up that
186 relationship really early on with a potential candidate, so I would be in a meeting
187 sometimes at 02:00 AM for Tokyo and then I'll be interviewing again for Tokyo at like
188 07:00 AM. I'd be like going to sleep for a bit and then starting again and in the end, it
189 was just wasn't sustainable. I still do sit in every interview but and I just switch things
190 a little bit with like one-to-ones and office hours and I created like shared docs so that
191 they could drop in the points that they wanted to discuss and get them to do that as I
192 requested they don't drop things in when we're about to have like a one-to-one. It's
193 like a working doc, so that they can just drop things in and assign it to me and I can
194 work on it and I know when I'm going to meet them again or we schedule a meeting I
195 can do things in advance, you know what I mean? They're not necessarily bringing
196 things up that they want me to action when we speak face-to-face, they're bringing
197 them up in advance so I can answer for them when we speak. It's kind of trying to
198 preempt a little bit the discussion point scenery, just kind of working in tandem a lot.
199 So, shared docs are a big lifesaver, then again, it's not ideal. You know, you're just going
200 to kind of like pen pals and writing to each other, but it is effective for action points,
201 like if they need me to look into holiday they recruit or the possibility of a pay increase
202 or if an issue comes up, like an HR issue, and they're just "Hey Liz, can I discuss
203 something with you?" This is basically like the outline of it and I can get information
204 for them, you know, on an HR level in advance. Like in the US... paternity leave is way
205 different over in the US than it is here. You can take up to 50 days and you can add a
206 varied degree of pay, like 60% of pay, they are very much in control. Whereas over
207 here there is still 2 weeks for paternity leave. So, it just helps me as well and I get the
208 time to look into what the rules are in that territory, HR policies, and when I do finally
209 see them, I have actual information and we can move forward. It just felt a lot more
210 effective. Like with the Australian team we meet... like it's often their evening and they
211 are at home so I'm really conscious of them having to take up home time for work

212 time, so we just try to do as much as we can via shared docs and emails and then when
213 we do meet, it's actually quite productive because we have stuff to work on.

214 **LE:** Okay, is that also how you keep track on targets and responsibilities like if you have
215 those shared documents?

216 **EP:** Yeah, it is. We have shared docs and trackers... a lot of trackers like the Google version
217 of Excel – G-Sheets. With holiday trackers, there is formulas and metrics as well that
218 you can pull but it's more like YouTube Analytics and it's more about the playlists and
219 performance and stuff like that. But with my role you don't really pull metrics so much
220 on people's performance because it's a creative role, so it's more likely to give
221 feedback and stuff that perhaps they have dropped the ball on or whatever. It easily
222 filters up to me. It's more like we discuss and things, but we have a lot of trackers to
223 kind of action items and things like that. So yeah, it's not actually that high tech, funnily
224 enough. It's all very much docs, trackers, Hangouts and what else... emails, ping
225 messenger, regional groups of chat, so we can all chat and communicate as a team.
226 So, I've got one for APAC, one for EMEA, one for the US team, one for LatAm, so I can
227 just message the team as a group and especially now with COVID, each office around
228 the world kind of closed at different times. And they didn't just close, you talk like
229 voluntary work from home, recommended work from home and then mandatory work
230 from home. So, I'd kind of have to manage that for every office around the world.
231 Obviously, it hit Japan and Seoul first, so I was like managing them, making sure they
232 weren't going to the office and if they were, why were they? Keep messaging out when
233 statuses changed, and I had to see that for the whole globe. So that was quite
234 challenging, but I had the team messenger, email and if anyone had any questions, I
235 set up a doc, if they needed me to order stuff for them or talk to someone like in
236 TechOps or what are the policies around? For instance, in my team in Sao Paulo, Brazil,
237 if you have to work from home the government allows you to buy all the equipment
238 you need to work from home, office chairs, desks, the whole workplace. If you work
239 from home, that is what you need to do. So, I needed to look if there is a budget cap
240 for that and make sure that they got their money back quite quickly. Just a lot to
241 coordinate, to ensure that the whole team globally were exactly where they were, at
242 home. And also, in alignment with Google policy, with the office, for each office around
243 the world. Again, it's like overcommunication but not in a particularly mind-blowing
244 way but by using messenger, emails, trackers and shared docs. I had to have a tracker
245 about when each office closed, also I had to add if anyone was diagnosed with COVID,
246 had the team cooperate, there was just a whole checklist of stuff to do. Just lots of
247 admin but I wouldn't say... all of a sudden, you're just going to communication mode
248 and tracker mode, messenger and WhatsApp was helpful as well. Just communicating
249 in any way possible.

250 **LE:** Generally, what would you say are the three most beneficial factors to ensure
251 productive teamwork in such a set-up, when you're working globally? What are the
252 essentials? Three of the things that you can't not have.

253 **EP:** Okay, so I could say Laptop... but do you mean more like in a leadership way or in a...?

254 **LE:** Yeah, more like in a leader-follower relationship kind of way. What are the essentials
255 that have to be given?

256 **EP:** I mean, trust and loyalty are huge. You know, it's really important for me. When I say
257 loyalty it's more... I don't feel particularly loyal to either company, any company that I
258 work for. I hope that doesn't sound negative. It's more the loyalty towards the person
259 and the team because I feel like, if you can have a rapport with the person and you
260 understand them, get to know them and figure out what their anxieties are, where
261 their strengths are and a bit about their background – what do they do? Focus on this
262 whole collection of individuals as a team, how can this team... you know, what do they
263 need? What kind of support do they need for their wellbeing, for them to be
264 productive? Could that be trying to make a process more efficient? Could it be because
265 this one person suffers so severely from SAD that the winter is just an unbelievably
266 hard time and actually, they really need to sit next to the window, or they need just
267 one working from home day for the next six weeks. Do you know what I mean? There
268 is so many things, that claim to my role like just understanding people. So, I would say
269 that trust and loyalty definitely... they need to be able to trust me and what they say
270 is between us and that I have a loyalty to them as a person as well as the team. I have
271 the team's best interest at heart. Also, I am leading by example, it's not like it's one
272 role for me... I want them to trust me and trust that I am working just as hard as them
273 and want them to do well. We're all going towards the same goal. So, yeah. That's
274 pretty much it. Trust and loyalty and also communication and transparency. In a big
275 company it's really easy to feel like you're not getting heard all the time. You're just
276 this one person in this huge company with a lot of hierarchy and a lot of teams and a
277 lot of management and you know, what happens in the world of meeting rooms, it can
278 trigger a lot of paranoia or anxiety for people. Am I doing well? Why haven't I heard...?
279 I think communication and transparency is huge and it's balancing the trust and the
280 loyalty, what I was talking about before, with what the requirements of stakeholders
281 etc. are. Just really communicating well and providing transparency. It's not just saying
282 yes to them all the time, it's also pushing back and explaining them why. "Actually, this
283 hasn't happened because of this" and providing them a reason. Make them realize you
284 have a point and then I would use that. When I say push back it sounds a bit aggressive,
285 but I mean just push back in the sense of questioning and presenting the team's ideas
286 in an intelligent way – "this came up" or "the team fears...". So yeah, I was going to
287 say, communication and transparency... you know, not just appeasing and say yeah,
288 yeah and then not actioning it or telling them what they want to hear but then not
289 being consistent. When I'm in an open team environment or with management I'm
290 kind of not really supporting them. Consistent communication is really key because it
291 really shows them you have their back and what you're saying to them in a one-to-one
292 situation is actually what you're doing in an open situation. I would say taking the time
293 to listen and really get to know them, like what do they do out of work, what is their
294 family environment, having socials with them - we have a monthly social and we just
295 hang out and it's all paid for. You know it's just a good opportunity for us to have some
296 down-time and actually get to know each other. So many out of the team do creative
297 projects, like they run radio shows, or they have kids, or they are photographers. It
298 really helps that I know that because it's something for me to talk to them and get to
299 know them about on a human level and we're both then just more human characters.

300 It can help me as well if someone says: "This person didn't do this", I can possibly even
301 give a little more background by saying "This is probably because of this, but they
302 already discussed it with me" or "They came in late because...". I just have a better
303 idea of what that person is about. Also, I think praise and recognition is huge, it's really
304 easy just to work, work, work and no one is actually ever pet you on the back for it.
305 They just expect... you know, you're a specialist and you do that. But I think recognition
306 is huge, so finding your time to give praise or recognition is really important.

