COMPANY REPORT

Leader Wellbeing within Remote Environments Through sustainable Human Resource Management

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A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

This year has been filled with unprecedented challenges and continuous change. As the future of work evolves, I hope people remember to prioritise their own wellbeing. There is no right way of doing it: what works for one might not work for the next. It's all about taking a moment for yourself and trying out what makes you feel best. Finding your balance will best sustain your wellbeing.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Substantial global workforce changes, triggered by COVID-19, magnifies the importance of leader wellbeing. The remote work transition imposes vulnerabilities on leaders, which may lead to detrimental outcomes. Sustainable Human Resource Management practices in wellbeing is a prevalent research topic; however, a focus on leaders is neglected within academic literature. Insufficient leader wellbeing aggravates resource depletion, compromising performance and decision making, whereas attained leader wellbeing potentially facilitates sustainable advantages for leaders, employees and organisations.

Through a Design-Based Research approach, composed of two studies, the researcher explored '*How may sustainable Human Resource Management facilitate the wellbeing of leaders within in a remote environment?*'. Study 1 unveils which sustainable Human Resource Management practices support leader wellbeing, while reinstating the industry wide problem: leader wellbeing negligence. Study 2 investigates the effectiveness of three interventions on leader wellbeing in the remote environment by using before-after measurements and evaluating the solution blueprint.

Following the exploratory research of the first nine semi-structured interviews, the findings demonstrate a degree of leader negligence but amplify the potential influences positive work environments have on wellbeing. Leaders felt that practices addressing wellbeing, learning and development, and work-life balance would support their wellbeing, thus the solution blueprint incorporated these three perspectives. Initial findings were disseminated with the case study opening the opportunity for feedback and action. Furthermore, the second round of interviews highlighted that the benefits and improvement potential of the solution blueprint. By completing the Design-Based Research cycle, the researcher appraised and improved the solution blueprint and the implementation process.

Both Study 1 and 2 reinstate that wellbeing, learning and development and work-life balance practices facilitate leader wellbeing. Thus, the implemented sustainable HRM solution blueprint supported leaders' wellbeing while working remotely, with the revised solution blueprint posing the opportunity for a greater impact. Despite perceived wellbeing improvements being minimal, this research initiated a crucial conversation amongst leaders, demonstrating the importance of wellbeing and need for systematic change within organisations.

GLOSSARY

Leader wellbeing

'The overall quality of an employee's experience and functioning at work'

(Grant, Christianson and Price, 2007: p.52)

Remote work

'Organisational work performed outside of the normal organisational confines of space and time'

(Olson, 1983: p.182)

Sustainable HRM

'The pattern of planned or emerging HR strategies and practices intended to enable the achievement of financial, social and ecological goals while simultaneously reproducing the HR base over a long term'

(Kramar, 2014: p.1084)

Work-Life Balance

'The extent to which an individual is engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role ...'

(Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw, 2003: p.513)

ACRONYMS

HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
UN	United Nations

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INTRODUCTION

Leader wellbeing remains a pressing matter for organisations who neglect to recognise its repercussions (Wirtz, Rigotti, Otto and Loeb, 2017). The nature of wellbeing is vital for any human; it is an essential factor in the quality of life (ODPHP, 2020) and is a *universal* human right (WTO, 2020). In today's fast-changing environment, organisations strive to facilitate wellbeing (Ponting, 2020), however, a clear focus remains on the mass employees, neglecting leaders (Roche, 2013). Leaders are best identified by their strong interpersonal skills, social networking capabilities, confidence and empathy (Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Ferris et al., 2005). Leadership stems from a formal or informal context (Van de Mieroop, Clifton and Verhelst, 2020), where formal leaders hold '*a position of leadership*' (Pielstick, 2000, p.100). However, the association with hierarchical positioning dwindles (Oedzes, Van der Vegt, Rink, 2019), enabling individuals to be perceived as leaders irrespectively of their position (Pielstick, 2000).

External parties often perceive leaders as dynamic, sensitive, intelligent and motivated, which are key attributes that transmit strength and wellbeing (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005). Barling and Cloutier (2017) unveil that leaders are considered responsible for wellbeing, contributing to the oversight in academic literature. Brazeau, Frenzel and Prescot (2020) support this notion, believing leadership predominantly promotes wellbeing. However, insufficient wellbeing levels causes resource depletion (mental and physical energy) triggering defective decision making (Bernerth and Hirschfeld, 2016), drastic changes in leader behaviour and interaction (Byrne et al., 2014), and the risk of burnout (Guillen-Royo, 2016; Wirtz et al., 2017). In 2020 alone, 76% of the Gallup study participants experienced some form of work burnout (Wigert, 2020). The consequences of leader wellbeing negligence constitute an industry-wide problem. Fisher (2002) proposes work-life balance adjustments, while Panaccio, Donia, Saint-Michel and Liden (2015) recommend scanning the work environment to stimulate idyllic conditions. Nonetheless, it is vital to further investigate sustainable leader wellbeing solutions.

The United Nations (UN) recognises that wellbeing establishes sustainable development; thus, 'Good Health and Wellbeing' has been identified as the third Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for 2030 (UN, 2020). With changing working conditions, it has become increasingly prevalent to designate attention towards leader wellbeing (Barling and Cloutier, 2017). After all, we must recognise that leaders are a viable source of sustainable competitive advantages when talent is managed correctly (Avedon and Scholes, 2009; Madi and Almsafir, 2014; Toor and Ofori, 2010). Understanding how to sustain their attributes is of the essence when wishing to achieve organisational success (Rabbi, Ahad, Kousar and Ali, 2015). Therefore, it remains crucial to preserve the talents' experience and functioning at work to support their wellbeing (McLellan, 2017) and an organisation's competitive edge (Avedon and Scholes, 2009). As without it, detrimental effects may spill over to the workforce productivity (Parry and Sherman, 2015) imposing unfavourable influences on SDG eight 'Decent Work and Economic Growth' (UN, 2020).

The global health crisis has wounded the progression of the UN SDGs yet exemplifies its importance. COVID-19 initiated a chain of drastic measures, where 88% of global organisations have transitioned towards remote work (Baker, 2020). The term is defined as '*organisational work performed outside of the normal organisational confines of space and time*' (Olson, 1983, p.182). Work is revolutionising, where technological advances initiate continuous shifts in the international working economy (Perez, 1983; Howells, 2005). However, according to a recent study, 25% of employees believe that their organisation have effectively developed digital leaders, where only 30% of future leaders are adequately trained to meet the evolving changes (Zuckerman, 2020).

These cascading changes put leaders under immense pressure, who must facilitate a smooth transition to remote work, tarnishing their wellbeing. Prior to the pandemic, remote work was considered optional (Felstead and Henseke, 2017). Organisations pose it as an adaptation to meet the needs of their employees and provide flexibility (Wilson, Sofroniou, Beaven, Mary-Grillings and Perkins, 2016). However, remote work has ramifications that, due to personal choice, have previously been minimised. Now, consequences of a blurred work-life balance and work exhaustion are magnified due to the ongoing pandemic (Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai and Bendz, 2020). Organisations prioritise the safety of their workforce, by implementing remote work, but fail to recognise its long-term repercussions on leader wellbeing.

Inadvertently Human Resource Management (HRM) absolved themselves from their core responsibility of talent management: taking care of their employees. A shift towards workforce performance and talent acquisition absorbs the majority of their attention (Vanhala and Tuomi, 2006; Guest, 2017), whereby, the demands for a sustainable perspective within HRM have intensified (Ehnert, Matthews and Muller-Camen 2020). Sustainable HRM can be defined as:

> '*the pattern of planned or emerging Human Resource (HR) strategies and practices intended to enable the achievement of financial, social and ecological goals while simultaneously reproducing the HR base over a long term*'. *(Kramar, 2014, p.1084)*

Ehnert and Harry (2012) emphasise the importance of incorporating human regeneration and development into sustainable HRM practices, while Fisher (2002) further elaborates on implementing work-life balance strategies to truly preserve human and social capital. Current practices do exist to sustain employee wellbeing; however, one must consider that one size does not fit all, especially for leaders who have diverse experiences and are responsible for greater complexity.

Furthermore, leader wellbeing is dynamic and multidimensional, where a change in one variable has altering influences on another (Baptiste, 2008). COVID-19 heightened this vulnerability, where the challenges of remote work exceed the natural domain of responsibilities leaders typically face. Leaders are juggling their personal and work responsibilities, while also ensuring their employees' wellbeing. Often employees share their hardships, and leaders are expected to take it in, without considering the heavy burden placed or emotional impact (Pickering, 2021). A study highlights that 42% of the participants experience competing priorities, while 67% have interruptions during work (Gallup, 2020). It is unfeasible for leaders to manage these aspects while ensuring their wellbeing; therefore, sustainable HRM must contribute to facilitating positive qualities of leaders' experiences and functioning at work, while ensuring long-term sustainable remote work strategies (Makarius, Larson and Vroman, 2021).

Wellbeing is a prerequisite towards the quality of life, this includes the experiences leaders have within their work environments (Rao and Min, 2018). Leader wellbeing, learning and development, and work-life balance are key sustainable HRM practices identified by relevant academics. It is imperative that HRM actively mediates between organisational performance and wellbeing by assessing leader work conditions to provide sustainable environments (Kalliath and Kalliath, 2012). Leaders must also be given the opportunity to develop their competencies, as it prepares and supports them for their roles (Wikhamn, 2019; Spreitzer, 1995). The 2019 Global Human Capital Trends survey indicates that 80% identify leadership as a high priority; however, only 41% feel that their organisations are '*ready to fulfil their leadership requirements*' (Volini et al., 2019, p.1), thus emphasising the need to adjust development programs. Lastly, remote work has imposed negative implications on leaders' work-life balance; the organisation must identify how to maintain a balance (Zaugg, Blum and Thom, 2001).

This research, which is composed of two studies, investigates a group of leaders, within a case study, and how they have been fairing within the remote environment. Study 1 aims to unveil how sustainable HRM may contribute towards their wellbeing by exploring their perception of wellbeing, the types of learning and development they have undergone, and evaluating their work-life balance. Furthermore, Study 1 provides an opportunity to reconfirm the industry wide problem, source the causes and consequences of leader wellbeing negligence, and find a possible sustainable HRM solution based on the propositions through a qualitative exploration. The designed solution blueprint will be implemented within the case study, where Study 2 will explore and evaluate how the solution blueprint, composed of three sustainable HRM interventions, has influenced the experimental and control groups' leader wellbeing in the remote environment. The evaluation will appraise the implementation process and solution blueprint, allowing the researcher to integrate the leaders' feedback and outcomes to make corrective adjustments to the solution blueprint.

This research is valuable for numerous stakeholders; the findings and knowledge primarily benefit leaders and future leaders. The identified solution will help improve their wellbeing, which positively contributes to the quality of life and experiences. Additionally, these positive effects enable leaders to perform at higher levels within sustainable remote work environments. Secondly, this achievement directly influences employee's wellbeing, where flourishing environments and positive leader-employee relationships are established. Finally, when leader and employee wellbeing are maintained, organisations may benefit from positive outcomes in productivity, corporate culture and brand reputations.

Drawn upon the discussion, the aim of this research will be to gain an understanding of the relationship between the remote work environment and leader wellbeing, while exploring how sustainable HRM practices are associated. The conceptual model (Figure 1) will provide guidance and a foundation for the literature review, in order to achieve a concrete analysis and propositions. Thus, the research question has been derived:

How may sustainable Human Resource Management facilitate the wellbeing of leaders working in a remote environment?
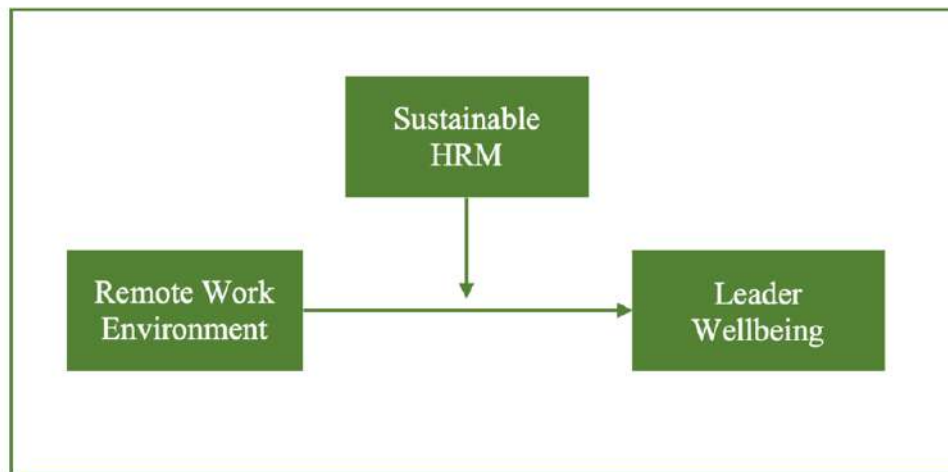
Figure 1. Remote Work Leader Wellbeing Framework

LITERATURE REVIEW

The complexity of Leader Wellbeing

When investigating leader wellbeing, academic articles are scarce; the topic is often overlooked (Bernerth and Hirschfeld, 2016). However, while conceptualising this matter, employee or work wellbeing are considered coinciding terms (Beamish, 2019). Extensive literature has been consulted to unearth the meaning; however, countless definitions have yet to provide a complete mutual understanding. Grant, Christianson and Price (2007, p.52) build upon Warr's (1987) definition of work wellbeing as '*the overall quality of an employee's experience and functioning at work*'. They highlight psychological, physical and social functions as three main components: creating a depth of dimensions to the definition. Comparably, Cartwright and Cooper (2009) interpret it as the positive physical, mental and emotional state; while Currie (2003) reiterates that positive work experiences are conducive to wellbeing. 'Psychological', 'mental', and 'emotional' are interchangeable terms, embracing the commonalities and multidimensional traits within the academics' definitions.

However, wellbeing is dynamic; changing environments have a significant influence. Baptiste (2008) and Azarbouyeh and Naini (2014) explore the relationship of wellbeing and the quality of life; a stress-free and physically safe environment contribute to wellbeing. Similarly, Bakke (2005) explores conditional environments as facilitating factors. The work environment remains relevant as its constructs determine a positive or negative outcome. According to Guest and Conway (2004), six elements of a positive environment include manageable workload, personal control over a job, organisational support, positive work relations, a clear role and lastly a sense of control of involvement in organisational changes. However, the multidimensional characteristics of wellbeing must not be undermined; a change in one dimension may irrespectively inflict unintended consequences on another (Grant et al., 2007).

The outcome of leader wellbeing goes beyond environmental conditions. Both the chosen leadership- and-life balance of a leader have influencing effects (Panaccio, Donia, Saint-Michel and Liden, 2015; Järlström, Saru and Vanhala, 2018). Greenhouse, Collins and Shaw (2003, p.513) define work-life balance as '*the extent to which an individual is - and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role*'. A distinctive balance provides positive attitudes and behaviours, contributing to increased wellbeing and quality of life (Fisher, 2002). Contrarily, an imbalance increases stress (Burke, 1988), reduces job and life satisfaction (Allen, Herst, Bruck and Sutton, 2000), and consequently decreases wellbeing and quality of life (Grant-Vallone and Donaldson, 2001).

Furthermore, Kaluza, Boer, Buengeler and van Dick (2020) highlight that destructive leadership types negatively contribute towards leader wellbeing, when compared to passive styles. Similarly, Panaccio et al., (2015) elaborate that over time, a service leadership approach presents detrimental effects on wellbeing. Servant leaders become emotionally draining by putting the needs of others before their own (Zhang, Zheng, Zhang, Xu, Lui and Chen, 2019), which may become a commonality when working remotely.

The Evolution of Remote Working

Businesses are going against societal norms and offering flexible work solutions to meet their employee's needs (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram and Simons, 1995). Messenger and Gschwind (2016) note technological evolutions enable stable networks for remote connectivity. Coincidingly, an economic shift towards the knowledge economy increased intangible economic assets (Drucker, 1959; Thompson, Warhurst and Callaghan 2001), which Felstead and Henseke (2017, p.197) describe as '*knowledge creation becoming less spatially bound*'. Additionally, the flexible firm, associated with adaptable work schedules and locations, enables remote work (Kelliher and Anderson, 2010).

However, Purvanova (2014) claims that organisations choose this approach to reduce costs and utilise its unique flexibility, while Bailyn, Rayman, Bengtsen, Carré and Tierney (2001) elaborate that the workforce displays interest due to the ability to equalise their work-life balance. Similar to flexible firms, organisational adaptations entail changes within traditional working conditions (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram and Simons, 1995), where feminisation has significantly contributed towards organisations providing adaptations, by meeting employees' personal and domestic circumstances (Wilson et al., 2016; Felstead and Henseke, 2017). In 2020, the global pandemic triggered most non-essential organisations to convert to remote work (Bartik, Cullen, Glaeser, Luca and Stanton, 2020).

Countless academics have examined the implications of remote work; however, for the most part, this has been within the context that individuals sought it out (Bailyn et al., 2001). Back in 1985, Elling elaborates that remote work offers the possibility to integrate the work and professional life, she saw this as an opportunity to both save energy and space. Westfall (1998) shares a similar view, that costs are significantly reduced. More recently, academics identified work exhaustion (Golden, 2006), isolation (Cooper and Kurland, 2002), lack of organisational identification (Thatcher and Zhu, 2006; Wiesenfeld et al., 2001) and blurred work-home boundaries (Mirchandani, 2000; Crosbie and Moore, 2004; Marsh and Musson, 2008) as destructive outcomes.

Contrarily, increased productivity and job satisfaction is associated with remote work (Kalliath and Kalliath, 2012; Wheatley, 2012); however, the academics do not disclose which specific work agreements were made. With COVID-19, many individuals have been forced to work from home, without having the organisation consider their domestic or personal circumstances (Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai and Bendz, 2020). Parents struggle to balance their responsibilities between work and their children; stress and fear levels increased tremendously, while time management and planning became difficult to achieve (Garbe, Ogurlu, Logan and Cook, 2020). Remote working may seem ideal in practice, however, during uncertain circumstances, external factors may aggravate adverse consequences; identifying sustainable practices for remote work is crucial.

Sustainable HRM: The Optimal Solution?

The concept of sustainable HRM is in its infancy; thus its definition remains ambiguous (Wikhamn, 2019). Inherently, Bhushan and MacKenzie (1992) elaborate that sustainable HRM tackles both societal and ecological issues, while Rainey (2010) explains that it involves altering organisational processes through environmentally sustainable solutions. Similarly, Dyllick's and Hockerts' (2002) interpretation focuses on the economic, social and ecological aspects. More concretely, Kramar (2014, p.1084) emphasises that sustainable HRM incorporates strategies and practices which aim to achieve *'financial, social and ecological goals while simultaneously reproducing the HR base over a long term'*. Through a detailed focus on sustaining human capital, organisational triple bottom lines (people, planet and profit) may be achieved.

However, academic literature neglects to specify sustainable HRM practices. Chams and García-Blandón (2019) merely hint control of employee competencies and resource consumption. Whereas, Ehnert and Harry (2012, p.227), summarise that a '*focus on human regeneration, health and development is where sustainable work systems has informed and overlaps within the works on sustainable HRM*'. Accordingly, HRM is considered responsible for wellbeing (Van De Voorde, Paauwe and Van Veldhoven 2012), learning and development (Ehnert and Harry, 2012), and work-life balance (Mazur, 2015) of their workforce, specifically their leaders. These elements are considered due to their prevalence in the literature.

HRM is accountable for leader wellbeing (Van De Voorde et al., 2012); ideally, HRM comprehends it's multidimensional characteristics, where conceptual awareness and active contribution deems exemplar (Kowalski and Loretto, 2017). However, an increased focus on leader performance and financial measures distracts them from their primary responsibility towards wellbeing (Vanhala and Tuomi, 2006; Guest, 2017). Grawitch, Gottschalk and Munz (2006) argue that the mediation between the two is possible and critical towards facilitating positive performance. Alternatively, Kalliath and Kalliath (2012) state that environmental factors, beyond workplace performance, negatively influence wellbeing, and thus job and organisational performance.

The diverged academic views, nevertheless, reiterate the importance of assessing the work conditions, more specifically the leaders' remote environments, to support positive outcomes. There cannot be a trade-off between organisational performance and wellbeing. Organisations should seek indirect paths towards performance improvements that simultaneously provide a significant positive effect on wellbeing (Schmidt, Welch and Wilson, 2000; Williams, 1994). Hereby, we propose:

Proposition 1: *Wellbeing practices support leader wellbeing in remote environments.*

Moreover, development falls under the category of sustainable HRM practices that enable imperishable work systems within organisations (Ehnert, 2009). Wikhamn (2019) identifies learning and development as an essential element when contributing to '*an organisation's social sustainability and responsibility profile*' (p.103). According to Spreitzer (1995) competence development empowers the individuals, providing preparation and support for their role. Leaders are within this scope; leader development relates to an organisation's human capital, while leadership development to their social capital (Day, 2001).

Correspondingly, Suutari (2002) recognises the urge to develop leaders; he explores extensive literature to understand which competencies and actions contribute towards effective development. Now more than ever, leaders require specific expertise on how to approach uncertain circumstance that may occur within virtual work environments. Dalakoura (2010) elaborates that leadership development creates an integrated network of multiple leaders, building a sustainable leader structure within organisations, while leader development improves and expands competencies and skills of individual leaders. She emphasises that both initiatives must be integrated within everyday practices to enhance effective development at all levels.

According to Keeman, Näswall, Malinen and Kuntz (2017) learning and development facilitates wellbeing. Continuous learning stimulates self-esteem, promotes an active life and encourages social interactions, which Feinstein and Hammond (2007) argue has positive effects. A recent study indicated that evidence-based learning interventions support wellbeing at larger scales (Yaden, Claydon, Bathgate, Platt and Santos, 2021).

Hereby, we propose:

Proposition 2: *Learning and development practices support leader wellbeing in remote environments.*

Furthermore, a growing focus returns to work-life balance; Ehnert, Harry and Zink (2013) consider it to be an essential practice within sustainable HRM. Similarly, Stankevičiūtė and Savanevičienė (2018) identify work-life balance as a key characteristic, under the category of 'care of employees', while Zaugg, Blum and Thom (2001) believe the balance must be an organisational objective. According to Song and Goa (2020), blurred lines of remote working may trigger work-life conflict, imposing consequences on leader wellbeing. However, Felstead, Jewson, Phizacklea and Walters (2002, p.65) claim that '*when working at home is a requirement ... it does not contribute to work-life balance*', supporting the aforementioned notion.

However, Kelliher and Anderson (2010) elaborate that work intensification has become a consequence for leaders who fail to segregate their professional and personal lives when working virtually, hinting the influences remote work has on the work-life balance. Thus, organisational proactiveness is imperative, as informational, financial, time-related and direct support for leaders enable the achievement of work-life balance (Hoeppe, 2014). Herewith, we propose:

Proposition 3: *Work-life balance practices support leader wellbeing in remote environments.* Drawn upon the literature review, the interlinking relations between leader wellbeing, remote work and sustainable HRM are apparent. Figure 2. illustrates the adapted conceptual framework.
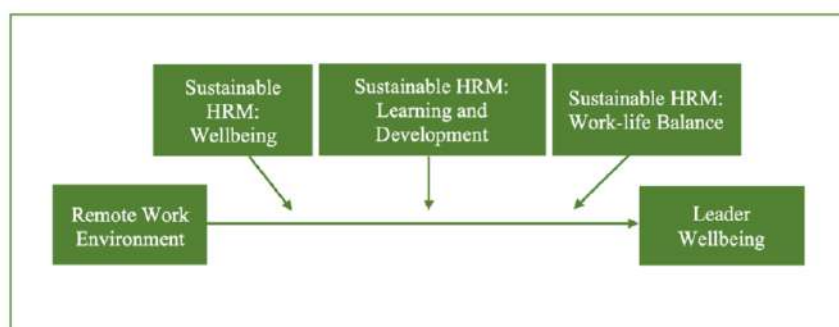
Figure 2. Remote Work Leader Wellbeing Framework – second version

METHODOLOGY

Research Philosophy, Approach and Strategy

For this research, interpretivism, a philosophical stance linked to epistemology (Hiller, 2016) was the main chosen research branch (illustrated in Figure 3). Epistemology entails '*how phenomena [can] come to be known*' (Giacomini, 2010: p.131), while interpretivism explores '*meaning and motives behind people's actions like: behaviour and interactions with others in the society and culture*' (Chowdhury, 2014: p.433).
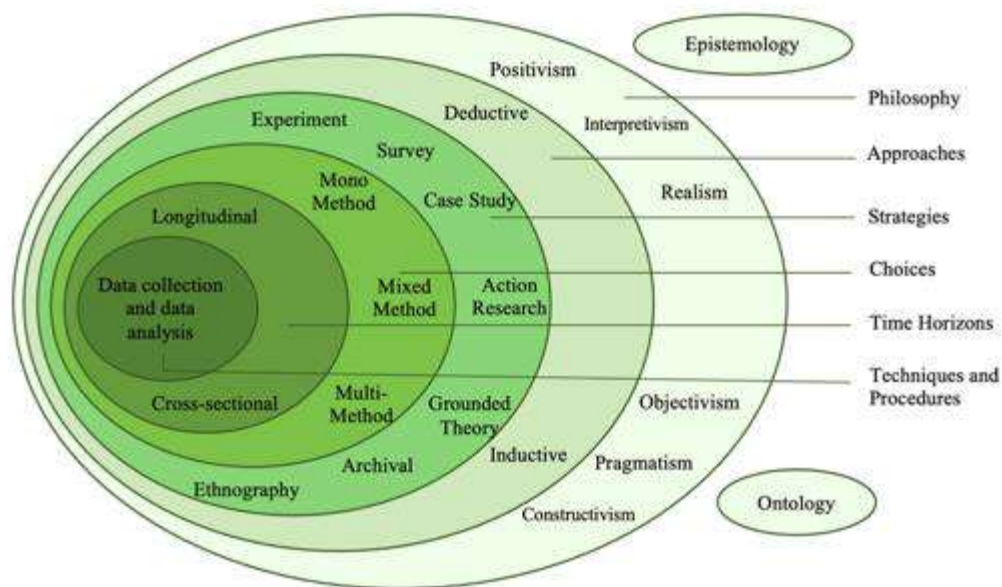
Figure 3. Research Onion (Saunders et al., 2009: p.108)

There are three reasons as to why this philosophy was utilised. Firstly, interpretivism acknowledges differences between individuals, incorporating a human interest (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012). Secondly, this approach allows one to explore the field more in-depth (Hiller, 2016). Finally, interpretivism provides an ideal approach towards exploring the field of HR and leader wellbeing (Saunders et al., 2009). All aforementioned aspects ensured that this approach provides a good foundation towards exploring a social phenomenon (Chowdhury, 2014).

To collect the perspective of leaders working remotely, qualitative data was utilised. This approach generates '*narrative or non-numeric information*' and '*focuses on the experiences and meanings of individuals*' (Carter and Henderson, 2005: p.215). Based on the literature review and theoretical frameworks, a deductive approach allowed the researcher to refute or affirm the propositions (Azungah, 2018). However, an opportunity for an inductive approach was left open, due to lacking leader wellbeing literature, which enabled the opportunity for a deeper insight into new concepts that may answer the research question (Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 2015). This research, composed of two studies (Appendix 1), utilised semi-structured interviews and was based on a set of open-ended questions that created a guide to align the interviews. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) state that this approach still allows one to deviate, allowing the opportunity for follow up questions.

The researcher used a single case study; the following page (Figure 4) provides background knowledge on the case study's size, industry, culture and study sample. Yin (2012) states that this strategy provides a real-life context to the problem at hand while enabling a holistic approach, as only one case study was used. Considering the data required and the purpose, the researcher utilised interviews to gather primary data, which according to Trochim (2020) fall under the category of surveys. As this research involved real individual cases, who might wish to remain anonymous, the researcher ensured their confidentiality with a signed agreement.

Figure 4. Case Study Infographic

* People Services refers to HRM. **Leaders did not participate in the study.

Research Choice and Time Horizon

A mono-qualitative method was the best fit for this research as a total of 18 semi-structured one-on-one interviews with nine leaders were conducted. A qualitative approach provides flexibility and the ability to gain a deeper insight (Kahlke, 2014). Furthermore, the flexibility allowed the researcher to be intuitive when asking further follow up questions, which according to Black (1994) opens the possibility of discovering or providing a greater understanding towards the phenomena explored.

Taking into consideration that the research is composed of two studies, where data was collected at two points in time, the research was longitudinal. This enabled the researcher to take a before and after measurement of leader wellbeing, also known as a pre-post random experimental research design (Trochim, 2002). However, due to the time constraint and willingness of participation, a non-probable sampling technique, more specifically purposive sampling, was utilised. This allowed the researcher to select the sample of nine participants (Appendix 2), which according to Saunders et al. (2009) provides the possibility to gain detailed data to answer the research question.

Techniques and Procedures

As this research explored leader wellbeing in remote environments the sample had to be homogenous. According to Yin (2012) the case study helped limit any influencing variables of the sample. Additionally, it provided a realistic representation of leaders within the global workforce. Three set criteria helped ensure a homogenous population; this made the research generalisable (Schofield, 2002). Firstly, the interviewees all work at the case study organisation. Secondly, the participants are part of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), ensuring their formal leadership position. Lastly, the leaders have adopted remote work within the past year.

The Two Research Studies

Study 1 explored a group of leader insights into their wellbeing while working in a remote environment. This helped reconfirm the industry-wide problem, source the causes and consequences of leader wellbeing negligence, and find a possible sustainable HRM solution based on the propositions. Study 2 explored a solution blueprint, derived from the findings of the first Study, to evaluate its effectiveness and make corrective adaptations. The solution blueprint effectiveness was compared between the before-after perceived wellbeing measurements of the experimental and control group. As this topic has minimal research, the studies were exploratory (Stebbins, 2001), which aligns with Yin's (1981) theory that a case study goes hand-in-hand with this strategy.

To alleviate the time constraint, the researcher conducted two one-on-one interviews with the sample. The first interview was composed of Study 1 and Study 2.1, while the second interview included Study 2.2 (Appendix 3). The interview questions were created using the conceptual frameworks as a foundation. The open-ended questions provided structure and covered the material explored in the literature review. This enabled the researcher with the ability to increase interview replicability (McIntosh and Morse, 2015). However, the researcher had the opportunity to ask follow up questions during the conversation, if a topic seems relevant (Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 2015). The second interview included the same questions used in the first interview for Study 2; however, an additional set of questions focused on the solution blueprint were used (Appendix 4).

Due to the pandemic and geographic limitations, all interviews were conducted on Microsoft Teams and in English. The first interviews were approximately 50 minutes, while the second round of interviews had a shorter time commitment of 20 minutes since less content was covered. The researcher built rapport with each participant; this could be achieved by exchanging pleasantries, finding commonalities, using active listening skills and mirroring (Abbe and Brandon, 2014). This created a comforting atmosphere for the study participant, allowing them to trust the interviewer and answer more honestly and accurately. To further ensure honest answers, the researcher thoroughly explained the purpose and aim of the studies.

With the consent of the participants, the researcher recorded each interview, which were then transcribed and analysed. A consent form ensured the ethical use of data derived and the participants' anonymity (Appendix 5). Primary data (interview recordings and transcriptions) was ethically stored on the researcher's cloud-storage and with the Hotelschool The Hague research centre (Appendix 6). Furthermore, confidential information, such as organisations or names mentioned, were redacted whilst transcribing.

Data from the two interview rounds were analysed through a qualitative approach, which used '*open codes, categories and thematic analysis*' (Lim, 2011: p.52). Thus, data was deductively categorised, using colour codes, within themes found in the literature review (Appendix 7). The researcher also opened the opportunity to discover thematic insights inductively. Data was analysed manually, whereby the researcher went through each interview transcription three times. The first round included deductive reduction, while during the second-round thematic insights were collected inductively. The final round allowed the researcher to check both deductive and inductive findings and left the opportunity to collect any data that might have been missed in the first two rounds. Finally, conclusions were drawn from the categorised data.

Solution Creation and Implementation

The conclusions from the first set of interviews allowed the researcher to brainstorm potential interventions for the solution blueprint, which would address how sustainable HRM practices may support leader wellbeing within remote work environments. These ideas were brought to the commissioner, where feedback was exchanged, and clear expectations were set. This allowed the researcher to create a solution blueprint, composed of three interventions supported by academic literature (Appendix 9), which highlighted a clear implementation plan for the case study participants. The three interventions focused on wellbeing, learning and development, and work-life balance sustainable HRM practices, aligning with the literature explored and research findings. Due to geographical limitations, the researcher had to ensure that the solution blueprint implementation could be executed independently.

The interventions' objective was to support and potentially improve leader wellbeing, where each specific intervention had its own objective that could contribute towards wellbeing. By integrating practitioner, scientific literature, organisational and stakeholder perspectives, the solution blueprint offered a holistic approach towards supporting wellbeing. The 'SLT Resource Group' socialised knowledge on best practices for wellbeing and remote working. The 'Building a New Habit' intervention aimed to improve efficiency within the remote working day and strength the leaders' wellbeing as part self-development. Finally 'Realistic Finish Time' facilitated being consequent with realistic workday finish times to sign off.

These interventions are operationalisation friendly; their design is socially, economically and technically feasible. The blueprint's design and content, integrated calming components and the leaders' feedback, overcoming potential resistance barriers. Furthermore, the solution is economically interesting, since the researcher acted as a consultant, by eliminating implementation costs. Finally, the instructions were self-explanatory ensuring the possibility of independent implementation.