307 **LE:** And on the other hand, what do you think are the most challenging factors, like the
308 things you have to cope with?

309 **EP:** [Pause for thinking] Challenging... god, it all feels a bit challenging. Really, those three
310 things: being able to convey that and actually act on it for the regional teams that I
311 don't see in person. So, all of those things I just said, being able to emulate that with
312 people that I just see via video or maybe once or twice a year I go and visit them if I'm
313 lucky. But being able to get trust and loyalty, being able to provide really transparent
314 and decent communication and forge a solid relationship with someone online is
315 really, really challenging. What else... the time zone stuff is challenging as well, being
316 available for everyone in... we just have windows of time, especially with the India
317 team and the Japan team. We just get like a window to listen to them, get everything
318 and answer questions. So, the time zone stuff is difficult. Also, maybe... but that could
319 also be my fault... I do take a very personable approach and I do have very solid
320 relationships and I think when I sometimes have to deliver bad news it's really
321 challenging. Because it can be... for example like someone in the US, we're going to let
322 them know that we're hiring a new manager so that they have this in-person support
323 and then they wanted to talk me "Hey Liz, because you're going, can I have a pay rise
324 because you know the work that I've done..." Then I have to be the one that has to say
325 "I'm sorry but you've reached your ceiling" and I gave all the reasons why but they
326 completely ambushed me, perhaps because I am quite personable and available. I can
327 kind of fall into that trap. So, that can be challenging because we're all kind of the same
328 age and you know, same kind of creative background. Sometimes I can get ambushed
329 by those kinds of questions. But I think the key things that are challenging are trust,
330 high level communication and transparency and giving praise and recognition in an
331 online way, that probably the most challenging.

332 **LE:** Yeah. So, you've talked about those different cultural aspects, that you had with Japan
333 and all the other countries you were talking about or talking to. Do you generally have
334 a company culture that you try to implement in all the different places or is this more
335 a local thing that you try to sort with goal alignment etc.?

336 **EP:** I try to promote it everywhere and like I said the Japan team are very reserved and
337 very respectful. We in our team have all the cultures under one roof and that is a
338 challenge for me as well because obviously, you know, the way I communicate I had
339 to change. I had to be a lot clearer and not just use idioms and colloquialisms and
340 expect everyone to get it. I had to be a little bit more literal in the way that I
341 communicated. You know, I'm from London and we can be quite casual in the way
342 people speak and sarcasm is in humor and there are lots of little things that I had to

343 learn to be very clear and succinct in the way that I communicate. But also, in a very
344 open and approachable way because of cultural things. How things are translated and
345 how it can be perceived and read or understood in person. You know, in Japan the
346 cultural idea is like mutual respect and humility and I actually feel like that people in
347 other regional teams could learn that as well. It's kind of like trying to take all the
348 cultural... I don't want to say positives, because I don't want to judge what's good or
349 bad but trying to have this generic approach that everyone globally can relate to.
350 We're very diverse, that is something I'm really proud of and how mutually respectful
351 the team is. Everyone's diverse background, you know, we have Master's, people that
352 have started in the team coming from a retail job, but there is a lot of respect there
353 for people's music expertise, for people's creativity, there's people there that can
354 speak more than three languages, which is something that just blows my mind. There's
355 artist and so many different people. I found that in my job as well, when I first started,
356 that everyone was really... they didn't know each other on a personal level and I could
357 say "Did you know that someone else is also a DJ, or he's also an artist – you should
358 talk to them..." You could just bring people together. You know, it's like bringing in
359 those different cultures and out them together, it's really difficult but it's really
360 rewarding when you can do it. Maybe that's also your role as manager or a leader to
361 help people understanding each other's cultures or why they reacted the way they did.
362 The way they were asking the question, they didn't mean that. I feel like that's part of
363 my role as well.

364 **LE:** So, you do think that the culture does shape the leader-follower relationship that you
365 have with you team?

366 **EP:** Yeah, I would say so. I feel that being a leader of a EMEA team in London we've got the
367 Ukraine, Romania, Italy, Spain, Germany, Turkey, Dubai, Tel Aviv, Nigeria, Sweden,
368 Norway, Finland, you know, all these different countries and cultures and
369 personalities, I think once you've cracked that kind of code and relate to everyone on
370 that level, it's very... it becomes easier to then fly to Tokyo and have that experience.
371 Coming on a level where I can listen and watch how people deliver what they want to
372 say, and I can understand people better. I feel like understanding cultures is immensely
373 important. And if you are going to manage a team online, like if you don't understand
374 the culture you've got no hope really. You're just someone pushing information
375 around then really.

376 **LE:** You said that you have that really built out feedback culture. How do you manage
377 conflicts in your team? When there is problems arising, is there a special way for you
378 handling these conflicts remotely?

379 **EP:** To be honest, all I can do is listen. I just listen, I take notes, I then talk to the other
380 person, I listen and take notes. I think about it. I then talk again and try to have more
381 of a conversation, is it possible that this person could have meant this? I just try and
382 talk it out. It's all I can do with conflicts... just talk and listen and coming up with
383 solutions. Someone really struggled with working in an open plan office and I explained
384 that it is an open plan office, it has always been. But this person would huff and puff
385 and sigh at their colleagues if they talked above a certain volume and then people

386 found that quite aggressive behavior and felt a bit uncomfortable in that environment.
387 So, it wasn't really a case of getting that problem removed but what I can do for that
388 person is I can book a room for a couple of hours each morning so they could work in
389 a room because the mornings were the hardest. But then they'd come back to the desk
390 and work with everyone. But also explain to them that huffing and puffing at people is
391 actually really rude and it doesn't look good on them and it's actually on them to go to
392 the people and explain why they feel the anxiety rather than just behaving like that.
393 Although these people are grown adults, you are kind of the middleman, trying to
394 explain to everyone involved why they feel the way they do. It's not rocket science; it's
395 just talking and explaining. Obviously, if things don't change, you'd have to go down a
396 disciplinary route which is really tricky as well when you have to do it online at random
397 parts of the day. [Doorbell rings, short interruption]
398 Yeah, when you have to go down the disciplinary route and you have like performance
399 improvement plans and that kind of thing. I've only actually ever have to do two of
400 those and normally they're just talking things through [Phone ringing, short
401 interruption] Making notes, following up with people, how are they feeling and making
402 regular check-ins with them and then phasing it out until I feel like everyone is kind
403 of on the same page in regards to working better. But yeah, there's not a whole lot
404 you can do when you work remotely.

405 **LE:** Yeah. So, we kind of already got to the bottom of this. Just some final questions.

406 **EP:** I'm just plugging in my laptop.

407 **LE:** That's fine, I'll just wait a second. If you could attend a leadership workshop like I
408 explained in the beginning for globally distributed teams what would be the topic, so
409 what would be content that you would expect it to address? What would be a helpful
410 thing to to learn about?

411 **EP:** Hang on, the doors going... I'll be back and think about that answer.

412 **LE:** Okay. That's all right.

[People talking in the background]

413 **EP:** All right, sorry. So, if I went to a conference what would I expect to...

414 **LE:** Yeah, if you were attending a leadership training or workshop or conference like I said
415 for leading global distributed teams.

416 **EP:** I would expect maybe... just really... I'd like to learn how to... It's a tough one. Probably
417 for me personally how to say no better. Good ways to gain their trust, I guess
418 understand like how to succeed as individuals as well as a team. How you can really
419 keep going back to: They are a collective of individuals who all have their own goals
420 and managing that as well as team goals. To prioritize, I find that extremely difficult
421 and even when I am answering your questions, I am jumping all over the place because
422 it's a whole lot of stuff and then you'd need to prioritize, I guess. With team

423 requirements and business requirements it's quite difficult. Maybe keyways on how to
424 keep the team informed, how to be transparent, how to deliver information, installing
425 trust, ways of answering questions. I guess, it's just really easy to have your own way
426 of dealing with things and have your own style but it would be really good to have a
427 guide that covers this stuff. How to do that a little bit better. I already said saying no...
428 Encouraging... I guess learning collaboration, how to encourage your team to be better
429 collaborators. I think it's really easy for people to just keep working to themselves,
430 especially at the moment where people are paranoid about losing jobs and in big
431 corporations, they feel like they permanently have to show how good and valuable
432 they are. I feel like there is a lot to be set for like delegating out and sharing ideas,
433 brainstorming. I think that can obviously be just as productive rather than people just
434 keeping everything in. So, I would love to learn how to encourage collaboration. I
435 would actually put that into practice in a global team where half the team is working
436 remotely. I'd love to work on that a bit more. Because that's actually probably one of
437 the most challenging things I have. So, you could probably add that to the last question
438 you had about collaboration. Yeah, that's about it. I mean, I should get back to you on
439 that one.

440 **LE:** Well that's fine, it helped a lot already.

441 **EP:** Okay.

442 **LE:** So, if there's anything else you'd like to share like, I don't know, some experience,
443 professional advice, something I haven't covered, or which is important to know or to
444 take into consideration?

445 **EP:** Well, I think...

446 **LE:** If you can't come up with something spontaneously it's fine. Don't worry.

447 **EP:** It's just like... I don't know, I lead by example. It's a big one for me and support your
448 team, take responsibility, don't micromanage. But also have the skills and knowledge
449 to be able to support them at work and help them understand better when they need
450 you to. I think micromanagement can be really detrimental. Represent them, protect
451 them in a way from situations. Just take responsibility, that's a big thing. What else?
452 Yeah, again I'll come back to you.

453 **LE:** That's fine, that's fine. So, for now that's it. Thanks so much!

Appendix 10:

Transcript Interview – Daniel Hayashi

Transcript of the Interview with Daniel Hayashi, Regional Account Manager at Vaco Japan Ltd.

Conducted on Wednesday, April 22, 2020, 10:00 AM

Interviewer: Lisa Engel (LE)

Interviewee: Daniel Hayashi (DH)

- 1 **LE:** So then let's just start with... first, did you have a look at the questions already?
- 2 **DH:** Yes, I did. I actually have them pulled up in a separate screen right here.
- 3 **LE:** Great, then let's just start with the general questions: you introduce yourself, who are
4 you, what are you doing, where are you doing this, stuff like that.
- 5 **DH:** Okay. Cool. So, my name is Daniel Hayashi and I am the Regional Account Manager for
6 a Vaco across the APAC region. It's actually interesting because I actually kind of hold
7 three different job titles depending on who you ask. Officially, with my employer I am
8 a Regional Accounts Manager. With Vaco in the United States I'm Engagement
9 Manager and with Google I am a Vendor Operations Specialist. So, really depending
10 on who you ask you get different answers. Basically, my kind of job is kind of a
11 combination of all three of those things actually. So, with Google I generally work with
12 my clients at Google, so these are like Project Managers and stuff like that when they
13 have external workforce teams. So, that's like, you know, vendor teams working on
14 regular long-term Google products. Google kind of dictates the strategy and then it's
15 kind of up to us to handle the operations and execution of that. But I work with the
16 stakeholders who are the primary Google Project Managers to pretty much resolve
17 anything and everything that they have problems with. So, one of the things that, you
18 know, so I've been working with Google almost... over five years now, I think. And over
19 the years there's a lot of information that you kind of learn on the fly. There are not
20 really things that are taught to you, they're just kind of things you pick up. It's what I
21 call a "tribal knowledge" because, you know, one person learns and they teach you
22 that, then you teach someone else, it's kind of that word to mouth that just repeats.
23 And so, using my experience I help them with everything - from their invoicing and
24 billing to onboarding people, to human resource related issues, recruiting, project
25 management, operations management. Like certain processes within Google, that
26 maybe certain people are familiar with, you know, maybe one team will be very
27 familiar with this process, so they would have a problem with that. Maybe there's
28 another team that for someone ad-hoc reason they need to be knowledgeable about
29 how to do this, it's a lot of talking: okay, so what you got to do is XYZ and that's likely
30 that. And then within Vaco as an Engagement Manager my goal kind of overlaps... or
31 my job kind of overlaps with the role of an Ops Specialist in that I engage with the
32 clients and I make sure that they have everything that they need to do and I'm also
33 working with other Ops Managers like Liz and their teams to make sure that they have

34 everything they need, to do what it is they need to do. Now, Liz's teams for example,
35 she's got some teams out here in APAC which... the time zone isn't a great time zone
36 for like London to Tokyo. So generally, during my ten hours or whatever working, I'm
37 generally always available for everyone in the region that is employed by a Vaco office
38 somewhere. But if they're located in APAC I exist as a primary point of contact when
39 they have an issue with their contracts, with time off, they have HR related issues, even
40 like a tactical operations'-based issues. I'll generally act as the first point of escalation
41 for them if their operations managers are unavailable and then I can redirect what
42 needs to be done and, you know, kind of looping in the people that need to be looped
43 in, in order to resolve issues as quickly as possible without having to wait for 24 hour
44 turnaround time. Because if an issue gets escalated to Liz, Liz is not going to see it until
45 the end of the APAC person's day and if Liz has to escalate that to Google HQ in
46 Mountain View that's another eight hours and then, you know, by the time it gets back
47 around you're looking at anywhere from a 24 to 48 hour turn around. You know, when
48 it comes to being time sensitive, especially with managing a whole bunch of different
49 teams with a whole bunch of different people in a bunch of different regions it's, you
50 know, being efficient with... how you're spending your time to resolve issues is one of
51 the big things I'm here for. And then with Vaco as a Regional Account Manager I handle
52 not just Google. I primarily handle Google teams out here but also work with anything
53 else for Vaco Japan, specifically in Japan, Korea and Australia. And that's pretty much
54 everything. I do everything from HR, to Legal, to Ops, to Reporting and Analytics, yeah.
55 I was previously a Business Analyst, things like that. So, yeah, I do a lot of different
56 stuff.

57 **LE:** That's cool, and speaking about time zones and stuff... Obviously, Vaco is distributed
58 all across the globe, is there like primary geographic locations that you have or is that
59 basically really everywhere?

60 **DH:** So, in terms of people that I'm directly in charge of, it's pretty much everyone in my
61 region. So, Australia's about the furthest eastern time zone, so Sydney, I think, would
62 be about the farthest my team's go and then I would say the last person I really have
63 to deal with at any point is in Hyderabad in India. That pretty much covers an eight-
64 hour span right there most of my day. But then you also have to take into account that
65 I work with e.g. Liz, who is an Ops Manager... I actually work with three different
66 Operations Managers for teams here in APAC that are all located in the UK and then
67 there's also people, that I work with, that are based in New York and people are based
68 in California. So, for me it's like I'm kind of working almost all hours of the day. I take
69 meetings as early as 07:30 in the morning and as late as, you know, 02:30 in the
70 morning.

71 **LE:** Yes. That's crazy. Okay that basically covered all the questions from the first box. Let's
72 move on to leadership behavior. So, what is the basic structure of your company? Are
73 there strict hierarchies, are you constantly reporting, how are you set up in your
74 position in comparison to higher or lower hierarchies?

75 **DH:** I would say it's actually relatively flat, but there is definitely a hierarchy involved. A
76 good example of, you know, basically, with Vaco Japan, I report directly to the CEO.