The researcher and commissioner agreed on a timeline (Figure 5) to ensure the seamless implementation of the intervention. Firstly, the key findings of the first round of interviews were shared with the SLT, this dissemination (Appendix 10) included a short introduction to the solution design, after which the solution blueprint was virtually delivered to all participants one week prior to the trial period. This allowed leaders to familiarise themselves with the three interventions and ask the researcher for further clarification.

Figure 5. Intervention Timeline

The participants could freely choose amongst the three interventions. However, the intervention was only executed by seven sample participants, where the remaining two participants were considered the randomised control group[1]. Thus making Study 2 a within random experimental design with a treatment group and control group (Trochim, 2002). The trial period of two weeks was then executed independently within the case study, whereby the control group resumed their natural routine, and the execution group trialled their chosen intervention. After the implementation all participants reconvened for the second round of interviews with the researcher.

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[1] Unforeseen circumstances in the participants' work had inhibited them from participating in the intervention

Solution Evaluation and Improvements

These interviews allowed the researcher to evaluate the intervention effectiveness and collect feedback from the leaders. The solution blueprint was evaluated by gathering before and after (Study 2.1 and Study 2.2) measurements of the leaders' perceived wellbeing, where the control and execution group were compared. Wellbeing is subjective (Kahneman and Krueger, 2006; Diener, Suh, Luca, and Smith, 1999), thus the researcher measured wellbeing in a qualitative and quantitative form to gain a holistic understanding. Leaders were asked to quantify their perceived wellbeing between a range of 0-10 to enable benchmarking amongst the sample. Secondly, descriptive explanations elaborated on why they had scored it at the given value. This method allowed the researcher to evaluate if the interventions influenced the perceived leader wellbeing and in what ways.

There are two ways to assess the success; firstly, wellbeing has improved if the leaders explicitly stated in the after interview that it got better or if the after-rating score was higher than the initial one. Secondly, wellbeing is supported if the leaders respond in a positive or satisfied manor. Should the outcomes lead to lower after-intervention wellbeing scores or negative qualitative responses, then the flaws or drawbacks of the solution were explored and improved.

The solution blueprint evaluation was then analysed by the researcher to create a final deliverable to the commissioner. Feedback given during the second interview allowed the researcher to make specific amendments to the original solution blueprint. As a result, a focused leader perspective was integrated. Finally, the intervention evaluation of Study 2 were communicated to the commissioner and case study SLT in the form of a second dissemination (Appendix 10). This provided an opportunity to both inform the case study of research progress and share the final solution blueprint.

FINDINGS

Respondents have been coded accordingly: X.1 or X.2, where X is the participant number and X.1 is Study 1 and X.2 is Study 2. Interview transcripts may be found in Appendix 11.

Deductive Approach

Remote Work Experience

Study 1 highlighted the fortunate and privileged position the leaders were in, but also the challenges imposed by remote work. There were '*peaks and troughs*' (8.1) throughout the past year, where '*it all just morphs into a continuum*' (2.1) and became '*pretty monotonous*' (9.1) but also '*ranged from very good to excellent, to really quiet gruelling*' (8.1). As the leaders are in a senior position they had '*a more settled environment and […] better accommodation*' (4.1), where many had their own designated offices.

However, the work intensity and areas of unknown lead to moments where leaders '*had no precedent*' (3.1). The ongoing pandemic contributed to obstacles leaders faced, where it was '*challenging managing it all*' (5.1). Following the transition to remote work leaders experienced a '*blurriness between work and home*' (9.1), which have been identified both as advantageous and disadvantageous.

Two months after the initial interview, leaders were once again asked to evaluate their remote work experience. Similarly, Study 2 indicated that leader 7.2 went '*through an incredibly busy time*', where leader 2.2 felt that they were '*reaching a limit*'. Others felt there were no distinctive changes, while respondent 6.2 even mentioned that '*pressure has been slightly reduced*' as the organisation '*got more streamlined*' working in the remote environment.

Despite the hardships experienced during remote work, leaders perceived their wellbeing to be rather positive in Study 1. Respondent 1.1 admitted that '*work has been quite stressful and intense*' but they '*managed fairly effectively*' and felt that remote work had benefited their wellbeing. Figure 6 illustrates the perceived wellbeing of leaders before the solution design implementation. Respondent 2.1, 4.1, 8.1 and 9.1 indicated a variation of wellbeing levels, which coincided with the '*peaks and troughs*' (8.1) experienced while working remotely.
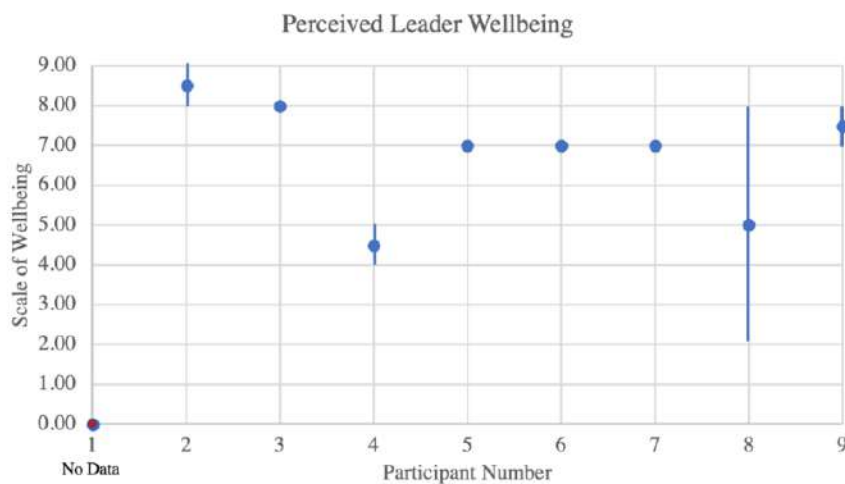
Figure 6. Perceived Leader Wellbeing (Before Intervention)

On the other hand, the general outcomes leaned towards the higher end of the wellbeing spectrum. There was a general consensus that the leaders had a positive work environment. The majority of the leaders managed their workload, despite the '*sheer volume*' (6.1) being strenuous. The leaders have a high level of control over their job, a '*very good amount' (4.1)* of organisational support and positive work relations. Furthermore, their clear role enabled '*autonomy*' (5.1), however there were mixed findings on the sense of involvement with change.

Similarly, the general work environment remained positive when asked in Study 2; many respondents noted that there were no significant changes within the six elements over the past two months. In some cases, positive work relations strengthen as '*high stress can support the growth of relationships*' (7.2). Figure 7. highlights the perceived wellbeing of leaders after implementing the solution design. Both control group (7.2 and 8.2) respondents had minimally higher ratings in second interview, whereas only two of the seven experimental group (1.2, 2.2, 3.2, 4.2, 5.2, 6.2, and 9.2) respondents had the same result.
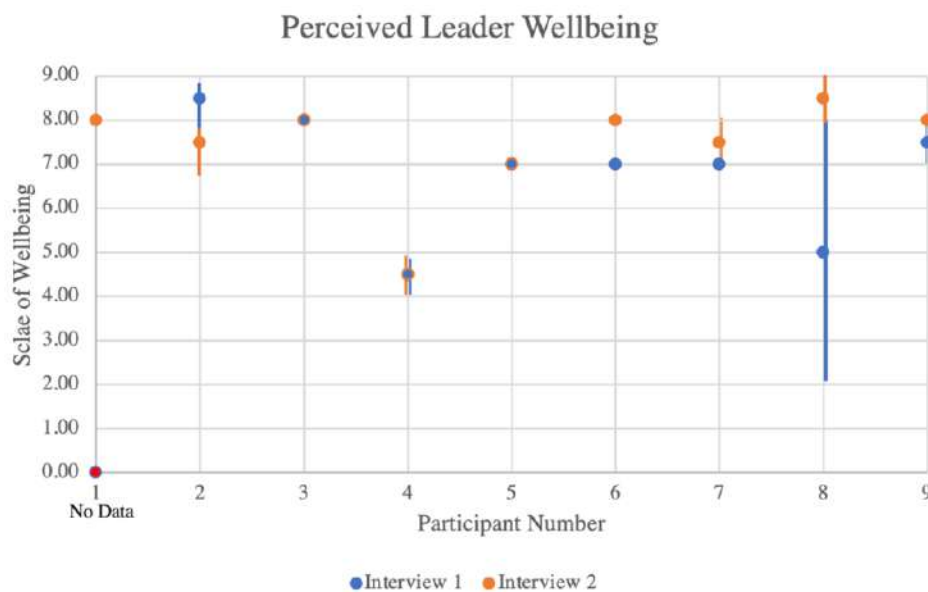
Figure 7. Perceived Leader Wellbeing (After Intervention)

Leaders 6.2, 7.2, 8.2 and 9.2 perceived a minimally higher level of wellbeing, compared to Study 1, as they felt '*quiet/pretty good*' (8.2 and 9.2). On the other hand, leader 3.2 said, '*I don't think its [perceived wellbeing] surpassed it, it certainly isn't any worse*', resulting in the same perceived wellbeing as from Study 1 (respondents 3.2, 4.2, and 5.2). Another leader felt their wellbeing was '*slightly lower*' (2.2) than before, where leader 7.2 elaborated, wellbeing was '*easy to go spiralling down*', as '*wellbeing during this time has an ability to take second place to work when it all gets very intense*'.

The respondents highlighted the importance of providing variability and choice within the solution design. '*Furnishing the choices people have*' (2.1), while providing '*flexibility*' (5.1) and taking into '*consideration of what access*' (5.1) leaders have must be considered in the interventions. Respondent 8.1 mentioned that the solution design should create '*awareness of what people do[…] socialising that knowledge*', while respondent 7.1 noted that '*the ability to talk to other people who understand what you're talking about*' could also add value towards wellbeing. Furthermore, respondent 4.1 considered it important that there were '*specific wellbeing requirements that are for leaders because they have a different role to play*'. Thus, ensuring the wellbeing intervention is not '*excluding leaders because they just felt that they're dealt with*' (4.1).

Of the seven participants who trialled the solution blueprint, two felt comfortable to tailor the intervention to their needs to best impact their wellbeing. However, respondent 5.2 mentioned that there should be an '*implicit permission*' to '*genuinely work flexibly*' and alter the interventions to suit the leaders' needs. The presentation of the intervention was complimented by leader 3.2, as it was '*really calming*', which helped overcome '*any negative barriers*' leaders typically face when asked to participate in a study. Furthermore, some felt that both the intervention and participation motivated them to focus on their wellbeing. One explained that '*having to be accountable to you for this made it happen*' (3.2), while another leader (9.2) indicated that being '*deadline and commitment driven*' further ensured the intervention execution.

Proposition 1: Wellbeing practices support leader wellbeing in remote environments.

The findings of Study 1 indicated that wellbeing practices were introduced to the organisation, yet leaders often disregard the suggestions made. Furthermore, wellbeing was '*sometimes a bit of an afterthought*' (1.1), where '*leadership is less or often left wanting*' (4.1). The leaders acknowledged that the organisation was '*very active in trying to make folks aware of what we should be doing*' (9.1) and '*impressed with material that's gone up*' (3.1). However, respondent 9.1 mentioned their regular '*inactivity*' in participating, while another noted '*I tend to feel that they're less aimed at me*' (3.1) hinting the lack of leader involvement within the wellbeing practices.

Most respondents had participated in the work environment assessment, where many felt confident and comfortable with their setup. Respondent 9.1 even got '*too comfortable*', while others were ready to have a more constructed office space. There is an '*element of personal responsibility*' *(1.1)* to ensure that the work environment encourages wellbeing, where many were '*fortunate to have that opportunity to create the right space and environment*' (3.1) that would help facilitate their wellbeing.

A SLT resource group was established, as a wellbeing intervention, by three leaders who met virtually on a weekly basis for 30 minutes during the trial period. Leader 2.2. described it as '*useful just to have that half an hour just to chat about other things*', where they '*parked all other [work] conversations*' (3.2), allowing them to talk about their wellbeing. Furthermore, the meetings provided an opportunity to '*carve out an amount of time each week, really, for us as peers who were involved in similar sorts of challenges to be able to force ourselves just to reflect a little bit, which was really helpful.*' (4.2).

These weekly engagements provided '*a bit more support and encouragement*' (2.2) and allowed the leaders to '*come back a little bit refreshed [...] you sort of start the next task maybe with a different mindset [...] it's quite a good reset*' (3.2). Furthermore, respondent 4.2 felt that '*it's a little bit like talking to a mirror, you don't have to sort of explain so much of the context which actually can be burdensome sometimes*'.

However, '*you have to be engaged for it to be successful*' (4.2), which for these leaders was sometimes challenging due to the intense work periods. Respondent 3.2 stated '*there are other interventions that as senior managers, we've probable developed ourselves over time that are more impactful [on wellbeing] than what I did in this case*'. Furthermore, the sessions were '*only 30 minutes [...] it's not enough to change the dial [on wellbeing] on its own*' (2.2). The findings indicate that wellbeing had been maintained, as leader 3.2 said '*it* [*wellbeing*] *certainly isn't any worse*'.

Proposition 2: *Learning and development practices support leader wellbeing in remote environments.*

The leaders had been able to positively adapt and learn from the transition to remote work; for some it was '*a massive hurdle' (4.1)*, while others were '*very quick to adopt a lot of very effective online tools' (3.1)*. Their agility and readiness reflected on the leaders' adaptability to remote work. This was supported through the extensive work experience (Appendix 2) that many leaders had, which helped build a foundation of accumulated skills for adverse times.

Most of the leader learning and development had been informal and from '*learning by doing*' (5.1), whereas the minority had formal opportunities. These opportunities were in the form of personal coaching, which had been described by leader 3.1 as '*hugely valuable*' and taught leader 9.1 to use '*empathy and understanding of putting yourself into the shoes of colleagues*'. Nevertheless, there was a clear consensus that learning and development had the potential to positively influence wellbeing, as leaders could '*manage the time [... and] be better prepared*' (1.1).

Remote work had generated informal leadership development throughout the organisation; leaders took their '*own initiative [... and] immediately set up social breakfasts*' (4.1). Respondent 6.1 noted that the Senior Leadership Team went '*into crisis management mode…*' and '*were able to come closer as a group,*' where their '*relationships became stronger far quicker*'. Furthermore, leaders took it upon themselves to build their social network through informal channels, where they could '*learn from [their] peers and learn things that you need to adapt within what you're doing' (1.1).* Leaders believed that the proactive social networking was strongly supported by the technological infrastructure they had rolled out back in February 2020.

Two leaders tried out the learning and development intervention; during the trial they worked on developing their personal habits, where one leader took daily walks during the afternoon, while another picked up running three to four times a week. The leader who took daily walks, felt it was more of a discipline, rather than a habit. However, acknowledged that they '*extended the time that I'm away from my IT*' (1.2). Furthermore, leader 9.2 who started running felt that this habit '*fits best with my lifestyle and my interests*', which had been a motivating factor to continue running even after the trial period.

The leaders acknowledge the benefits this intervention brought. Walking provided a '*break in your day*' (1.2), whereby this '*good behaviour*' (1.2) encouraged productive working and calmness within the workplace. Similarly, running enabled the leader to '*relax into the work day*' (9.2) and prioritise the tasks that needed to be completed that day. However, there wasn't '*a significant change*' (1.2) within their wellbeing, thus questioning the overall effectiveness of the intervention. The initial intention was to follow a learning and development course, which would guide the leaders into developing a strong habit that would support their wellbeing. However, both participants did not feel that was necessary. They '*jumped in with both feet*' (9.2) to do the habit.

Proposition 3: *Work-life balance practices support leader wellbeing in remote environments.*

Adapting remote working had blurred the work-life boundaries for many leaders. More specifically, the leaders were '*in a national lockdown*' (3.1) and had '*nothing to do*' (3.1), so there was a tendency and '*temptation*' (7.1) to continue working past office hours. Some felt an '*additional pressure to work harder and longer*' (2.1) due to the uncertainty COVID-19 brought. Constantly working in the same environment, competing personal responsibilities, and limited external human interactions are also work-life conflicts leaders had experienced. This had negatively influenced the work-life balance, where many leaders were not as satisfied with their division between personal and professional responsibilities.

This outcome, however, was also expected by a few leaders, where respondent 6 acknowledged that as a leader working in a fast-growing organisation '*you accept [that] your work life balance might get rather messed with*'. Furthermore, many were very dedicated and committed; leader 3.1 is '*passionate about the company and the sustainability agenda*', whereas another mentioned that this work-life balance enabled a '*positive busy rather than negative busy*' (7.1).

The organisation currently did not promote work-life balance practices; however, leaders shared a clear interest in wanting to improve their current situation. The concept of providing training was brought up regularly, where leader 4.1 mentioned that this could '*make me more effective*'. Moreover, many felt that the organisation should '*further legitimising stopping and starting*' (5.1) so that leaders could create '*flex in their lives*' (8.1) to look after their wellbeing. Furthermore, knowledge on work-life balance practices should be socialised, which would create '*a greater awareness*' (8.1) within the organisation.