77 He, for the most, lets me do what needs to be done because I have generally proved
78 my worth. Especially, when it comes like the actual business side of things. So, he will
79 let me do what I need to do, when it needs to be done. He'll definitely be like "Hey I
80 need your report on this, can give this to me in the next 24 hours?" and so I'll drop
81 something else to hand in this report. And then, like, it gets a little more hairy when
82 you bring in the other international Vaco locations, because technically I'm not
83 employed by the other Vaco international offices and, you know, a lot of other people
84 aren't either. So, it gets a little blurry there. So, there's basically a bunch of people that
85 I interface with for different purposes, but I don't have to do a lot of reporting to them.
86 There's maybe one person internationally that I need to do a report to - she's actually
87 Liz's boss, but we pretty much just meet once a week anyway. But that's more along
88 the lines of... are there performance issues or problems with the team, just kind of
89 quick update reports, not like hard metrics or financials things. And the financials for
90 my segment of the business here in APAC, I pretty much submit a report once a month
91 to our finance manager and we have a monthly business review, an MBR once a
92 month, which provides all the regional managers for Vaco Japan, as well as Drake
93 Business Services Asia, which is kind of a partnership company that I work with. But
94 other than that, it's, you know, there's not a huge amount of hierarchy above me. I
95 would say below me definitely gets a little bit different in that. The first managers
96 below me are what we would... are basically Operations Managers. So, Liz is a great
97 example of Operations Manager, she works in this global team, but she is very much
98 tied to a very specific workflow. She only handles, you know, music stuff. She doesn't,
99 you know, handle things with the technical operations team or things like that.
100 Whereas my engagement interactions are more region based, which means I'm
101 actually working with teams that are doing all sorts of different things. You know, my
102 teams range from music guys like Liz that are technically under Liz, to, you know,
103 people on cloud renewals and technical operations or engineering based things. So,
104 basically operations managers, their job is to manage teams on a day-to-day basis.
105 They are looking at what tasks need to be done this week, who is available, who is out
106 of the office, what kind of ban does a team have and how do we allocate resources to
107 cover all the goals. You know, kind of like checkpoints that we need to make it work.
108 For me it's... I tend to look at most of my problems in a much larger scale, so I'm not
109 really looking at a week to week basis, I'm looking more at a quarter to quarter basis,
110 if anything. So, yeah, I wouldn't say that there's a huge difference. I think Ops
111 Managers actually do more reporting than I do. And the reports that they do are
112 usually going straight to their Project Managers at Google or their Client Managers,
113 whatever. Because the Client Managers, you know, they're dictating the strategy, so
114 they need to have that report. For me, I don't really need that from them. From them
115 it's more of like... I need updates on like... well all my Operations Managers I pretty
116 much meet with at least once a week. We just have like a quick half hour at some point.
117 Sometimes we skip it, if we don't have anything, but it's more along the lines of if there
118 is something that's happening that I need them to action on certain items in order for
119 me to complete my stuff. That's pretty much all the reporting I need: did you do this,
120 where you at, is there anything I can do to help you, is there anything I should be
121 focusing on and leveraging so that you don't have to do as much work or something
122 like that. So, once it is a whole lot of... between the alternators and music engagement
123 managers there's not a huge amount of physical reporting I would say. But then you

124 get below that and then you have the actual staff with their working there on the
125 ground level doing all the operations and stuff and so the Operations Manager will
126 handle most of that interaction and then I'll handle more on the sounds of: "Hey how's
127 everything going at work, do you have any HR issues, how is everything going on right
128 now? You know, when I do things, I'm always asking... "Hey what's going on with
129 coronavirus in your country? What's the status? Are you having problems? You know,
130 basically making sure they can do their jobs.

131 **LE:** Yeah, so how would you then generally describe your leadership style? More... not the
132 dictator style but the "you do this, you do this, you do this" or how do you do things?

133 **DH:** Personally, I really don't like the dictator style. I mean, it works. One of the big things I
134 feel like in management especially in a large company where you're working in a bunch
135 of different teams. There's a ton of different styles of leadership that you can kind of
136 take to effectively manage and lead a team and you can't necessarily have one blanket
137 method for everyone. I feel like in certain times you need to be a dictator. A good
138 example would be... say you have this project that came down with a really strict
139 deadline that's not very far away. A lot of times that's a time when you got to be like
140 "Hey, I need you to do this, this, this, this, this, you need to meet these deadlines by
141 this time because we only have three days to do this". That's a great time when, you
142 know, being a dictator, I think is acceptable, but most of the time I actually like to give
143 people as much freedom as possible to do the work that we hired them to do. Because,
144 I mean, it's really on us that we hired these people for a purpose, and we gave them
145 an offer because we thought they were capable of doing this. My mentality is that, you
146 know, we hired them do this, I should let them do this. As a manager, I think, my main
147 thing is making sure that they have all the tools and resources that they need in order
148 to complete their work. I'm not here to tell you what to do or exactly how to do it.
149 Everybody has different ways of doing it, but I want to make sure that you have
150 everything you need to do that. So, you know, there's like those kinds of people that
151 sit on top and tell people which way to go and there are people that kind of lead from
152 the front. I'm more of the kind of push from behind person, where I like to make sure
153 that, you know, everybody's kind of going in the right direction, but they are, you
154 know, leading themselves and doing what they need to do. I don't think it's necessarily
155 healthy to have someone just barking orders at you all the time. I mean, I've had
156 managers of a whole bunch of varieties and I never really liked the guys that are big on
157 micromanagement because I think that actually reduces productivity if anything.

158 **LE:** Yeah so in your opinion what are general attributes that a good leader needs to have?
159 So, essentials?

160 **DH:** I think... I would say, if I had to break it down to like five qualities, I would say... Apathy.
161 Humility. Organization. Being personable with other people and being really, really
162 quick to learn. I would say those are the five most important things, there is probably
163 a thousand more. To give you some more background, I'm actually a boy scout. So, you
164 know, I would say for great quality you should meet the twelve points of the scout law:
165 trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave,
166 clean and reverent. I mean, I think, those are very good summary of what everyone

167 should be, but especially leaders. And then, you know, I've worked with people that
168 have this idea that they're always right and everything that they say is the law and all
169 this other stuff. I think, the really good leaders are the ones that are open to new ideas
170 and also open to the idea of being wrong. Like, I mean, I know for a fact I don't know
171 enough about what these guys do on a day to day level to dictate how they're doing it
172 and I feel like, you know, if I tried to do that then they would say "you don't know what
173 you're talking about, you don't know what you're doing". And so, you know, I don't
174 have that, I'm trusting these guys to do that thinking they know it best and no one's
175 going to do it as well. I think, that's a really big thing, especially as a manager that's on
176 my level where I'm not working on day to day operations, but I still interact with
177 everyone. Yeah, I think, those are some of the most important qualities of a good
178 leader. I mean, it's really... really good leaders, I think, should be people that you
179 follow, not because they're your manager or whatever, but because you like what they
180 represent and you want to do a good job because this person is there as your manager.
181 You can be a dictator, I guess, but it's like... Bill Gates, I think, was the last great dictator
182 of Silicon Valley. I think, he's probably one of the last managers, that can really be the
183 way he was, especially in our current social environment. Nowadays, I think, it's more
184 about cohesion, you know, working with others, understanding other people's points
185 of views and also understanding that you might not always be right.

186 **LE:** Yeah, that's true. Do you think that those characteristics that you mentioned that they
187 change once you have a team that is globally distributed rather than sitting at one desk
188 together, like in one location?

189 **DH:** I think, if anything, it's more important, especially when you're working with a global
190 team and, I think, you need to have all the same characteristics, but they need to be
191 like ramped up a couple notches. Just because you're not sitting next to these people
192 every day and see them all the time. I think you also... one word with a global team
193 you need to have an even stronger sense of empathy and interpersonal understanding,
194 because we have people from a different culture. You know, their way of thinking is
195 most likely not going to be the same as your way of thinking. And I think that a lot of
196 people, especially when they're working international kind of situations... they'll go
197 into, you know, some new team or something and try to apply everything that they
198 did with the previous team to this team. Now, that may work for a majority of the time,
199 I would think, but there's also many times when just because of cultural differences
200 this isn't going to work as well. There are definitely huge cultural differences between
201 the United States, Japan and Korea. Those three countries, I think, are all different
202 from each other in varying ways. I think, managing teams in those regions, you need
203 to be aware of all those things that it takes... you know, that goes back to knowing "I
204 could be wrong, this could be on me, I might not understand your way of thinking and
205 that's my fault" and so I think that's even more important when working on global
206 teams.

207 **LE:** Yeah. How do you and your team or in your teams keep track on targets and
208 responsibilities?

209 **DH:** A lot of that is actually left up to operations managers, but for my part, the way it
210 organizes... basically, there are... since I engage with the clients of the stakeholders
211 really frequently, it's more along the lines of knowing what they need to know and
212 make sure that that's clearly communicated across the Operations Managers. Because
213 Operations Managers are really the ones that are in charge of executing the stuff. For
214 me, it's being aware of what needs to be done, so I can help support them in doing
215 that. If I know that there is some workflow coming through that's going to sop up a
216 bunch of bandwith from a team in a specific region, it's really important that that
217 Operations Manager is aware of that, as well as the team on top of that. So, in terms
218 of keeping track of data metrics, there's agreements that we have with Google that at
219 certain points all people on the teams need to achieve certain points. We would call
220 these SLAs, Service Level Agreements. You know, making sure that they do this amount
221 of work in this amount of time and complete things in this cyclical period.

222 **LE:** Mmhm.