Two leaders decided to implement the work-life balance focused intervention; one leader started to '*block out chunks of my diary*' (5.2) that would be dedicated to non-work time, whereas the later set realistic switch off times. Creating the work-life flex sometimes '*causes more anxiety*' (5.2), however it also helped prevent '*diminishing returns*' (5.2) that would support work productivity and reduce the work hours. Setting clear finish times had also motivated the leader to not work during the weekend.

As a result, respondent 6.2 stated the clear finish times were '*clearly effective from the perspective that [...] it's forcing you to stop in the simplest fashion*', which ultimately reduced '*time at the screen*' and the '*chance of deep vein thrombosis from sitting in a chair for too long*'. Furthermore, a '*calmness*' was induced as leader 6.2 was '*not working for a long period of time*', while leader 5.2 noted that this intervention did help '*draw some lines*' in terms of work-life boundaries within the remote environment. However, the main drawback was that the effectiveness was hindered through the lack of '*group commitment*' (6.2).

Inductive Approach

Leader Expectations and Experience

There are many expectations one has of a leader; they are expected to '*lead by example*' (4.1) and '*make sure everyone's okay*' (5.1). Often leaders have '*other considerations*' (9.1), leading to competing responsibilities and making it difficult for them to focus on themselves. The larger complexity of leader responsibilities get overlooked, which leaders themselves '*are guilty of*' (6.1) because they are expected to pay '*attention to the [wellbeing] advice that is given*' (8.1). Afterall, leaders should '*walk the talk*' (8.1) and take care of themselves as no one will follow up. A leader (6.1) put it bluntly: '*big boys don't cry, you get on with it*' indicating the stigma on leaders solely looking after themselves.

Furthermore, leader 3.2 state, '*we have to put up a "we're coping face" to everyone else*', which sets a false pretence of how the leaders are actually doing. However, more often than not, leaders have accumulated tactics that that help them address their wellbeing best. Leader 3.2 further elaborated, '*I've had 25 years of learning what works and doesn't work, and I've been through other programs [...] that have helped me refine that [wellbeing]*'. With this knowledge, leaders were able to maintain their wellbeing individually.

The organisational culture had been described as '*avoiding being too bureaucratic*' (1.1), where the organisation '*all care about each other and look out for each other*' (6.1). However, the lack of systems and polices had prevented the organisation from addressing wellbeing proactively '*rather than just considering wellbeing as an afterthought to the symptoms of it starting to appear*' (1.1). By trying to '*embed these things [wellbeing initiatives] culturally on the basis*' (1.1), leaders felt that they could potentially better '*flow that culture through*' (2.1) the whole organisation to have a positive impact.

Study 2 further highlighted that the current organisational culture does not activity incorporate wellbeing. As a result, leaders experience difficulty with setting time aside to focus on themselves, they lack '*the discipline of saying I can't*' (2.2). Furthermore, there are moments where leaders block out time for themselves, but '*people have no respect for the purple blobs in your diary*' (5.2) and schedule themselves in. Leader 3.2 stated '*I think you've come to this at a really timely period [...] everything you help us to think about, I think has been really, really useful whether or not we end up adopting exactly what you've suggested or just building that into something else*', confirming the importance of the research and the potential added value.

The organisation allows flex working, however '*there's still a bit of a culture of presenteeism thinking like other people in the leadership business say you don't need to be here, but actually you do*' (5.2). Thus flexing your schedule throughout the full organisation has not been fully adopted or accepted culturally, often limiting the possibility for leaders to be flexible with their time. Leader 6.2 suggested that to integrate flex working into the organisational culture '*we would have to, as a group, get really solid on certain subjects [...] and it would have to be absolutely from the top*.'

Organisational Context

The case study is a '*fast growing business*' (2) with a '*start-up*' (9) mentality, as a result, roles naturally fell into place. Many of the leaders are shareholders, thus they are '*seriously invested in the business*' (6.2). As a result '*there is a trade-off you [leaders] take in exchange for an element of your wellbeing*' (6.2) to ensure the organisation can thrive. Leaders acknowledged that the '*HR team has been busy*' (1) and they have a '*lack of resource availability*' (4), therefore certain aspects within HRM, such as learning and development, have not been '*invested in*' (6). However, the leaders mentioned that they are going through '*an evolution where we are emerging from the first phase of start-up*' (9). Thus, the HR department is expected to become mature and established in the near future.

CONCLUSION

The importance of leader wellbeing while working remotely was reinforced and confirmed by the conducted research. COVID-19 initiated substantial global workforce changes, where the transition towards remote work imposed a series of vulnerabilities on leaders. Unprecedented events put the interviewed leaders into new territories, where immense workload and long hours were a commonality. Leader wellbeing, however, persevered; responses in both Study 1 and 2 gravitated towards the higher end of the spectrum, with the average score being 7.4. out of 10. This outcome coincides with the positive work environment elements leaders agreed were present, confirming the influence environment factors have on wellbeing.

Leaders accepted their wellbeing levels, and elaborated that current external factors, such as the pandemic, had initiated fluctuations between '*peaks and troughs*'(8.1). Furthermore, this was expected from individuals in a leadership position; they acknowledged that these hardships were necessary sacrifices to ensure the organisation's success. Fortunately, these pressures did not drive wellbeing towards a detrimental direction. Thus, the sustainable HRM interventions implemented were there to further stimulate and support wellbeing.

Practices addressing wellbeing were proposed to support wellbeing within remote work. Unfortunately, those introduced into the case study lacked a leader orientation, resulting in participation inactivity and confirming the notion that leaders were neglected. The SLT resource group, enabled an opportunity to redirect the wellbeing focus. However, the wellbeing outcomes were contradictory: perceived wellbeing, between Study 1 and 2, remained the same, while leaders enjoyed the experience, stating that the social connectivity and reflective moments were helpful. The intervention lacked adaptability and the opportunity to adjust and individually personalise; as a result the lack of flexibility, did not optimise the benefits. Conclusively, formal wellbeing practices may be considered inhibitors towards wellbeing, where a laisser-faire approaches could provide greater support as the control group results hint.

Learning and development, another dimension within sustainable HRM, was proposed to support wellbeing within remote work. Given the case study's nature, these practices were premature; most skills were acquired through informal learning opportunities. Nevertheless, they were considered helpful, where leaders learned from their peers; however it remains uncertain if these aspects impacted wellbeing. Contrarily, the learning and development intervention, despite not being treated as a traditional training, provided the necessary push for leaders to incorporate the wellbeing habits into their routine. Furthermore, they clearly stated positive outcomes, where supportive traits helped increase the perceived wellbeing scores minimally. Ultimately, learning and development practices provide the necessary support to facilitate wellbeing.

Work-life balance initiatives were proposed to be another sustainable HRM practice that would support leader wellbeing in remote work. Blurred work-life boundaries, longer hours, and competing personal responsibilities were key consequences of remote work; respectively, the leaders' work-life balance satisfaction became impaired. The final intervention enabled leaders to create flex into their workday and prevent working-hours from leeching into their personal time, where health benefits followed. However, the positive changes minimally improved perceived wellbeing; a lack of organisational commitment hindered the effectiveness. To conclude, the benefits of the intervention itself addressed the needs leaders were initially lacking; work-life balance practices supported leader wellbeing working remotely.

Different elements within the remote work experience had impacted leader wellbeing diversly; leaders acknowledged their fortunate position and genuinely managed their wellbeing, despite facing hardships. Most importantly the interviews reflected that the three sustainable HRM interventions must include the following to provide a supporting nature: flexibility and freedom to enable personalisation, a structured platform to initiate necessary wellbeing developments, and finally organisational commitment to ensure a greater positive impact on wellbeing.

DISCUSSION

Literature Relevance and Significance

The research validated leader wellbeing negligence as an industry wide problem. The wellbeing of employees remain leaders' predominant responsibility, supporting Barling and Cloutier's (2017) views that this contributes to the disregard. Repercussions of this negligence were not deeply explored; leaders mentioned strained physical and mental resources, however noted it was due to work intensification and was not detrimental. Hence, consequences explored by Byrne et al. (2014), Guillen-Royo (2016) and Wirtz et al. (2017) were not addressed. Arguably, immense engagement demonstrated leaders' passion and drive. These behaviours, interpreted as intrinsic job satisfaction, mitigate work intensification consequences (Sparham and Sung, 2007; Li, Xie and Huo, 2020).

The leaders' high engagement overshadowed their own wellbeing; therefore, sustainable HRM wellbeing proactivity (Ehnert and Harry, 2012) is imperative. The research suggests that wellbeing, learning and development, and work-life practices support the wellbeing of leaders working remotely. Literature-based themes, explored deductively, affirmed the three propositions. Thus, answering the research question: '*How may sustainable Human Resource Management facilitate the wellbeing of leaders working in a remote environment.*'

The first proposition, '*wellbeing practices support leader wellbeing in remote environments*', is weakly affirmed. Initial practices lacked a direct focus towards leader roles and responsibilities, confirming leader wellbeing negligence (Roche, 2013); accordingly those initiatives did not appeal to the interviewed leaders. Alternatively, the implemented SLT resource group was openly accepted and provided reflective opportunities, which were described as helpful, hinting a level of support. However, leader wellbeing remain unchanged, refuting Spence (2015) and Clinton and Van Veldhoven's (2013: p.369) theory explored in the solution design that social connectivity '*has a more direct effect on wellbeing*'.

The work environment had a greater response, compared to the aforementioned formal practice. The pre-existing environmental conditions, aligning with Guest and Conway's (2004) six positive elements[2], were identified and acknowledged by leaders. Their satisfaction towards the naturally integrated factors helped support perceived wellbeing, echoing the literature of Schmidt, Welch and Wilson (2000) and Williams (1994) that indirect performance pathways simontaneously provide positive outcomes.

Similarly, the second proposition stating that, '*learning and development practices support leader wellbeing in remote environments*' is partially supported. Leaders clearly expressed that their extensive work experiences and informal learnings greatly contributed to their skill set, supporting Spreitzer's (1995) view that foundational competencies enable the necessary preparation and support, even for remote work roles. This aided their transition, which in turn alleviated potential stress, indirectly facilitating wellbeing (Quick and Henderson, 2016). The leaders' agility presented potential positive influences on wellbeing; virtual social networking opportunities were swiftly organised and integrated into the organisation stimulating social capital. In remote work, supportive networks developed by social capital compliments wellbeing (Portela, Neira and Salinas-Jiménez, 2012).

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[2] Six elements: manageable workload, personal control over a job, organisational support, positive work relations, a clear role and a sense of control of involvement in organisational changes.

Leaders believed that practices focusing on leadership and leader improvement had the potential to support wellbeing, linking to Kelloway and Barling's (2010) theory that leadership development interventions support wellbeing. The habits intervention enabled positive experiences, as the new routine stimulated productivity and brought a calming atmosphere, aligning with Bakke's (2005) literature. However, a significant change was lacking, wellbeing scores reflected a minimal improvement. A degree of support is considered as the intervention did not negatively influence wellbeing; according to Yaden, Claydon, Bathgate, Platt and Santos (2021) learning and development practices incorporating evidence-based interventions can enhance wellbeing, creating a potential supportive wellbeing facilitator for the future.

The third proposition, '*work-life balance practices support leader wellbeing in remote environments*', is affirmed. In Study 1, leaders acknowledged that their work-life balance had been muddled since adopting remote work, which confirms Felstead et al., (2002: p.65) perspective that '*when working at home is a requirement… it does not contribute to work-life balance*'. Leaders frequently worked long hours, leading to a dissatisfactory division in personal and professional responsibilities. This aligns with Kelliher and Anderson (2010) statement that work intensification is a key consequence, which Fein, Skinner and Machin (2017) note has deteriorating effects on wellbeing in the long run.

Once adopting the work-life balance intervention, wellbeing had improved by simply achieving a more satisfactory level of work-life balance. The practice helped leaders segregate their professional and personal responsibilities while working remotely, which echoes Wepfer, Allen, Brauchli, Jenny and Bauer's (2018) view that clear boundaries are necessary to enable positive outcomes. Once again, the increase was minimal, which one leader noted may be due to the lack of group commitment within the organisation. Daniels, Watson and Gedikli (2017) argue that shared activities amongst employees can further stimulate wellbeing, highlighting the importance of group commitment.

This research has a considerable amount of practical implications. The sample has extensive work experiences, where many leaders had their own wellbeing methods. Thus, this research could have a greater potential to impact new leaders (0-3 years' work experience). Despite the research having a modest impact on perceived wellbeing, leaders recognised the importance of leader wellbeing. Involving leaders in this research had initiated an important conversation, shifting the wellbeing focus, that many respondents themselves neglected. This impact is considered valuable, as raising awareness is a key step to institute change (Kotter, 1995) and it can positively impact SDG 3 'Good Health and Wellbeing'. Finally, the case study, working in environment sustainability, could use this research to integrate sustainable actions targeting their employees to further facilitate positive remote work environments.

Furthermore, the disseminations, both with the case study SLT and internship company, highlighted the value and significance of the research. These moments opened the opportunity to receive relevant feedback that the researcher could incorporate into their deliverable, as well as the report itself. Furthermore, sharing the acquired knowledge initiated a meaningful dialogue for those who were not part of the study and enabled the researcher to incorporate the attained knowledge into a new environment outside of the research field. In the future, the researcher would consider disseminating for a larger audience to initiate a greater impact.

Additional Findings

The researcher had not anticipated the inductive themes 'leader expectations and experience', 'organisational culture' and 'organisational context' to be prevalent influencers on wellbeing within the remote work environment. These aspects were not considered, due to their abstract relation to sustainable HRM. However, through the interviews their relevance and impact on leader wellbeing became apparent.

'Leader expectations and experience' entails the accumulated years of involvement individuals have as leaders, while acknowledging the notion people have of leaders. This theme is both a barrier and facilitator, in the sense that acquired leader experiences taught many individuals methods to support wellbeing, whereas the expectations others had of leaders obscured their wellbeing. Chaigneau, Brown, Coulthard, Daw and Szaboova (2019: p.10) raise the point that '*experiences derived from people's interaction with their environment become endowments*' which contribute to wellbeing. Contrarily, leaders face complex responsibilities while working remotely, during which leaders were expected to '*put up a "we're coping face" to everyone else*' (3.2). Haver, Akerjodert and Furunes (2013: p.287) state that emotional regulation is '*considered a key competence associated with effective and good leadership*', however excessive emotional suppression impairs interpersonal functioning and wellbeing (Coté, 2005; John and Gross, 2004). Leaders acknowledged that they were accountable for these behaviours, yet felt this was a discussion the organisation still had to have.

The case study integrated a non-bureaucratic approach within their culture, leading to an absence of policies or systems that would safeguard leader wellbeing. Furthermore, leaders felt that wellbeing and flex working were not culturally integrated and adopted by the organisation. Consequently, their wellbeing initiatives were often inhibited due to lacking group commitment. Huhtala, Kaptein, Muotka and Feldt (2021) stress the importance of integrating an ethical culture within organisations to support wellbeing, whereas Albrecht (2012) emphasises that supportive and fair organisational cultures will indirectly contribute to wellbeing. Nevertheless, integrating a wellbeing perspective into organisational culture has the potential for greater support and group commitment.

Finally, the case study's organisational context provided reasoning to certain findings; leaders noted that they were a fast-growing business, trying to emerge from the start-up phase. Therefore, the nature of the organisation entailed different environments and constraints on wellbeing compared to large organisations, which from a sustainable HRM perspective would need to be addressed differently (Youssif Abo Keir, 2019). Furthermore, most interviewees were personally invested in the case study; thus, they sacrificed their wellbeing for the organisation's success. These two components as a result created additional barriers towards leader wellbeing that were not anticipated.

Evaluation Method Improvements

Leaders described their wellbeing qualitatively and quantitatively, where some found that quantitative scores were easier to give than others. The evaluation implied that the 0-10 range of wellbeing was interpreted differently amongst the leaders, leading to inconsistencies. Furthermore, the findings reflected that the two-week trial period was limiting; it was difficult for the leaders to feel a significant change or impact on their wellbeing. As a result, the evaluation did not capture the full potential of the solution blueprint.

Figure 8. Solution Blueprint Evaluation

The wellbeing metric improvements were minimal, therefore Figure 8 illustrates the new proposed evaluation method to assess if the solution blueprint has supported and or improved leader wellbeing within the remote work environment in the future. The researcher recommends extending the trial period to four weeks, in addition to weekly check in moments for leaders to shortly quantify and qualify their wellbeing in a journal. Finally, the predefined wellbeing range (Table 1) should be utilised to ensure a cohesive understanding and interpretation of each score.

0	Worst
1	Very Poor
2	Poor
3	Significantly below average
4	Below average
5	Average
6	Above average
7	Significantly above average
8	Good
9	Very good
10	Best

Table 1. Wellbeing Scale 0-10

Solution Blueprint Evaluation

The objective of the solution blueprint was to support and potentially improve leader wellbeing through the implementation of one of the three interventions. Given the previously discussed findings, the solution blueprint is considered effective. Perceived leader wellbeing outcomes were slightly higher than the initial scores and there were mentions of a positive quality of functioning at work, indicating supported wellbeing. However, the changes are interpreted as minimal, which is explained by the lacking leadership perspective within the initial solution. Many leaders noted that their extensive experience had allowed them to create their own wellbeing interventions, something this blueprint did not address. Furthermore, flexibility and permission to take 'Me and We time' to have a greater impact on wellbeing was lacking.

The three interventions themselves were further improved on. For instance, the wellbeing intervention should enable more flexibility in format and frequency. Moreover, ensuring people can execute their learning and development intervention independently was seen as valuable, however a greater focus on sharing productivity methods was needed, which could facilitate wellbeing (Prochaska et al., 2011). Furthermore, involving the whole organisation and translating work-life values within the culture could potentially eliminate the '*implicit permission*' (5.2) needed to work flexibly. This aforementioned feedback was incorporated into the final blueprint to potentially facilitate greater support and improvements of leader wellbeing in the future.

The final solution blueprint operationalisation has elements to be considered. Testability entails verifying and validating the interventions' outcomes (Hassan, Afzal, Blom, Lindström, Andler and Eldh, 2015). The original evaluation method hindered the testability of perceived wellbeing, where the new method, previously introduced in the discussion (Figure 8), has the potential for more concrete measurable observations (Simon, Anand, Gray, Rugkåsa and Yeeles, 2013). Furthermore, the revised solution blueprint offers flexibility and adaptability, ensuring short-term maintainability. As the remote work environment and leader wellbeing dimensions evolve, a time efficient and effective maintenance is required for the long-term (Alvarez and Possamai, 2002).

The implementation integrity was moderate; the original design was not entirely executed as planned (Crane and Frederick, 2018). Some participants strayed from the original interventions, which was partially unavoidable due to external factors such as the leaders' work responsibilities and personal interpretation of the interventions. The geographical difference also contributed to the researchers lacking involvement during implementation. However, the first solution blueprint outcomes minimally supported leader wellbeing, hinting that the intervention integrity was directed towards success. By incorporating the given feedback into the final solution blueprint, there is a potential to increase the integrity for future use.

The external integration, ethics and management of the final solution blueprint remain inconclusive. The solution blueprint has the potential to align itself with the case study's strategy, by incorporating an alternative sustainable perspective. Ethical implications may be minimised and controlled, by following the actions taken in the methodology. However, a positive outcome on these two mentioned aspects depend on the management of the solution blueprint and who within the organisation wished to take on the responsibility. Ideally, this would be an individual within HRM, that is familiar with this research and leader wellbeing practices to ensure the best possible outcomes.

Limitations

Actions have been purposefully implemented within the methodology to mitigate the amount of limitations; however, they are still subject to be present in the research. Choosing a qualitative approach, enabled a holistic understanding on the researched phenomena (Black, 1994), but prevented the opportunity to draw quantitative conclusions. These conclusions could have provided statistical value to identify correlations or cause-effect relations (Queirós, Faria, and Almeida, 2017). Furthermore, an alternative data collection method could have been utilised instead of the mono-method approach; journaling, for instance, promotes deep reflection and 'records participants experiences in a natural context' (Hayman, Wilkes and Jackson, 2012: p.27). Data analysis could have also been executed differently; NVIVO takes the '*analysis of qualitative data significantly further*', compared to doing it by hand (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2007: p.578). The chosen strategies and approaches were appropriate to the research, however eliminated the opportunity to collect, analyse and explore using alternative methods, which in turn could have offered different perspectives.

Furthermore, the research philosophy, interpretivism, was initially chosen due to its suitability for exploring a social phenomenon such as sustainable HRM. However, this approach has led to a gap of verifying validity (Pham, 2018), where perspectives are rather subjective than objective (Mack, 2010) and the research generalisability, according to Kelliher (2005) is put into question. Furthermore, the concept of interpretivism could have resulted in misaligned interpretations between the researcher and respondents. For instance, many terms were defined by the researcher and introduced as such to the interviewees, yet there is a possibility that the sample still relied on their personal understandings when answering the questions.

It was challenging to meet the golden standard method during the implementation. Both control and experimental groups were randomised, however not on the researchers account, as leaders could individually choose their intervention. The control group was not initially planned, this puts the research's level of evidence into question (Bondemark and Ruf, 2015). Since base line measurements were collected, the silver standard method was adopted. However, due to the methodology's complexity and small sample size, the researcher compared the two groups at a superficial level. In the future, the researcher proposes using a larger sample to run a thorough comparison.

The researcher took COVID-19 into consideration, but did not expect the impact's extent. The pandemic created three relevant limitations. Firstly, the British lockdown initiated a series of implications, which heavily influenced the leaders remote work experience, which was not explored in the literature. Secondly, the pandemic created unexpected work responsibilities, which were unaccounted for, hindering the solution blueprint participation of two leaders. Thirdly, due to social distancing and geographical differences the interviews were held virtually; interviews had technical disruptions that interrupted and distracted the leaders' line of thought. Furthermore, the researcher involvement during the implementation was hindered, limiting the control and overview of the execution.

Finally, pre-existing relations and the nature of the research between the researcher and case study introduced the risk of social desirability bias, diminishing the validity (King and Bruner, 2000). Despite the interviews being held one-to-one, the personal relation and connections the researcher had with the interviewees potentially influenced the respondents to adapt their true answers to ensure favourable research outcomes. This was most present in Study 2, when asked to evaluate the intervention effectiveness. In the future, indirect questions and prefacing them could eliminate potential judgement, which limit social desirability bias (Bergen and Lobonté, 2020).

Recommendations

This research has initiated an important dialogue amongst senior leaders within a remote work environment, showcasing the relevance and importance of the conducted research. The additional findings of the interview outcomes indicate the opportunity and direction for future research. The influences of COVID-19 on the general remote work experiences would suggest replicating this research once the ongoing pandemic has passed to examine how voluntary remote work influences leader wellbeing. Furthermore, expanding the scope would enable the opportunity to explore the differences of leader wellbeing either within diverse leadership levels or industries. Moreover, repeated reference to the improvement of productivity by achieving wellbeing and a satisfactory work-life balance suggests a potential relationship to further research. Finally the possibility to explore alternative sustainable HRM practices and their influence on wellbeing still remains.

Reflection

The relevance and importance of sustainable HRM addressing leader wellbeing within remote work environments has been reinstated. Drawn from the discussion, it remains evident that there are clear areas of improvements within the research and opportunities to explore diverse perspectives into leader wellbeing, remote work and sustainable HRM dimensions. Reflecting upon the dissemination, it is apparent that the conversation of leader wellbeing has merely been started. Nevertheless, the outcomes initiated a critical discussion amongst leaders, where systematic changes within remote work environments is crucial. We must acknowledge that organisational commitment and cultural adaptation are both imperative to sustain wellbeing. Now more than ever, we must realise that sustainability goes beyond the environment, and it is time to defend the significance wellbeing has on us.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Study 1 and 2 Description

	Study 1	Study 2
	An exploration on how sustainable HRM may facilitate the wellbeing of leaders working in a remote environment.	An experiment to determine if the sustainable HRM intervention has a positive impact on leader wellbeing when working in a remote environment.
Aim	Gain an insight into which sustainable HRM practice needs the most addressing.	To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention.
Outcome	The ability to create a suitable sustainable HRM intervention to help facilitate leader wellbeing.	An intervention recommendation for HRM to help facilitate the wellbeing of the leaders in remote work.

Table 2. Interview Study Aims and Outcomes

Study 2.1: an interview **before** implementing the intervention to gain an understanding of the leaders' current level of wellbeing and remote work environment.

Study 2.2: an interview **after** implementing the intervention to gain an understanding if the intervention has had a positive or negative influence over leaders' wellbeing in a remote environment.

*The company refers to their HRM as People Services, therefore questions have been adapted to appeal towards the case study.

Appendix 2. Case Study Participant List

Code	Nationality	Length of Service (years)	Age	Gender	Interview Type	Study Participation	Intervention
1.1/2	British	5	40	M	Teams	1,2.1 and 2.2	L&D
2.1/2	British	7-8	40	M	Teams	1,2.1 and 2.2	ERG
3.1/2	British	14-15	46	F	Teams	1,2.1 and 2.2	ERG
4.1/2	British	10	43	M	Teams	1,2.1 and 2.2	ERG
5.1/2	British	4	35	M	Teams	1,2.1 and 2.2	WLB
6.1/2	British	18	48	M	Teams	1,2.1 and 2.2	WLB
7.1/2	British	8	47	F	Teams	1,2.1 and 2.2	CG
8.1/2	British	17	50	M	Teams	1,2.1 and 2.2	CG
9.1/2	British	20	54	M	Teams	1,2.1 and 2.2	L&D

Table 3. Case Study Participant List

ERG = Employee Resource Group (Intervention #1)

L&D = the habit trainings (Intervention #2)

WLB = realistic work ending time (Intervention #3)

CG = Control Group (did not do an intervention)

Appendix 3. Interview Outline (Study 1 & Study 2.1)

Study 1 and 2.1 *BI = Before Intervention

Opening	Introductions	Thank and greet participant. Introduce myself (background, study)	
	Outline of the interview	Duration: 50min Purpose: explore which sustainable HRM (referred to People Services during interviews) policies may facilitate leader wellbeing and to gain an understanding of your personal leader wellbeing. ** Emphasis on personal experiences, opinions, views, perspectives** focus on them	
	Details for Case Study Participants	Nationality, length of service (as a leader) and age	
Remote Work (BI)	Remote Work Experience	- How would you describe your remote work experience during COVID-19?	
Leader Wellbeing (BI)	Work Environment	* Guest and Conway (2004) six elements of a positive work environment: manageable workload, personal control over a job, organisational support, positive work relations, a clear role and lastly a sense of control of involvement in organisational changes* - How would you describe each of the six elements specifically to your work environment?	
	Perceived wellbeing	*Define leader wellbeing: psychological/mental, social, physical aspects*	

		- How would you describe your overall quality of experience and functioning at work?
Leader Wellbeing	HRM Involvement	- How involved is People Services with regards to your wellbeing? - How could People Services become more involved in ensuring your wellbeing while working remotely?
	Work Environment Assessment	- What actions did People Services and the health and safety officer take to assess your remote work environment? - What changes in your remote environment would facilitate your wellbeing?
Learning and Development	Agility and Readiness	- To what extent did you feel prepared for the transition?
	Leader Development: individual knowledge, skills, and abilities	*Define Leader Development: human capital* - What kind of programs did you receive to develop your leader skills for remote leading?
	Leadership Development: building networked relationships	*Define Leadership Development: social capital* - What kind of leadership development programs have you participated in?
Work-Life	Perceived Work-Life Balance	- How would you describe your work-life balance since adopting remote work?

		- How has remote work influenced your work-life balance?
	Work-Life Conflict	- What kind of work-life conflict have you experienced since transitioning to remote work?
	Achievement of Work-Life Balance	- What changes would you make to achieve a satisfactory work-life balance? - How can People Services help support your work-life balance?
Closing	Any other Business	- Would you like to add any further details on a topic we have discussed? - Do you have any questions for me?
	Self-Improvement	- Do you have any feedback you would like to give me?
	Goodbyes	Thank participant for their valuable input and time.

Table 4. Study 1 & 2.1 Interview Outline

Appendix 4. Interview Outline (Study 2.2)

Study 2.2 * AI = After Intervention

	Introductions	Thank and greet participant
Opening	Outline of the interview	Duration: 30min Purpose: To evaluate the intervention and to gain an understanding of your personal leader wellbeing. ** Emphasis on personal experiences, opinions, views, perspectives** focus on them)
	Pleasantries	Ask how they have been, since the last interview.
Remote Work (AI)	Intervention Remote Work Experience	- How would you describe your remote work experience after the use of the intervention?
Leader Wellbeing (AI)	Work Environment	*Introduce Guest and Conway (2004) six elements of a positive work environment: manageable workload, personal control over a job, organisational support, positive work relations, a clear role and lastly a sense of control of involvement in organisational changes * - How has the intervention influenced the six elements of your work environment?
	Perceived wellbeing	- How would you describe your overall quality of experience and functioning at work?
Intervention	Experience	- What are your thoughts on the intervention? – What kind of changes have you experienced in your overall quality of wellbeing?

	Effectiveness	- What improvements would you propose? - Based on your experienced benefits and drawbacks, what is your evaluation of this implementation?
Intervention Closing		
Closing	Any other Business	- Would you like to add any further details on a topic we have discussed? - Do you have any questions for me?
	Self-Improvement	- Do you have any feedback you would like to give me?
	Goodbyes	- Thank participant for their valuable input and time.

Table 5. Study 2.2 Interview Outline

Appendix 5. Data Ethics: Interview Informed Consent Form and Confidentiality

Leader wellbeing in Remote Environments

I, the intended research participant, have read the information for this project. I was given the opportunity to ask additional questions. If I had any questions these have been answered to my satisfaction. I have had enough time to decide whether or not I wish to participate.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I understand that some people have access to my personal details. These people have been mentioned (in the information etc.).

I consent to the use of my details, for the purposes that have been mentioned in the information/information letter.

I consent to my details being kept for further analysis (if applicable) for a maximum of 15 years after this research project has ended.

I hereby give my informed consent to take part in this research project.

Name of participant:
Signature: Date: _____

I, the researcher, confirm that I have fully informed this participant about the above research project. I agree to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participant if they wish.

If any new information arises in the duration of the research project that could potentially influence the participant's consent, I will inform the research participant.

Name of researcher:
Signature: Date: _____

As indicated, all research participants have signed or acknowledged the data consent form. However, to ensure their anonymity, these will not be included in the report.

**Declaration relating to confidentiality concerning research data
in Launching Your Career (LYCar) programme**

The undersigned, Ariane Albert (hereinafter referred to as: the Student), residing in The Hague.

Conducting a (research) project for the company ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉
(hereinafter referred to as: the Client), residing in London, United Kingdom.

Whereas:

- the Student shall, in the context of his or her LYCAR research, gain access to confidential information;

- the Client shall, where appropriate, demand a signed declaration relating to secrecy and confidentiality concerning the information provided in this context;

- this non-disclosure agreement shall, in the event of any discrepancies, take precedence over other contracts or agreements which have been or will be concluded or made between the Student and the Client;

Declares as follows:

1. The Student shall keep confidential any information which the Client or any other party involved in the LYCAR research provides under this contract, and shall not further disclose such information in any way, except insofar as the Student is obliged to disclose it by virtue of any legal requirement or irrevocable decision of a judge.

2. Information, as referred to under 1, refers to all information, including written, verbal, graphic and digital information, or information in any other form, which comes to the knowledge of the Student during the research period and which the Student knows, or can reasonably be expected to know, is of a confidential nature.

3. The Student shall not, without the prior written consent of the Client, disclose any confidential information to third parties or contribute to the publication of confidential information. The Student shall submit the thesis to the supervisor for approval from the Client in respect of confidential information, before making such information available to his examinator(s) at Hotelschool The Hague.

4. The Student shall be bound to this obligation of secrecy for five (5) years after signing this declaration.

Thus declared and signed by:

Name: Ariane Albert   Date: 20 November 2020

Place: The Hague   Student number: 671043

Signature:

Appendix 6. Data Management Storage

Original data files, including the interview recordings and transcriptions have been safely stored with the Hotelschool The Hague Research Centre.

Upload initially failed, so I got an exemption to submit my raw data via WeTransfer.