223 **DH:** Things like that. And so, it's really... a lot of that's communicated through training
224 because a lot of the workforce that we work on are for the most part relatively
225 established. They've been trialed and tested and they're actually in kind of an actual
226 execution mode right now, so we know exactly what the goals are and what we need
227 to accomplish right from the beginning. It's mostly just communicating that to new
228 people. Occasionally, these things change but those are generally team like
229 communications that are made not just to me but also to the team as such. And we
230 kind of rely on a lot of people to kind of self-manage themselves. A good example is,
231 you know, if you have someone that is underperforming, that's where I come in and
232 talk with them about what we call a "performance improvement plan". You know, how
233 can we get them up to where they need to be in a set period of time? For me it'll be a
234 lot... for me, it's a lot of coaching and looking at, you know, if they're not reaching the
235 goals before, why was that? Was that not communicated to them? Are they doing
236 something incorrectly? Is there something they could do more efficiently? That's kind
237 of how I help try to bring people back up to where they need to be. For the most part,
238 I would say most of the teams and individuals, regardless of their position, they're very
239 good at self-managing and that's kind of the great thing about my teams, I don't have
240 to micromanage them all the time.

241 **LE:** Yeah. You said that you were intervening, if something doesn't work the way it should
242 work or whatever. How do you approach conflict management in a remote set up?

243 **DH:** I mean, I'll always do my research before I even bring it up, because if someone reports
244 on someone else like "Hey you know that this person is not doing this or something is
245 not being right" I'll do research in the back and look at their process, their workflows,
246 any data that we have, to see if that's actually their fault. Because I would say nine
247 times out of ten it is actually the individual contributors' problem that needs to be like
248 adjusted or fixed and usually it's a behavioral thing. But then one time out of ten it's
249 going to be like it's not their fault. I've had a team with a guy that looks really really
250 terrible on paper, then we found out that he was just incredibly unlucky with the work
251 that he was being assigned. All metrics seem really really bad and I knew him, so I'm

252 like “Yeah, I think this data isn’t accurately representing the work that he's
253 contributing. I think, that he’s contributing a lot more than most other people, I would
254 say”. You know, at that point that's not a fair thing to look at in terms of his actual
255 contribution to the team. But then, with actual people that we have a conflict with, if
256 I have done my research and looked into it and I know the background, know what’s
257 going on... I would be directly to the point. I mean, I've never liked when any of my
258 managers tried to beat around the bush and then try to tell me what was wrong
259 indirectly. I'm much more of a “Hey here's the problem, here's what we noticed and
260 here is the data to back that up”. Well, we need to work on something and then they
261 know and that turns into a conversation about change. Is there something that can be
262 done differently to help you achieve what needs to be done? Or is there something in
263 the way of your performance or your behavior that we need to adjust in order to meet
264 our goals? Yeah, I don't know. I prefer to approach conflict resolution very very
265 directly. The only time, I would say, I'd approach it indirectly is when I know that
266 method won’t work for that person. Because, generally, I know everybody that works
267 for me on a personal level. I know what their personalities are like, I know how they
268 work and what they do and I know their way of thinking. I generally understand their
269 behavior, so I’ll adjust my interactions with each person to cater to that person
270 specifically because some people like it straight up, no fluff, nothing else, just give it
271 straight to them. I don’t really need to give them anything beyond that, they’ll go and
272 fix themselves. Other people can be a little bit overly sensitive and won't take this
273 direct feedback as well as someone else would. In those situations, I got to kind of ease
274 them into it and, you know, sort of give them their dessert first and then give the
275 veggies afterwards. Because they need to be able to understand that I appreciate what
276 they’re doing but there are other things that need to be worked on. It's not necessarily
277 something that you can change the day and you might have extenuating circumstances
278 that I'm not aware of... kind of approaching them a little more softly but for the most
279 part I try to be as direct as possible, just because I would prefer people to tell me
280 exactly what the problem is and give me some direct feedback, so that I can have a
281 clear understanding of what their expectations are as well as what I need to do. What
282 I really try to get across is that I have these expectations and there you need to be at
283 this level to meet those.

284 **LE:** Yeah.

285 **DH:** I mean, for me, every single person [interrupted by someone sending a message on
286 Google Hangouts] That’s what I mean, that’s how we stay in touch. We have Google
287 Hangouts and things like that. Having that, especially in a casual sense, creates a better
288 sense of belonging to a company. Other things that I do – because I have teams in so
289 many regions – I tend to travel as much as I humanly can. Not so much right now,
290 because of the obvious situation, but I used to travel almost once a month at least to
291 go to other countries and visit my teams there. I always take everyone out to dinner,
292 have some 1-on-1 time with every single one. It’s a huge amount of time out of my
293 schedule every month but I think it’s worth it, because it really puts a face to my name.
294 They know what I’m doing, the things that I work on and I think that creates a better
295 relationship between me and the staff. In turn, that creates that kind of corporate
296 identity because that’s even more difficult to do that when working onsite at another

297 company. My staff, they all are Vaco employees, but they are technically working
298 onsite at Google. So, they are working within another company, but we have to try and
299 create this bubble or corporate identity for them, within this other company. In the
300 past, that was always a big thing, but I think working together and having more people
301 communicating within your workflows, especially in your own company, so the Vaco
302 people, I think that helps to create a much better sense of identity. One thing that I try
303 to do it, that all the projects that I handle, I try to consolidate the staff to as few
304 locations as possible. Liz's team is a little bit tougher, because they are spilt between
305 seven or eight different countries with maybe only one or two people in each of those
306 countries. So, those are the people that I worry about the most. But then I might have
307 another team, where I was able to get clearance for when we started with them, to
308 have all of them here in Tokyo. Instead of having one person in one country, we're
309 having nine people all in one office, all working together. In my previous team, we had
310 like 60 people in the same facility, in the same office. So, that really helps to create
311 that corporate identity within another company.

312 **LE:** Yeah.

313 **DH:** But that obviously doesn't change the fact that I think it's tough.

314 **LE:** Do you think that the exclusive virtual teamwork, like if you almost never see each
315 other face-to-face, that it does influence the team performance?

316 **DH:** I think, it depends on the team and the person. I had people that worked amazingly on
317 their own. Like, their productivity is through the roof, they're doing really good. In one
318 of my old teams we had... you know, the team that I said had 60 people in one location.
319 We had 36 people in one location, 63 in another location and then we had one person
320 by themselves in West-Virginia. Like, we all knew her, we've all seen her on video calls,
321 we all chatted with her on Hangouts and things like that. She went to the same training
322 we did at the same time, but remotely. She did really well. Now, on the flipside, with
323 some teams I've got... A good example is, I've got one person in Korea, who works at
324 an office by herself. She is the only Vaco employee at that office in Seoul. You know,
325 for her, I understand, it gets a little bit lonely. But she does have that interaction with
326 other people on the same project but in different countries because it's another
327 country-based project. I think, that really helps her motivation and how she feels at
328 work. You know, she's really good at her job, she executes things really well, she has a
329 good relationship with our clients and she also knows everyone else in the region that
330 works on the same project. On the flipside though, you could have someone that
331 comes in, you know, one of these people that need to be really social all the time,
332 really needs that kind of direct human interaction to do well or be successful. That can
333 be really though. But in the end, it comes down to the individual and their motivation.
334 I think, if people have good work ethics, they can work by themselves in the desert in
335 Afghanistan, if they wanted to and still do as well as someone who is part of a larger
336 team in Tokyo for example. So, I think, it really depends on the person. It's not so
337 much... I don't think it's necessarily the fault of the managers. I mean, there are things
338 that we can do to help them feel more included and be more inclusive to them, but
339 their ability largely depends on the individual themselves, not necessarily us. Because

340 if it did depend on us at that level, that would mean we'd have to go back to that
341 dictator, micromanagement kind of thing. I would hate to do that, if I had to do that, I
342 would probably feel like I shouldn't have hired them in the first place.

343 **LE:** What do you think are the most challenging factors that you have in a remote set-up?
344 Maybe not in a set-up where there are 60 people in one office, but where it is a bit
345 more distributed. What are the most challenging things that you have to consider from
346 leadership perspective?