Appendix 7. Deductive Categories for Data Reduction

| Study 1	Codes
Leader Wellbeing	HRM Involvement Work Environment Analysis
Learning and Development	Agility and Readiness Leader Development Leadership Development
Work-Life Balance	Perceived Work-Life Balance Work-Life Conflict Achievement of Work-Life Balance

Table 6. Study 1 Deductive Codes

Study 2.1	Codes
Remote Work (Before Intervention)	Remote Work Experience
Leader Wellbeing (Before Intervention)	Work Environment Perceived Leader Wellbeing

Table 7. Study 2.1 Deductive Codes

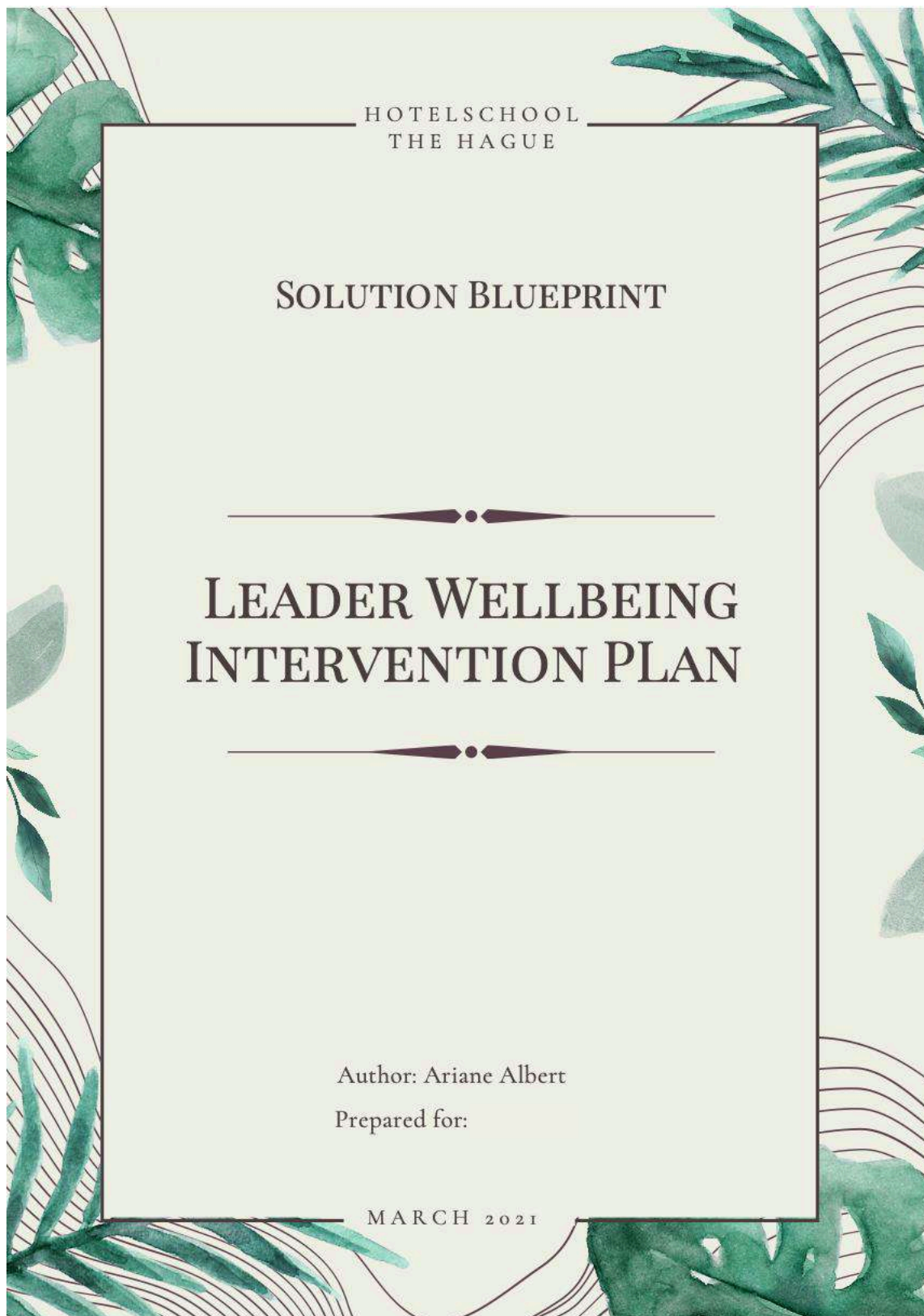| Study 2.2	Codes
Remote Work (After Intervention)	Intervention Remote Work Experience
Leader Wellbeing (After Intervention)	Work Environment Perceived Leader Wellbeing
Intervention	Experience Effectiveness

Table 8. Study 2.2 Deductive Codes

Appendix 8. Research Timeline
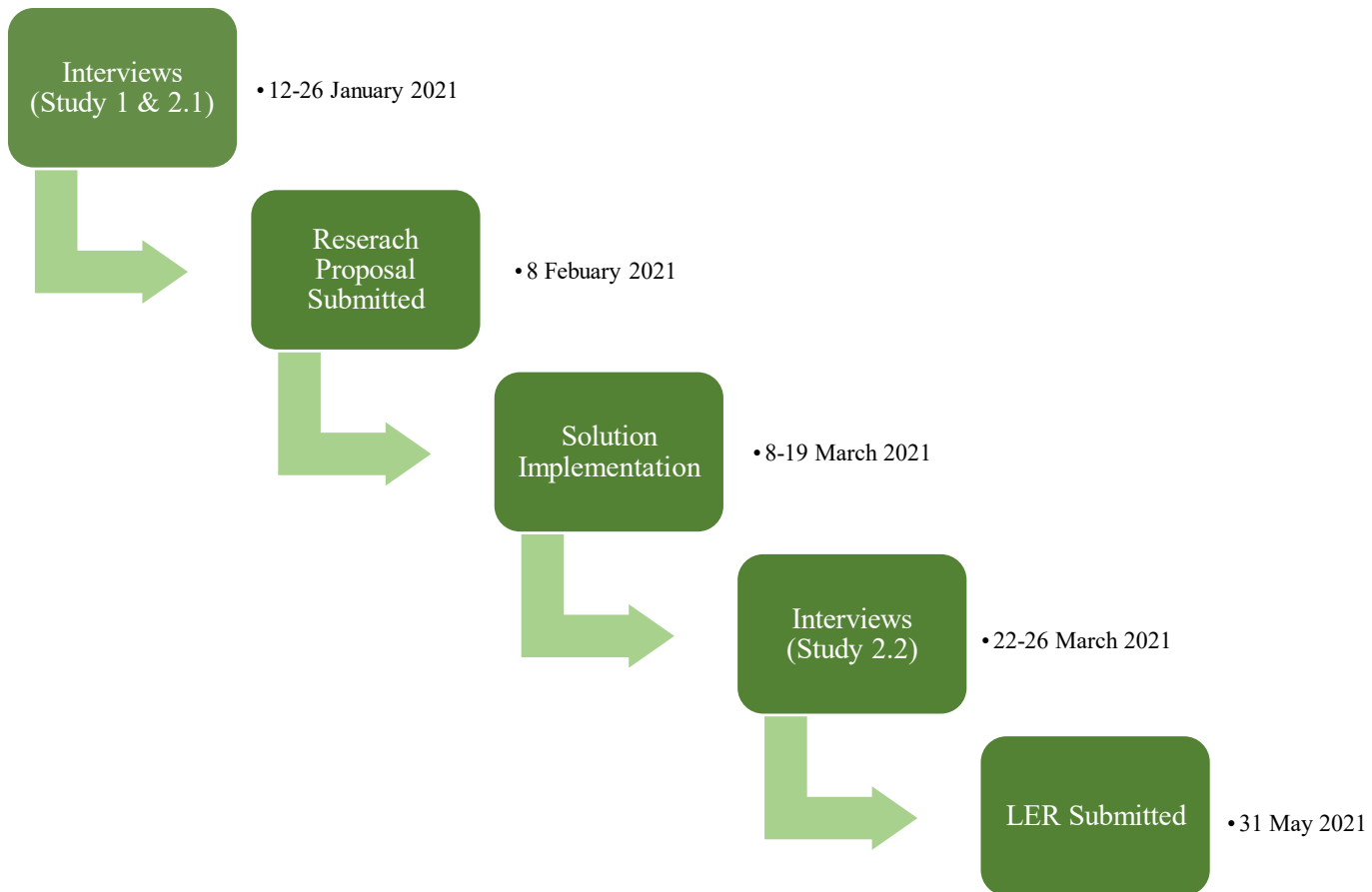
Figure 9. Interview, Proposal, Implementation and LER Dates of Execution

Appendix 9. Solution Blueprint

Solution Blueprint Version 1 for the Client

HOTELSCHOOL
THE HAGUE

SOLUTION BLUEPRINT

LEADER WELLBEING
INTERVENTION PLAN

Author: Ariane Albert

Prepared for:

MARCH 2021

Context

The interview findings indicated that wellbeing interventions should be varied as 'one size does not fit all'. The complex responsibilities of leaders have distracted them from their own wellbeing. Furthermore, People Services direct initiatives and involvement towards leader wellbeing specifically are lacking. Learning and development initiatives have also been overlooked, despite leaders showing a clear interest. Finally, leaders have a clear tendency to gravitate towards working more within a remote environment, impairing their work-life balance.

Based on the findings the three perspectives, 'wellbeing', 'learning & development', and 'work-life balance', within sustainable Human Resource Management will be the foundation for the interventions.

Aim

To implement three sustainable Human Resource Management interventions that help facilitate leader wellbeing within a remote work environment.

Outcome

Improved perceived leader wellbeing (to be evaluated in study 2.2).

INTERVENTION 1

WELLBEING

SLT Resource Group

What: The opportunity for you to join a weekly employee resource group*.

Purpose: To reflect and share your experiences with fellow leaders within the SLT.

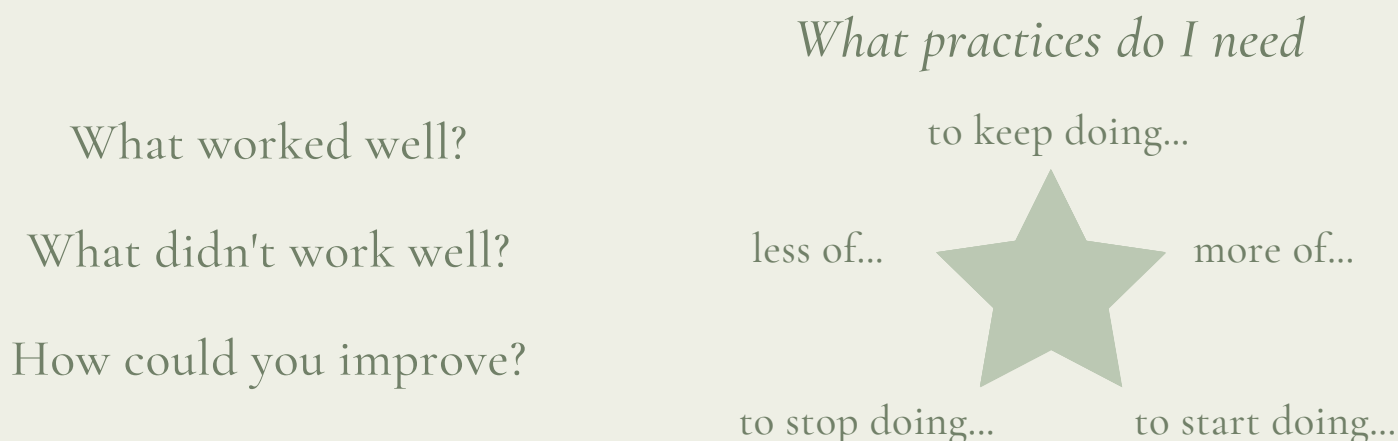**Objective:** Socialise knowledge on best practices for wellbeing and remote working.

Strategy

1 Form a resource group with fellow SLT members*.

2 Schedule a meeting (approx. 30 min).

3 Stimulate reflective thinking using the tips below.

4 Take the learnings from the session and try to implement them into your workday.

5 Repeat weekly throughout the trial period.

*If an insufficient amount of SLT members choose this option to form a group (min 3 participants), then Nina will conduct one-on-one check-in sessions.

Guiding Questions & Retrospective Reflection

Use the questions below to prompt reflective thinking on your wellbeing and remote work practices. Share these experiences during the weekly session.

What worked well?

What didn't work well?

How could you improve?

What practices do I need

to keep doing...

less of...   more of...

to stop doing...   to start doing...

Approximate Time Commitment

	SLT resource group	One-on-One
Two Week trial	1 hour	40 minutes

Supporting Research

Studies suggest a positive relationship between social connectivity and employee wellbeing[1], with Spence[2] arguing that basic communication and social interaction experienced at work have greater impacts on wellbeing, when compared to formal wellbeing programs. Both one-on-one and employee resource group sessions provide a productive form of social connectivity which empowers and supports employees[3]. Employees experience supportive and friendly behaviours during these interactions, which '*may be assumed to have a more direct effect on wellbeing*'[4]. Furthermore, employee resource groups provide informal learning opportunities for leaders working remotely[5], whereas one-on-one sessions enable critical reflection moments[6].

1. (Umberson and Karas Monetz, 2010)
2. (Spence, 2015)
3. (Spence, 2015)
4. (Clinton and Van Veldhoven, 2013, p.369)
5. (Green, 2018)
6. (Hansman, 2016)

INTERVENTION 2

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

BUILDING A NEW HABIT

What: The opportunity for you to build a new beneficial habit through a learning and development program.

Purpose: To incorporate a new habit into your daily routine.

Objective: To improve efficiency within the remote working day and strengthen your wellbeing as part self-development.

STRATEGY

1 Choose one habit (see list).

2 Learn about the habit and tailor it to your needs.

3 Learn how to build a habit.

4 Incorporate the habit into your daily work routine.

5 Continue for the remaining time of the trial (record your progress).

1. BENEFICIAL HABITS (recommended daily time commitment)

- Scheduling uninterrupted Deep Work (15 min.)
- Planning your workday (15 min.)
- Gratitude Journal (10 min.)
- Prioritising tasks (15 min.)

- Exercise (30 min.)
- Sleep (7+ hours)
- Meditation (10 min.)

2. Habits explainations

Deep Work - Introduction and Implementation (more details)

Workday Planning - Structuring your day and Best practices (more details)

Gratitude - The Science of Wellbeing W2*, Gratitude Journaling (more details)

Prioritising tasks - Eisenhower's Matrix, Eat the Frog or other suitable methods

Exercise - The Science of WellbeingW4*

Sleep - The Science of Wellbeing W4*

Meditation - The Science of Wellbeing W5*, SoundCloud guided meditations

*requires an account please see Coursera login details (bottom right)

3. How to build Habits

Follow *The Science of Wellbeing* on Coursera (login details below) and learn how to build positive habits by watching the Week 6 Situation Support and Goal Setting videos.

Situational Support: create simple changes within your environment to facilitate good behaviours to build good habits.

Goal Setting: utilise the WOOP (wish, outcome, obstacle, plan) method by creating specific and measurable goals.

*Coursera Login

Username: leaderwellbeing@gmail.com

Password: LeaderWellbeing2021

Approximate Time Commitment

	Preparation	Execution
Two Week trial	40 minutes	10-30min per day

Supporting Research

Positive work habits have been identified to increase efficiencies and sustain a satisfactory work life balance, where '*good work habits helps one work smarter without working harder*'[7]. Fortunately, many habits may be learned and modified to implement into a daily routine[8]. Organisations invest into their workforce, through learning and development, to further support growth in professional performance[9]. These initiatives, furthermore, empower employees for their work roles[10] and increase their commitment as a result of increased development opportunities[11]. Finally, an overall focus on employee growth and development is essential towards contributing to 'an organisation's social sustainability and responsibility profile'[12].

7. (Joseph and Lakshmi, 2011, p.43)
8. (Southerton, 2013)
9. (Sung and Choi, 2014)
10. (Spreitzer, 1995)
11. (Owoyemi, Oyelere, Elegbede and Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011)
12. (Wikhamn, 2019, p.103)

INTERVENTION 3

WORK–LIFE BALANCE

Realistic Finish Time

What: The opportunity for you to set a realistic finish time for your workday.

Purpose: To prevent work from rolling on over hours and set a work-life boundary.

Objective: To become consequent with your realistic finish time to sign off and end work for the day.

Strategy

1 Evaluate your day's schedule and set a realitic finish time.

2 Create a sign off routine that works for you (see rituals below for inspiration).

3 Optional: start sign off routine 25min. before your realistic finish time.

4 Continue for the remaining time of the trial (record your progress).

Sign off Rituals

- Find your 'third' space
- End of the day dance party with the kids
- End your day with a to-do list for the next day
- Play some music on the speakers
- Tidy your desk and close all computer tabs
- Put the kettle on and enjoy some tea
- Review your workday (what went well, what didn't)
- Listen to a podcast

Approximate Time Commitment

	Preparation	Execution
Two Week trial	25 minutes	15 minutes per day

Supporting Research

As mentioned within the Learning and Development intervention, habits, have the potential to positively increase the achievement of a satisfactory work-life balance[13]. By introducing realistic finish times for the workday, leaders have the opportunity to build boundaries between their work and life within the remote environment which helps sustain wellbeing[14]. This division may not always be ensured, taking the leaders' complex responsibilities into account[15]. However, small steps towards creating time-related goals provide support for leaders to achieve a more satisfactory work-life balance[16].

13. (Joseph and Lakshmi, 2011)
14. (Wepfer, Allen, Brauchli, Jenny and Bauer, 2018)
15. (Muna and Mansour, 2007)
16. (Hoeppe, 2014)

CHALLENGE

3 DAY WEEKEND

3 DAY WEEKEND

What: An optional challenge to do in addition to one of the proposed interventions (1-3).

Purpose: To replenish and refresh yourself during the weekend.

Objective: To fully disconnect from work over the weekend period.