347 **DH:** Honestly, from the work that I am doing... so, most of my teams are relatively scattered
348 with the exception of that one team. I think, probably the biggest challenge for me is
349 staying organized and on top of the things that need to be done in the different
350 regions. Because each region has their own little things that you need to pay attention
351 to and then you have different people in those regions. So, you kind of have to stay
352 organized on what they need and what they're doing in order to better support them.
353 And then also I would say the other big thing is time zones. Like, time zones are a
354 nightmare, especially... what was it last month... when they have daylight saving time.
355 A bunch of countries changed time zones, all my regular meetings got moved an hour
356 and then there is a bunch of regions that don't have daylight savings time. Then I had
357 to go through the reschedule stuff, move things around in order to better coordinate
358 that. So, I think, when you work in a global setting with a very scattered group across
359 several countries and several time zones, you need to be like a 100x more organized
360 than you would be if you were all sitting in the same office. That's, I think, the biggest
361 thing. More than anything else.

362 **LE:** Yeah, fair enough. So, also, you've talked a bit about cultural differences, that you've
363 experienced, having bigger differences among certain countries than others. Do you
364 share company values that you have or is that more regional values that you try to put
365 together somehow?

366 **DH:** I think, it's more of the latter or maybe combining the two of them. So, there is
367 definitely certain company values that I want people to have and want them to do but
368 I don't want to push them too far out of their comfort zone in a negative way. I'm very
369 used to working in what we call a [unclear name]. This is how we call a foreign company
370 in Japan, which is run very differently from a Japanese company. I've worked for
371 Japanese companies in the past and they are very rigid about hierarchy and internal
372 social structures and all that. At the same point I want to give people... I want to let
373 them know that there is this freedom because I am used to working in American
374 companies and I am used to that way of thinking. So, I try to teach them that. I try to
375 teach people that they can be independent thinkers, no ideas are bad... well, some
376 ideas are bad ideas, but I'm open to hear about what they have to say and if
377 somethings wrong, please call me out on that. It's more like when... If you're raising
378 kids or something, and you're trying to instill your own values on them. They're going
379 to figure out their own stuff, make friends and stuff but the thing is, there are certain
380 things that I can try to instill in them that I think is beneficial. Not just for the team or
381 the company, but for them personally in the long run. Here's a good example of a
382 cultural difference: In Korea and Japan there is this huge traditional idea of lifetime

383 employment which, statistically speaking, is a dead idea. Just doesn't work anymore.
384 That died out like 20 years ago. A lot of people still look at that. For me though, coming
385 from... I'm actually Japanese American. I was actually born in the United States and
386 then I moved to Japan. The kind of way I grew up is no job is permanent. What can you
387 learn from this job, that can help you in the next job? I tell this to most of my
388 employees, don't do the job that you're doing for the job you have. Do it for the next
389 job. What can you learn and take from this job, that will help you improve in the future
390 and go on to newer and better things? I think, this job that I have right now is my 19th
391 job since I was 16 or something?! I have had multiple jobs, I've hopped around
392 industries and from doing that, I know from experiences, all the experience I gained is
393 super beneficial. I mean, I've worked in everything, from the medical field to business
394 and entertainment. From my staff... I kind of instill the same things that helped me be
395 successful so they can improve themselves. Because I am not going to lead them
396 around and hold their hand, I want them to figure things out themselves. Make their
397 own calls and then not be scared of taking a risk. I know, a lot of people, Asian countries
398 especially, are very risk averse. They're going to ask for permission, before they do
399 anything. While I will be like "You know what, you know this better than I do, make
400 the call. Do what you've got to do, and I'll back you up." I think, that's one of the big
401 things, as a leader, having your employees' backs is really important. If your employees
402 trust you and know that you'll back them up if they make a mistake or something
403 happens, I think, that leads them to be more trusting of you and they'll be more
404 productive and adventurous. Which is something that I'm trying to instill in people that
405 are from countries that are maybe not so adventurous.

406 **LE:** Do you think that this intercultural interaction that you have throughout your
407 experience did shape your thinking about leadership?

408 **DH:** I don't know if it shaped my thinking about leadership, per se, but it shaped the way I
409 think about interpersonal interactions. You know, one of the big things, I think, that's
410 really important for all people, not only managers, leaders or employees, is being able
411 to interact with different people in different situations and still have a positive
412 outcome. When you're giving critical advice or there is some sort of conflict issue, you
413 can't perform the same actions with everyone. Everybody needs to be treated a little
414 bit different and that's the same for cultures. If I am working with a stakeholder from
415 Korea, I am probably interacting with them a little bit different than I would interact
416 with a stakeholder from Japan. And then I would also probably interact differently with
417 a stakeholder that is based in Japan but was raised in the United States. In the end,
418 everybody has their different way of thinking and some people you just have to feel
419 out... I can joke with some people; with others I might be business only. I'll message
420 some and hang out with them, it's on me to decide on what to do and what not. Having
421 this experience of working in an intercultural environment... well, having the
422 intercultural background that I have was important because it really taught me that
423 you need to interact with people differently and you can't treat everyone the same. I
424 mean, you should treat everyone the same, but I think the way you're treating them
425 or interacting with them needs to differ depending on that specific person and what
426 their expectations are. It's kind of like... you know, when interacting with people, you

427 have to know what their expectations are and vice versa, in order to have a clear path
428 of communication.

429 **LE:** Yeah. So, actually we have already reached the final questions part. First question,
430 since I'm working on developing the foundation for a leadership training for globally
431 distributed teams... if you could attend a workshop or training for leading such a team,
432 what topics would you expect it to address? What would you like to take away from
433 that?

434 **DH:** I mean, I would say the biggest things are... I think, if I were attending, what I would
435 want to take away is how to improve my relationships with individual contributors in
436 all these teams across the APAC region and prove their sense of corporate identity. I
437 think that's definitely one of the hardest things to do in a globally spread out company.
438 It's the balance between having a relationship with the staff and fostering the
439 corporate identity with people that are maybe out by themselves, they don't really
440 have anyone else from the same company working with them. That's always pretty
441 difficult, not only on a working/productivity level but also on a personal/mental level.
442 I think, being able to enforce that or create a better sense of belonging helps people a
443 lot and that has a positive effect on their work, being happy and satisfied in their job.
444 Aside from building relationships and cultural identity, I would say, the last thing would
445 be how to interact with new people in new regions that you don't know anything
446 about. That would be cool. A lot of the times you have to go blind into these situations.
447 Like, I have a team that is going to be in Thailand and I really don't know anything
448 about Thailand or about them. So, I kind of have to go in blind and see how I am doing
449 that in the process. Being able to feel out that situation, right in that moment, is a skill
450 that should be taught, but I'm not sure how you would teach it. I feel like a lot of it
451 comes from experience, just dealing with a lot of different people from a lot of
452 different places. If there was a way to teach that, that would be wonderful. I think a
453 lot of people would love that.

454 **LE:** So, basically the kick-off situation that you have when having a new team with new
455 people? How do you start off?

456 **DH:** I personally try to be as genuine as possible. I don't try to hide who I am or what we're
457 doing. That kind of goes back to me being as direct, as clear as possible. Because I don't
458 want to give them some false expectation and then over the course of time have them
459 discover this is not what I was expecting from that conversation. I like them to think
460 he's the exact same as he was 5 years ago, nothing has changed. My management
461 expectations would have been that accurate. It's kind of like having everything on the
462 table, like if you... best example I have: You go on a first date. You don't want to be
463 making up a bunch of stuff and not be clear about who you are. You don't want to lie
464 about who you are or anything like that. You just want to be clear. That's kind of how
465 I feel about my job. There are a bunch of partners that I have in this business and
466 they're all doing their own thing but I'm managing client engagement things, I need to
467 know who they are and what they're doing, so I can help them more.

468 **LE:** Okay, great. So, final question. Is there anything that I missed, that you want share and
469 I didn't ask or anything else that could maybe help me in developing this training?

470 **DH:** I mean, I would say, to give you a little bit additional background to me... I also used to
471 give training for a Google team years ago. So, I would also do all the development of
472 the training materials and all the stuff. One of the things I've learned that I brought
473 forward to my management style now goes back to the fact that not everybody does
474 things the same way. I think what's really important is that when you're teaching these
475 people that they're going to have the same issues that I have when kicking-off projects.
476 You don't really know them, you don't know how they're working but it's important
477 that you adapt what you're trying to teach to them into a... not necessarily cultural
478 mindset, but more of a... something that they can understand and more of internalize
479 themselves on a personal level. Because I think they'll learn better from that. How can
480 I appeal to them based on their different ways of thinking? So basically... I feel kind of
481 bad because I'm almost saying I manipulate them [laughter], but it is kind of like that.
482 You're trying to do as much as you can, so that they'll do what needs to be done. You
483 as a manager, you have this high-level overview of things way beyond what they are
484 working on and most people should understand that. That there are things, that are
485 just out of scope for them. But me being able to communicate and building that trust
486 is really important. When it comes to teaching these people that are from different
487 regions, I would bet, that you could teach a lot of these things to like an old Japanese
488 businessman, but you'll probably get a lot of kick back from him. Just because they
489 have the mindset that their company has been doing things the same way for 100
490 years. I think then you'll have to appeal them in a way that you can still get your point
491 across and just get them to maybe learn something. Whatever I've been training, I'm
492 happy if they take away one thing that I've been teaching because I don't expect
493 everyone to learn everything on the first try. When I first onboarded Google, I literally
494 had... my wrap-up time was, I think, less than a week. I had 1,5 days of training, 1,5
495 days of shadowing and then go. And that was all. What has happened? What was going
496 on? Some people picked it up really well, some struggled with it for a long time. I think,
497 having the ability to train a variety of people in a variety of situations with a variety of
498 backgrounds, I think, that's super beneficial to not just you, because it makes your
499 teaching easier, but it also helps them as well. They are learning in an environment
500 with people from a bunch of different backgrounds. I would say you couldn't teach an
501 American the same way you could teach someone from Scandinavia. I feel like people
502 in Scandinavia pick things up just a lot better than Americans.

503 **LE:** Okay, great. Thank you for sharing that. I will definitely consider it. Then that's it for
504 now. Thanks again for your time. I appreciate it so much!

505 **DH:** You're very welcome. It was fun meeting you and talk to you soon!

506 **LE:** Sure. Bye!

Appendix 11:

Interview Evaluation-Table

Appx.	Line(s)	Statement	Collation
Leadership Characteristics			
3	226-228	Empathy, Patience, Compassion	TW (204-209) AD (120) LS (291-296)
3	229-230, 281-282	Cultural Awareness / International Experience; in tech also local teams are really multicultural (TW 207-209, DL 130-133, EP 369-373)	TW (188-192)
3	233-242	Vision to Execution (Design and Communication)	
3	261-265	Curiosity about team members, who are they, what do they want	AD (111-112)
3	280-287	Self-Awareness	
9	212-215	Consciousness (especially with time differences)	
3	346-356	Strong Communicator	TW (77-80) AD (120) EP (293-297)
4	60-69	Transparency, Honesty with team and yourself	TW (247-254)
5	46-54	Contextual knowledge helpful	EP (451-453)
9	347	Approachable	
10	171-178	Open to the idea of being wrong	
10	165-168	Boy scout attributes: trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent	
Leadership Behavior/Tasks			
3	38-51	TW - servant leadership, enabling the team; her leadership style is very personal, empower autonomy; clear vision/strategy creates autonomy and helps alignment	
10	411-416, 425-430	Interact with everyone differently, but still treat everyone the same	NS
3	257-261	Your values relate to where you grew up, it shapes the way you see the world and this reflects in your leadership; DH: analogy of raising kids, certain values you want them to have, but still have their own personality; Agreement GLOBE Study: "Leadership is culturally contingent. That is, views of the importance and value of leadership vary across cultures." p. 5	TW (217-219) AD (238-246) DH (368-383)
3	292-299, 319-321	Create strong relationships / built trust, feeling of "one team"	TW (111-117) EP (258-261)
4	37-57	Big difference between leader and manager, everyone needs to know leader (AD: leadership more emotional, management task related)	AD (115-117)
4	139-141	Even out the way for your team to collaborate without barriers	LS (149-154) EP (76-81)

Appx.	Line(s)	Statement	Collation
9	86-88, 398-407	Leadership tasks: disciplinaries, pay negotiations, performance reviews etc. / Disciplinaries very tricky online	DH (232-238)
5	167-169	Tasks get amplified in a distributed set-up (characteristics more intense), put more effort into everything	DH (191-195, 361-362) AD (124-126, 204 ff.) XY (164-170)
6	55-79, 175-181	Start with leading yourself, then lead forward, lead across, lead through and lead within (courage, inclusion, continuous growth); EP: lead by example	EP (273)
6	169-170	Retaining company culture (AD: Corporate culture influences the multicultural team, not the other way around)	AD (251-260) DH (296-302)
8	26-30	Situational leadership, there is no one right way	DL (165-174) DH (135 ff.)
8	58-74	Create presence online, make work fun, DH: get to know your people	DH (267-273)
8	128-137	Equality in the team: in case of time zone differences, make sure the same person doesn't always have to stay late/be early (refer to one remote - all remote in line 60) EP: be there in person for everyone not possible all the time	EP (132-138)
8	247-252	Get out of the way of your team; professionals, they know what they are doing (NO MICROMANAGING), remove roadblocks	EP (451-453) DH (142-148, 157, 240-241)
8	262-272	Awareness for signs of mental illness in the team (people tend to work more)	
9	109, 123-129	Voice of the team, take responsibility for them, escalate things through	DH (403-407)
10	235-238	Coaching is a big task	
10	179-186	Follow you because they like what you represent, it's about cohesion	
Goal Alignment			
3	55-70	Made from scratch (new to role), globally shared documents with initiatives and locations to monitor processes in the regions (learn from each other); shared docs, global calls, structure and same systems; EP: prepare for meetings, collect questions and to do's in advance	EP (192-199, 218-227)
3	164-171	Shared goal/vision is a must; people need a reason to connect (TW: OKRs), remove ambiguity about goals, otherwise motivation is gone (AD)	TW (101-107) DL (110-113) DL (140-145) AD (137) EP (171-177)
4	49-57	Get everyone together every once in a while, treat everyone the same (make people feel heard; empower them to share concerns, ideas, feedback) LS: Feedback loops are critical!	XY (183-188) LS (92-99)
4	87-89	Teams in different locations - benefits understanding market requirements, good for product and operational related companies	
4	135-138	Performance increased by virtual collaboration - things are clearer and more logical, people are more up to date	
5	136-145, 180-184	People have individual solutioning approaches, important are outcomes; give people freedom	TW, EP

Appx.	Line(s)	Statement	Collation
6	114-122	Sales position - quantitative and qualitative goals; reviews each 6 months (self-review, peer review, hierarchical element)	
8	34-48	Team agreements - expectations, core hours, how to collaborate, which tools to use, where's the information, weekly goals etc.	DH (218-229)
Work Environment			
5	37-40	Different set-up of distributed delivery (teams are distributed, distributed team), in Daniels Project teams are in one location but different teams are in different locations	
3	114-120	At TW Natalia creates informal space through chat, video etc. where team members can express feelings, thoughts etc. outside of a meeting	TW (117-125)
3	171-175	Empathy and cultural awareness are important; being curious and make topic relatable to everyone	EP (151-160)
4	145-150	Always face to face kick-off, onboarding in HQ Hamburg	EP (88-92) remote, only f2f in London
4	151-156, 164-166	Regular offsites, fly around to visit locations, team building (dinner, beers)	DH (286-296)
4	159-162	Allow home office as much as possible, everybody is remote, no silos	DL (96-101)
4	195-201	Start-up culture - open, transparent, flat in hierarchies, familiar atmosphere	
4	222-231	All work is remote and distributed at FREE NOW, paired with f2f time, always have a local colleague who has project ownership and is CP for stakeholder	
5	58-62	At TW they have guilds inside projects where people with similar roles exchange knowledge, drive cross team initiatives and update the other teams	
9	90-104	Video Calls, Google Hangouts, regional leads to support and be present, biweekly meetings with leads and office hour every day for team to reach out	
5	93-96	Roles that interact a lot should meet f2f regularly	
6	83-111	Regular group calls, live chats, video conferencing, retreats for whole company, weekly stand-ups, town halls with leadership	
6	139-144	Only get together f2f when something is really meaningful, creates impact	
7	137	Motivational environment essential to productivity	
9	306-309	Praise and recognition are a huge factor	
7	149-153	Work environment inspired from agile (many tech companies use agile), stand ups, minimal number of meetings, rely on tools for the rest (Trainer suggests, works for company XY and TW)	XY (136-140) DH (116-119)
8	178-187	Different people need different levels of humanness when working together, for some video/remote is plenty while others need physical interaction; takes more time and attention to create relationships. (EP: people really miss that human element)	EP (147-151) DH (317-344)
Challenges			
7	137-141	Challenges can be huge benefits when overcome	TW