STRATEGY A – THREE DAY SHUT DOWN

1 Organise and plan your monthly diary to free one Friday within the trial period.

2 Sign off your home office on Thursday evening.

3 Enjoy your **work** free weekend.

STRATEGY B – TWO DAY SHUT DOWN

1 Organise and plan your monthly diary to free one Friday within the trial period.

2 Utilise the Friday for admin. work (no meetings or planned calls).

3 Sign off your home office on Friday evening.

4 Enjoy your **work** free weekend.

SUGGESTION

Look into Option 3 "sign off" rituals to prevent yourself from doing any work during your weekend.

Clinton, M. and Van Veldhoven, M., 2013. HRM and Employee Well-being. In: Managing Human Resources. United Kingdom, Wiley., pp. 365–388.

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Joseph, C. and Lakshmi, S.S., 2011. Developing Positive Habits in the Workplace. IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 5(1), pp.37–44.Muna, F.A. and Mansour, N., 2007

Muna, F.A. and Mansour, N., 2009. Balancing work and personal life: The leader as acrobat. Journal of Management Development. Journal of Management Development, 28(2), pp.121–133.

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Umberson, D. and Karas Monetz, J., 2010. Social Relationships and Health: A Flashpoint for Health Policy. Journal of Health and Social Behaviour, 51(S), pp.S54–S66.

Wepfer, A.G., Allen, T.D., Brauchli, R., Jenny, G.J. and Bauer, G.F., 2018. Work-life boundaries and well-being: Does work-to-life integration impair well-being through lack of recovery? Journal of Business and Psychology, 33(6), pp.727–740.

Wikhamn, W., 2019. Innovation, sustainable HRM and customer satisfaction. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 76, pp.102–110.

Amended Solution Blueprint

Haven taken the feedback from Study 2 and the commissioner into consideration, a second

version of the solution blueprint has been created.

PREPARED FOR

SOLUTION BLUEPRINT

LEADER WELLBEING
INTERVENTION PLAN

APRIL 2021
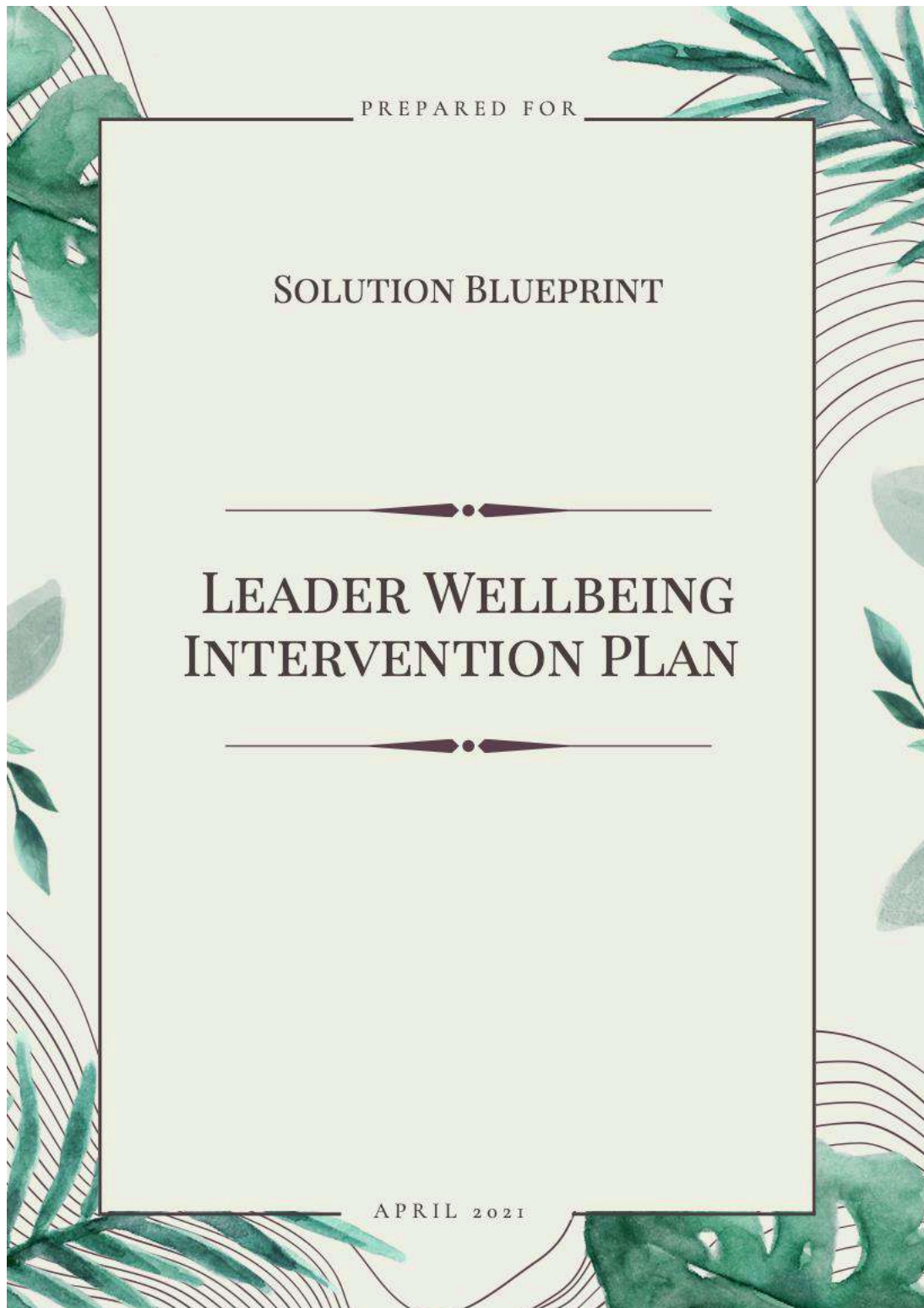
Forword

The aim of these interventions is to improve your wellbeing; therefore, you are given complete control over how you want to change and execute them. The interventions may be done independently or with a group, this can be in the form of 'Me' or 'We' time, please do whatever motivates you most to try them out.

You are at complete liberty to make any alterations that fit you best and will have the greatest impact on your wellbeing. Should the mentioned interventions not suit you, then feel free to do your own wellbeing practices or find alternatives. The most important aspect is that you are creating time to focus on your wellbeing.

Context

The interview findings indicated that wellbeing interventions should be varied as 'one size does not fit all'. The complex responsibilities of leaders have distracted them from their own wellbeing. Furthermore, People Services direct initiatives and involvement towards leader wellbeing specifically are lacking. Learning and development initiatives have also been overlooked, despite leaders showing a clear interest. Finally, leaders have a clear tendency to gravitate towards working more within a remote environment, impairing their work-life balance.

Based on the findings the three perspectives, 'wellbeing', 'learning & development', and 'work-life balance', within sustainable Human Resource Management will be the foundation for the interventions.

Aim

To implement three sustainable Human Resource Management interventions that help facilitate leader wellbeing within a remote work environment.

Outcome

Improved perceived leader wellbeing (to be evaluated in study 2.2).

INTERVENTION 1

WELLBEING

SLT Resource Group

What: The opportunity for you to join a weekly employee resource group*.

Purpose: To reflect and share your experiences with fellow leaders within the SLT.

Objective: Socialise knowledge on best practices for wellbeing and remote working.

Strategy

1 Form a resource group with fellow SLT members*.

2 Schedule a meeting (approx. 30 min).

3 Stimulate reflective thinking using the tips below.

4 Take the learnings from the session and try to implement them into your workday.

5 Repeat weekly throughout the trial period.

*If an insufficient amount of SLT members choose this option to form a group (min 3 participants), then Nina will conduct one-on-one check-in sessions.

Guiding Questions & Retrospective Reflection

Use the questions below to prompt reflective thinking on your wellbeing and remote work practices. Share these experiences during the weekly session.

What worked well?

What didn't work well?

How could you improve?

What practices do I need

to keep doing...

less of...   more of...

to stop doing...   to start doing...

Approximate Time Commitment

	SLT resource group	One-on-One
Two Week trial	1 hour	40 minutes

*Amendment Tips

- Change the frequency and time of the meetings.

- Go on a socially distanced walk/coffee with your employee resource group.

- Conduct the employee resource group with leaders outside of your organisation.

Supporting Research

Studies suggest a positive relationship between social connectivity and employee wellbeing[1], with Spence[2] arguing that basic communication and social interaction experienced at work have greater impacts on wellbeing, when compared to formal wellbeing programs. Both one-on-one and employee resource group sessions provide a productive form of social connectivity which empowers and supports employees[3]. Employees experience supportive and friendly behaviours during these interactions, which '*may be assumed to have a more direct effect on wellbeing*'[4]. Furthermore, employee resource groups provide informal learning opportunities for leaders working remotely[5], whereas one-on-one sessions enable critical reflection moments[6].

1. (Umberson and Karas Monetz, 2010)
2. (Spence, 2015)
3. (Spence, 2015)
4. (Clinton and Van Veldhoven, 2013, p.369)
5. (Green, 2018)
6. (Hansman, 2016)

INTERVENTION 2

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

BUILDING A NEW HABIT

What: The opportunity for you to build a new beneficial habit through a learning and development program.

Purpose: To incorporate a new habit into your daily routine.

Objective: To improve efficiency within the remote working day and strengthen your wellbeing as part self-development.

STRATEGY

1 Choose one habit (see list).

2 Learn about the habit and tailor it to your needs.

3 Learn how to build a habit.

4 Incorporate the habit into your daily work routine.

5 Continue for the remaining time of the trial (record your progress).

1. BENEFICIAL HABITS (recommended daily time commitment)

- Scheduling uninterrupted Deep Work (15 min.)
- Planning your workday (15 min.)
- Gratitude Journal (10 min.)
- Prioritising tasks (15 min.)

- Exercise (30 min.)
- Sleep (7+ hours)
- Meditation (10 min.)

2. Habits explainations

Deep Work - Introduction and Implementation (more details)

Workday Planning - Structuring your day and Best practices (more details)

Gratitude - The Science of Wellbeing W2*, Gratitude Journaling (more details)

Prioritising tasks - Eisenhower's Matrix, Eat the Frog or other suitable methods

Exercise - The Science of WellbeingW4*

Sleep - The Science of Wellbeing W4*

Meditation - The Science of Wellbeing W5*, SoundCloud guided meditations

*requires an account please see Coursera login details (bottom right)

3. How to build Habits

Follow *The Science of Wellbeing* on Coursera (login details below) and learn how to build positive habits by watching the Week 6 Situation Support and Goal Setting videos.

Situational Support: create simple changes within your environment to facilitate good behaviours to build good habits.

Goal Setting: utilise the WOOP (wish, outcome, obstacle, plan) method by creating specific and measurable goals.

*Coursera Login

Username: leaderwellbeing@gmail.com

Password: LeaderWellbeing2021

Approximate Time Commitment

	Preparation	Execution
Two Week trial	40 minutes	10-30min per day

*Amendment Tips

- Take on habits that you haven't been able to focus on thus far.

- Continue your wellbeing habits and intensify them.

- Follow the 'Stress Program' on the EAP (Employee Assistance Programme)

Supporting Research

Positive work habits have been identified to increase efficiencies and sustain a satisfactory work life balance, where *'good work habits helps one work smarter without working harder'*[7]. Fortunately, many habits may be learned and modified to implement into a daily routine[8]. Organisations invest into their workforce, through learning and development, to further support growth in professional performance[9]. These initiatives, furthermore, empower employees for their work roles[10] and increase their commitment as a result of increased development opportunities[11]. Finally, an overall focus on employee growth and development is essential towards contributing to 'an organisation's social sustainability and responsibility profile'[12].

7. (Joseph and Lakshmi, 2011, p.43)
8. (Southerton, 2013)
9. (Sung and Choi, 2014)
10. (Spreitzer, 1995)
11. (Owoyemi, Oyelere, Elegbede and Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011)
12. (Wikhamn, 2019, p.103)

INTERVENTION 3

WORK–LIFE BALANCE

Realistic Finish Time

What: The opportunity for you to set a realistic finish time for your workday.

Purpose: To prevent work from rolling on over hours and set a work-life boundary.

Objective: To become consequent with your realistic finish time to sign off and end work for the day.

Strategy

1 Evaluate your day's schedule and set a realitic finish time.

2 Create a sign off routine that works for you (see rituals below for inspiration).

3 Optional: start sign off routine 25min. before your realistic finish time.

4 Continue for the remaining time of the trial (record your progress).

Sign off Rituals

- Find your 'third' space
- End your day with a to-do list for the next day
- Tidy your desk and close all computer tabs
- Review your workday (what went well, what didn't)

- End of the day dance party with the kids
- Play some music on the speakers
- Put the kettle on and enjoy some tea
- Listen to a podcast

Approximate Time Commitment

	Preparation	Execution
Two Week trial	25 minutes	15 minutes per day

*Amendment Tips

- Instead of a realistic finish time try and add breaks into your work day.

- Try and set healthy work-life boundaries (i.e. dedicated work space, work routine)
- Block out 'Me/We' time on a frequent basis.

Supporting Research

As mentioned within the Learning and Development intervention, habits, have the potential to positively increase the achievement of a satisfactory work-life balance[13]. By introducing realistic finish times for the workday, leaders have the opportunity to build boundaries between their work and life within the remote environment which helps sustain wellbeing[14]. This division may not always be ensured, taking the leaders' complex responsibilities into account[15]. However, small steps towards creating time-related goals provide support for leaders to achieve a more satisfactory work-life balance[16].

13. (Joseph and Lakshmi, 2011)
14. (Wepfer, Allen, Brauchli, Jenny and Bauer, 2018)
15. (Muna and Mansour, 2007)
16. (Hoeppe, 2014)

CHALLENGE

3 DAY WEEKEND

3 DAY WEEKEND

What: An optional challenge to do in addition to one of the proposed interventions (1-3).

Purpose: To replenish and refresh yourself during the weekend.

Objective: To fully disconnect from work over the weekend period.

STRATEGY A – THREE DAY SHUT DOWN

1 Organise and plan your monthly diary to free one Friday within the trial period.

2 Sign off your home office on Thursday evening.

3 Enjoy your **work** free weekend.

STRATEGY B – TWO DAY SHUT DOWN

1 Organise and plan your monthly diary to free one Friday within the trial period.

2 Utilise the Friday for admin. work (no meetings or planned calls).

3 Sign off your home office on Friday evening.

4 Enjoy your **work** free weekend.

SUGGESTION

Look into Option 3 "sign off" rituals to prevent yourself from doing any work during your weekend.

WELLBEING EVALUATION

Objective

The solution blueprint supports and potentially improves leader wellbeing through the implementation of one of the three interventions.

1 **Before intervention Interview:** collect perceived wellbeing on a scale of 0-10 and their qualitative descriptions.

2 **Execute intervention:** study participants try one intervention for a period of 4 weeks, with weekly check-in moments.

3 **After intervention Interview:** collect perceived wellbeing on a scale of 0-10 and their qualitative descriptions.

4 **Intervention Evaluation:** use the below checklists to evaluate if wellbeing was supported and/or improved.

Weekly Checkin Moments

Leaders self-check-in by scoring their wellbeing of the week on a scale of 0-10, then they jot down key words that coincide with the score.

Supported

✓ Expresses intervention satisfaction

✓ Positive intervention experience

✓ Intervention continuation after trial

Improved

✓ Expresses ways wellbeing improved

✓ The after-intervention score is higher than the initial scoring

Resources

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Appendix 10. Dissemination

The researcher acknowledges that these two moments of dissemination count as one, considering that they are both directed through the same channel and at the same audience. The second dissemination with the Internship company can be found in the Career Portfolio (Appendix 6).

Dissemination Keynotes SLT Round 1

Dissemination Keynotes SLT Round 2

Leader Wellbeing

STUDY EVALUATION

Food for Thought

"If we're not in the right headspace to have the conversation, to not feel like obliged to go through with it [SLT RG**]... and I just feel that this is not helpful in the moment. It's just putting a burden on them than for them to explicitly say that which I don't think we do enough actually."

"The realisation that as senior managers, we pretend we have to put up a 'we're coping face' to everybody else."

"I think there is the implicit permission [needed] to genuinely work flexibly."

"There's still a bit of a culture of presenteeism thinking like other people in the leadership business say you don't need to be here, but actually you do."

"We would have to, as a group, get really, really solid on certain subjects". And I would actually say it's things like that would have to be absolutely from the top...culturally decide that certain things are out of balance."

** SLT Resource Group

"related to integrating work-life balance and wellbeing into Anthook"

Interventions

- **Wellbeing**
  SLT Resource Group
- **Learning and Development**
  Improving habits
- **Work-Life Balance**
  Realistic finish time

- **Wellbeing**
  3 participants
- **Learning & Development**
  2 participants
- **Work-Life Balance**
  2 participants

Control Group (no intervention)
2 participants

Evaluation

Remote Work Experience

"Feeling of being in control..."

"We're reaching a limit constant... attrition, a constant grind."

"[Intervention] didn't change my experience."