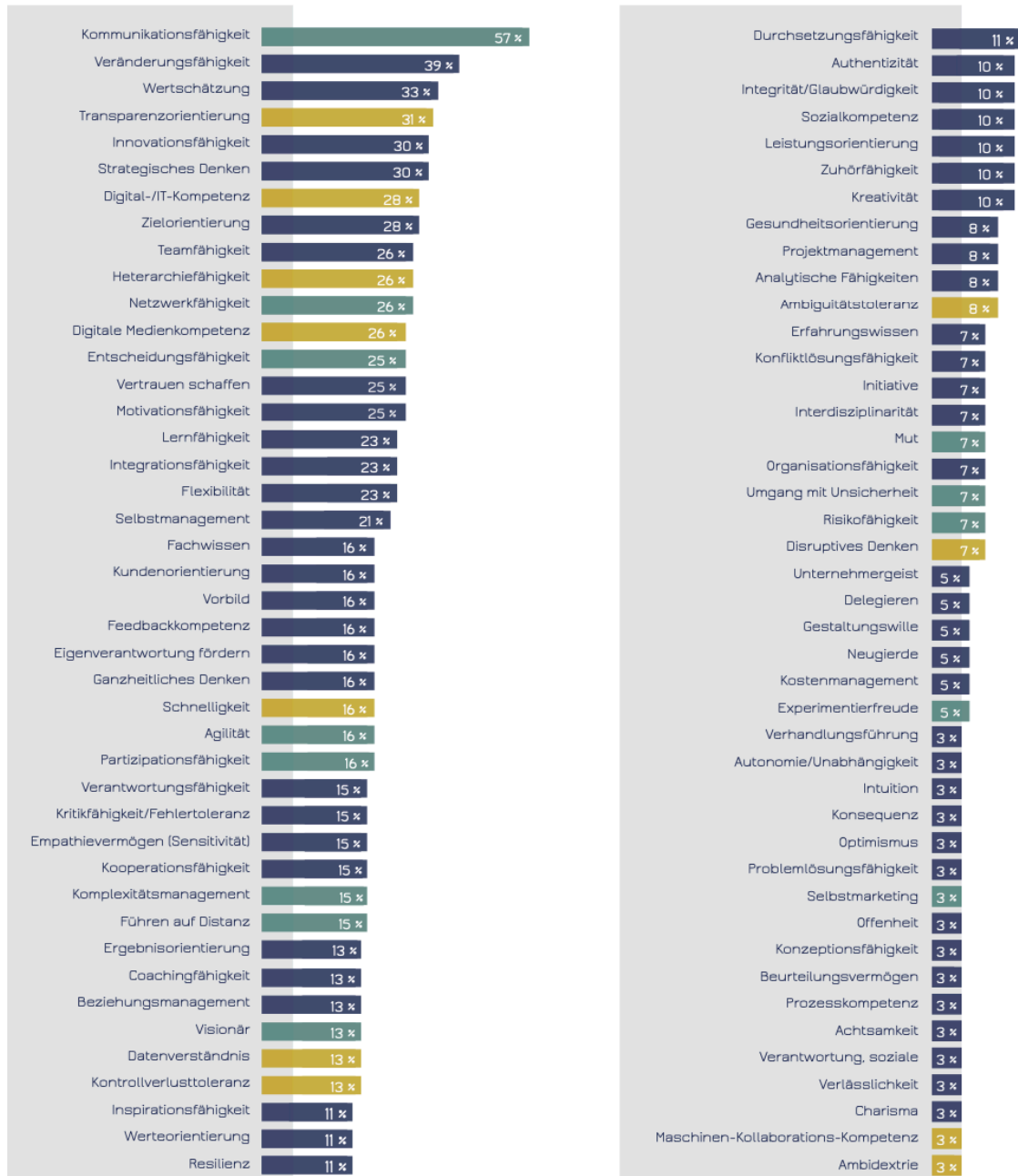
Appx.	Line(s)	Statement	Collation
3	76-89, 84-110	Time zones are a blocker, own time management as a leader solution: be in the centre (geographic location), record calls for preparation and option to re-watch (benefit: not so much travelling needed), prevent them if possible or keep as small as possible (shared leadership, around the sun etc. to reduce delays in responses) DH: Time zones trickier the more people are involved and the more distant	DL (193-195) XY (126-132) AD (170-187) LS (121-137) EP (318-321) DH (36-44)
3	90-97, 185-191	Over-communication / right amount of communication	EP (316-317)
8	77-80	Communication: so many different styles	
9	138-142	Feedback loops from people that don't really know you?	
3	132-142	Team member connection / feeling of one team; solution: get to know the individuals and connect them through common interests	TW (74-80) DL (155-160)
3	156-159	Internet connection / infrastructure	LS (86)
3	199-220	Competing priorities - realistic lead times, manage expectations	
3	303-309, 335-339	Totally different relationships with all team members, mass communication not possible	DH
3	369-392	Team composition (international), benefit: diversity increases results, LS: Diversity is a superpower; EP: diverse professional backgrounds	TW (185-192) XY (153-156) LS (190-193) EP (353-358)
6	159-163	Diversity creates extra effort (biases), DH: cultural differences need awareness; e.g. DH (399-400) Asian countries are very risk averse, need lots of confirmation	AD (221-227) LS (203-210) DH (200-207)
6	151-152	Hard to find talent - tap into global workforce	
4	46-48	Distance between remote location and leader - hard to get a hold of people	connect to feedback-loops EP
4	90-91	Laws in different countries are really different (general, labour laws)	
4	105-107	Data preparation always a bottleneck	
4	131-133	Language barriers	DL (193) EP (340-343)
4	168-177	Virtual collaboration (things getting lost in video calls, people don't manage themselves properly)	
5	40-44	Between team communication tricky when teams are not in same location	
5	105-107, 124-126	Decision making process - enabling everyone to contribute, access to information, centralized decision communication	
5	161-163	Conflict Management - issues harder to spot, team structure is important (who to escalate things to?)	AD (209-216) TW LS (141-154)
9	299-306, 382-386	Getting to know people helps in conflict situations; sit down, listen, find a solution	DH (244-250)
9	322-332	Delivering bad news	
5	239-241	Cost factor - every alignment/issue etc will cost the company money	
7	158-160	Usage of collaboration tools	

Appx.	Line(s)	Statement	Collation
7	272-283	Company culture doesn't embrace what it means to be remote; in this case the whole company structure needs to be adjusted	
8	85-92	Facilitation: trying to implement what works in person online, which is not working	EP
Training Approach			
4	234-236	Communication and knowledge sharing	AD (105)
4	236-238	Collaboration Tools (AD: demand assessment - choice of two topics - one winner incl. tools) (LS: doesn't train specific tools, but dislikes Microsoft teams, Skype for Business)	AD (105, 156-160) LS (108-117) EP (426-432)
4	238-240	Intercultural relations/awareness	AD (219-227, 230-233) LS (158-170)
4	240	How to create personal relationships/trust base remotely	DL (207-211) AD (191-200) LS (158 f.-277) EP (420) DH (436-446)
5	203-207	Asynchronous decision-making process	
6	194-196	Corporate culture that keeps people together even when remote	DH (436-446)
7	106	Virtual way of working is different from classic models	
8	219-241	Character profiles when there is no f2f kick-off (great teambuilding)	
8	275	Team Agreements	
8	275	How to facilitate online	
8	278	Feedback & Appreciation	
9	421-423	How to succeed as individuals but also as a collective	
10	446-452	Kick-off new areas with new people	
7	71-80	Experiential Training - in teams, one-on-one; don't mix companies at the moment	
7	86-97	F2f duration longer, remote max 6 hours divided on 3 days (homework, process information)	

Appendix 12:

Extract from: Leadership Competencies in the Digital Era after IFIDZ (2019)

Kompetenz-Ranking



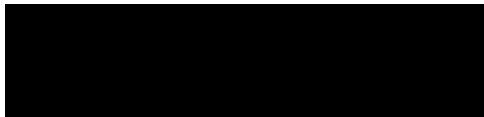
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- „Digitale Kompetenzen“ umfassen Kompetenzen, die im „vor-digitalen Zeitalter“ entweder noch nicht existierten oder kaum eine Bedeutung hatten und erst im Kontext der Digitalisierung signifikant an Relevanz gewonnen haben.

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Lisa Engel