"I don't need to be stuck on my screen, from a practical point of view, that was quite helpful."

"It's been better, I'm spending more time with my kids my family."

"Definitely an improvement [in remote experience]."

"Incredibly busy time. The break between work and non-work gets very much muddied."

"The pressure has been slightly reduced, we've got more streamlined. General experience has been the same."

"Better experience due to more range of the house."

Perceived Leader Wellbeing

Positive Work Enviornment

Conway & Guest (2004)

Neutral
Sense of control of involvement in organisational change
Clear role
Organisational Support

Changes

+ + + - -
Managable workload

+
Personal Control over the Job

+++
Positive Work Relations

Wellbeing
SLT Resource Group

Before	After
8	8
8-9	7-8
4-5	4-5

Benefits
More support and encouragement from meetings.
You come back refreshed...it's quite a good reset.
Allowing you to have some space to reflect.

Drawbacks
Only 30 minutes...not enough...
Did not change perceived wellbeing

Improvements
Higher frequency (daily, 5-10min)
More flexibility within interventions (using own wellbeing initiatives)
Changing the formate (i.e. doing the sessions while walking)

Benefits
A good break in your day. Allowed me to avoid pitfalls and keep stress levels low.
Could relax into the workday and provided structure.

Drawbacks
The change in wellbeing was not significant.

Improvements
Allow people to try things independently.
Make interventions deadline or commitment driven.
Learn how to become more productive.
No need for the actual L&D outline, could just jump into it.

Before	After
no data	8
7-8	8

Learning & Development

Work-Life Balance

Improvements
Provide implicit permission to genuinely work flexibly.
Involving the whole organisation

Benefits
Prevented diminishing returns, helped productivity.
Reduced time in front of the screen, better focus.
The intervention was effective at forcing you to stop...

Drawbacks
Lack of group commitment

Before	After
7	7
7	8

Control Group
No intervention

"It's easy to go spiralling down into not doing the wellbeing, but actually, I think the wellbeing is going to help you in the bigger picture."

Before	After
7	7-8
2-8	8-9

Needs
More social interaction (physically).

Own wellbeing initiatives
Regular exercise (biking and running)

Conclusions on Interventions

- **Wellbeing**
  The SLT resource group provided support and the opportunity to take a breather. However, leader wellbeing had not been significantly impacted.
- **Learning & Development**
  The habits enhanced a positive remote work experience, where stress was handled more effectively and wellbeing was supported.
- **Work-Life Balance**
  This intervention did help 'draw some lines' in terms of work-life boundaries within the remote environment and presented attractive benefits which supported wellbeing.

Thank you for participating in my study!

Proof of Disseminations

Round 1 (19 February 2021)

Re: Leader Wellbeing Research

● Ariane Albert <671043@hotelschool.nl>
To:

Tuesday, 23 February 2021 at 07:30

On 19 Feb 2021, at 19:23, _____ wrote:

Hi Ariane,

Many thanks for joining us today and providing us with insight to your recommended interventions – we look forward to learning more!

This is the link to the IEMA article: https://transform.iema.net/article/homeworking-patterns-out-office https://transform.iema.net/article/homeworking-patterns-out-office. The author (David Burrow's) e-mail address is included in the article. If you mention that you're working with Anthesis, I am sure he'd be happy to have a call with you to share some of his insights. Please do not hesitate to call if you need any further help/introduction.

Have a great weekend!

From: Ariane Albert <671043@hotelschool.nl>
Sent: 19 February 2021 16:21
To:
Cc:
Subject: Leader Wellbeing Research

Thank you again for the opportunity to present during the SLT meeting.

As I mentioned in the presentation, my current thesis scope only uses Anthesis as a case study. However, I would gladly look into reference points with the IEMO journalist for the SLT. Could you please share the contact details?

Thank you in advanced and have a lovely weekend!

Cheers,
Ariane

Round 2 (29 April 2021)

RE: Thank You!

BB
To: ● Ariane Albert;

Tuesday, 4 May 2021 at 22:51

Many thanks Ariane – I hope all's well with you?

And thanks for sharing the blueprint – much appreciated. We'll be sure to make use of your resources!

I hope all goes well in concluding your studies.

Best regards,

From: Ariane Albert <671043@hotelschool.nl>
Sent: 29 April 2021 14:23
To: Ariane Albert <ariane.albert@hotmail.com>
Cc:
Subject: Thank You!

Dear All,

I am extremely grateful for your participation in my thesis study!

Unfortunately, I was unable to present at your recent SLT meeting, but I have attached the Study Evaluation from the last interviews. I have also taken your feedback from the second round of interviews and have incorporated them into the attached solution blueprint, you are most welcome to share these within your teams.

Your input and time was very valuable and allowed me to make great progress is my study, thank you!

If you have any questions feel free to reach out.

Once again, thank you so much and I wish you all the best.

Have a lovely day!

Best regards,
Ariane

Appendix 11. Interview Transcriptions

Interview 1.1

A: Starting off, I want to know what your remote work has been like… How would you describe your time working remotely since COVID-19?

X: I think the major change that's probably happened since the start of the lockdown period in the UK, has been that there is a clear advancement and investment in technology to support that working. So, I think previously where many of us in [company] would have had periods of time working remotely, we weren't using the systems that were in place to support that more and to do that more effectively. In the first few months we had a very quick learning curve, where those that were more advanced in using systems such as teams and zoom, SharePoint, were helping other people move to that way of working. So, that had a great benefit to the business as a whole, that it demonstrated a way of working that is aligned to the current systems and IT systems can provide for you and created new ways of working that were more efficient and more collaborative. That was obviously a big sort of change to that and shift in the way that you work remotely as you would have done previously because of the necessity to make those investments in capital systems and time in working with them, we had in our division because we are heavily dependent on elements of the construction industry, because I have a big team of engineers…

A: Hmmm

X: Because we are split between consultants and engineers. We have a lot of work that was cancelled…at the very least postponed and that created a real challenge immediately around order book. I think the instincts in people in the 2008 and 2009 crisis kicked in, where there was a lot of discussion of the domino effect and who's going to feel the effect first and of course it was going to be my team and the effects from that would kind of go through to other

teams. So, we all needed to plan for that and the future, that looked very uncertain and what we actually found was that… this won't materialise, but a lot of the risk that we were looking to manage didn't really emerge. Construction came back and we were able to put in mitigation measures around the nature of the clients we had, that meant that we removed our reliance on construction in the future. For the future lockdown we had methods of working remotely that allowed us to continue to access pipeline projects and look after out top line. And in the end in consulting that is the first thing, in terms of the hygiene and wellbeing of people that you need to be concentrated on. I mean if you don't have work, it creates a massive amount of anxiety…

A: Yes definitely.

X: Particularly, in the circumstances where people are under the uncertainty of that time, didn't even know if there as an option to move their labour elsewhere… As I say, created a lot of anxiety for the people working in the team associated with those projects we had to utilise the government Corona Virus job retention schemes so probably a third of our…my community utilised that, that came along at the perfect time for use…if I am being honest in line with the pandemic hit, we were also having some contractual problems so, that kind of actually… a useful synergy… which allowed us to preserve some of that resource and I think once people got used to that idea of being off work for a period and we were able to do that in quiet a democratic way, so that those who needed to be at home, more to deal with kids at home, or needed reduced hours, we were able to prioritise that, so that we were able to keep and manage the wellbeing across the team. Somewhat fortuitously and somewhat by good nature of people in the team. As the year had progress, we have seen a return of a lot of new opportunity, now we are at a stage where we're turning down opportunity. We are much more comfortable with the way we are working. I think there has been challenges for some people probably myself included around just working constantly in the same environment and not having a change of scenery. Things like, your daily commute that split up… psychologically your working day.

There's lots of things that we had to adapt, but I do think that probably know there is a collective fatigue to the point where people would like to have the opportunity to return to the office and back to routine. Generally speaking, it's been managed quiet well and we've been enlightened quiet well to new technologies and methods of working which have been beneficial to us and will continue to be beneficial to us. And we haven't really felt, an impact, in the way that of course that the most stressful thing to have to deal with would have been to look at people's jobs and we haven't had to do that. So, I think we managed to get through 2020 with a degree of optimism and relatively speaking… look after people's wellbeing… there have been points of challenges…. You don't have that community that you would have in the office… people to just relieve the tension of a day by kind of just having coffee or water discussions…

A: Such as break times…

X: In fact. Yeah. That's a thing that we've adapted quite well. If anything, we're working longer than we were before, which is not a good thing necessarily, but it's indicative of the amount of opportunity we have.

A: Well, definitely thank you for that very elaborate answer. And I like that you already touched upon a few topics that I'll be asking you a little more in depth later on. Just to make sure you also realise this is also more about your experience as a leader. I really like that you're talking about [company] and the wellbeing of the employees. That's always important to keep in mind, but I also want to learn a little more about yourself and your personal experiences. You mentioned you're working more at home now if I understood correctly.

X: Yeah.

A: You're completely in a home office the full week, or are you allowed to mix it a little?

X: No. Well, not at the moment. We've had periods where the lockdown has allowed us to return to the office, but in truth I think I've been into our offices three times this year or last year rather over the course of, from when lockdown started. There's the start of April. With the exception of three days, I've pretty much been exclusively working from home. Yeah. And that has if you're asking about my personal experience of that, that there are some benefits to that. But I think the lack of flexibility around working from home is not great because when you experienced the drawbacks of working from home, you don't have a route out of that. As I said, the main things that I've had to deal with as a leader are external forces that I think we've managed very effectively. That's always going to be a concern because your first concern as a leader is looking after your staff. And I was worried that I wouldn't be able to do that, and we've managed to navigate that. And then I think the second thing of course is, for you to be looking after your own wellbeing. And I've been able to manage that fairly effectively. But there have been points where it's difficult because like anybody you're only human and effected by working in the same space. And some variation kind of helps I think, with your productivity. But also, you're unable to reach out to members of your team and provide more human support and reassurance in a way that you would have done previously. Things that where a member of my team might be struggling with working from home for different reasons. It's very difficult to offer them the support that you would like to because you're remote from them and you have no opportunity to meet with them. I think that's been challenging, we've done quite a lot of work in the team to support with the social capital in having a team social events, things of that. We've probably done better at that than anybody else in the UK communities, but even now that's starting to wear a bit thin because there's only so many ways you can kind of be creative about kind of engendering that social capital. So yeah, I think we're properly looking forward to it stage where we can meet in person again.

A: Oh, of course. Well, that's good to hear also how you're really focusing on building that social capital. I like to hear that, especially because it is challenging when you're doing things remotely. Moving on more to your personal wellbeing. For my thesis, I actually took a very holistic definition, which talks about the overall quality of an employee's experience and functioning, at work, which also takes into consideration the mental, physical, and social wellbeing. Taking this definition into account, how would you describe your overall quality of experience and functioning at work since being in a remote office or environment?

X: Okay, sorry. You said mental, physical, and…

A: Social, like you said, the social capital…

X: So, I don't think the social, I don't think you can, the social and the mental. I don't think it's very difficult to isolate to work because you've got these external factors going on, to the demeaning, you can't meet your family. Like you would have done, you can't meet your friends like you would have done, and you get windows of opportunity through which you can't do that… I'm quite a tactile person. I can't have tactile relationships with friends and family anymore. All of those things having an impact on your mental wellbeing that not really to do with work necessarily, or their work is as a part of that. So, on that side, I mean the… I've found that there've been points where work has been quite stressful and intense. One when we had to respond to the initial pandemic, and there was a lot of slightly scattergun planning because nobody really knew what to do and how to respond to it. And so that meant working long hours in a way that wasn't really well directed, but we kind of figured it out in the end and then periods where we've just had high demands from clients, and that has meant working long hours. And I think, one of the problems with that is that work can quite easily leach into your weekends and your evenings in a way, which is much easier to control if you're going into the office. I think that has been a challenge for me. I don't think it's got on top of me, but it's

something that I'm conscious of trying to manage. And I'm conscious of trying to make sure that people in the team don't fall into there's mental wellbeing issues as well. Physically probably lockdown has been beneficial for me. I think I've done more exercise now than I used to. It's easier for me to fit it into my day. I've got more of a routine around that. The natural kind of boredom that kind of comes in around just being in the same space all the time means that when you get the opportunity want to get out and you want to walk or cycle. From a physical side, which obviously feeds into the mental side, probably lockdown has been quite a positive thing for me, surprisingly. So, so yeah. I think, I think the main thing that I would say that I'm trying to manage from a mental and social side is trying to be a bit stricter around my work hours and not letting those drift. Yeah. And when that's happened, that's been difficult to… I've felt the impact of that at those points in time. Yeah.

A: Well, it's really good to know that you're aware of it, so that at least you have some kind of direction where you want to go towards. Now, I'm going to go more into the human resource management and how they may be involved with leader wellbeing. So how would you say how involved is human resource management with regards to your personal wellbeing?

X: Without being overly critical, because everybody's got things on their plate that they've had to deal with this year and, HR had lots of stuff to manage as you could imagine. I would say not particularly like there's been probably pretty limited interaction around that. There's one of the, one of the big challenges, that I've seen is that I think wellbeing kind of…is sometimes a bit of an afterthought. It's not kind of linked into the fundamental process of the way that we work. Our priority number one is our clients and servicing our clients and doing that effectively, our priority number two is making sure we have enough work in order to do that. So, at times when you have uncertainty, of course, your, your first response to that is to say yes to opportunity. And that puts, strain on the team and, can have an impact on wellbeing. And I think the wellbeing discussion has been secondary. It's like, okay. Yeah, but make sure the

teams and yourself, that you're happy and healthy. As opposed to that's the first priority here that we are focused on well-being and the productivity comes as a result of people feeling good and positive. There's been very little advice I find on structuring your day for productivity. So there's been nothing issued around here are some tools and techniques that you could use to make sure you get the most out of your day and you're productive, but also that, the boundaries of your day are managed so that, once you get to the end of your day…how you psychologically make that break from work. We haven't seen any guidance or advice on that. And I think that's been really missing is something that I've been appealing to HR to take a look at.

A: Yeah. If I understood correctly, you wanted more of advice on how to balance your schedule to still ensure that your wellbeing, and let's say work performance are balanced in a healthy way.

X: I think we… there's some interesting arguments around productivity, which I think require more examination. And that is if you link wellbeing to productivity, you can actually spend less hours working and be more productive. And if you encourage the right behaviours around that, you can end up with a happier, healthier workforce that are more productive. And I think we haven't really given enough time and thought to that we've just gone more hours mean more output means more profitability. And well, oh yes, but we must think about wellbeing as well but it's like a peripheral consideration that, people are left to manage that themselves and push back when it becomes too much. And I think that's the wrong way of dealing with this and particularly working in remote environments where you can't get a sense of somebody experiencing that within your team. I think it's, as I say, our HR team has been busy and they have limited resource, but if I was to feedback one thing to them which I have done already, it would be around exploring and challenging that productivity argument and the benefits and the relationship between wellbeing and productivity.

A: Definitely, I hope that I could come up with something or a solution that could address that, and hopefully it will benefit both the productivity and the wellbeing. So, moving forward more to your work environment and work environment assessment, did human resources and the health and safety officer assess your remote work environment when you started off in February or March, I believe.

X: No… that's a difficult one that, that is there and there's guidance and advice around it. So, I would that there is an element of personal responsibility there because I know how my work environment should be set up. I've had training on that. So I know about, seat, position and risks around RSI and that all of that detail, but there wasn't a specific session where the, the health and safety rep or HR said, okay, we need to put, 15 minutes in your diary and just walk you through how you should set up your workstation, know that that didn't happen.

A: And would you want to have any changes to your remote environment that would help facilitate your wellbeing?

X: That's a difficult one because it cuts through to, I suppose, your personality. And I don't really like being instructed what to do, so I would have probably done things how I wanted anyway. I mean, yes, I probably would have taken some advice on maybe like an office chair and how that should be set up, but I kind of know what a comfortable environment would be. Around that advice and support of what to buy, people, particularly who… there are people that I have in my team that don't have two screens and there wasn't supports around that. And then as I say, with office chairs and desks, there, wasn't specific supports around that. So, I'm in a different place to members of my team in that, I have the luxury of being able to do things like that and just invest in things like that. But I think that was probably lacking as to and should have been a core focus of wellbeing. That's not to say that HR and health and safety aren't

sympathetic to those who come forward with requests, but it's probably the wrong way of doing it.

A: Okay. That's good to know. So, this is going to move forward more about learning and development. And you mentioned you already had trainings with, for instance, ergonomic chairs and knowing how to sit properly at a desk. This is more about agility and readiness. To what extent did you feel prepared for the transition of physical working in an office to a remote environment?

X: Hmm. I think everybody who works in the service industry was prepared to an extent because everybody's worked from home before. I think that there are some considerations there around, as you mentioned around the ergonomics that… people probably haven't had to think about because it's just been like on the rare occasion that they have worked from home that we've had to adjust to in terms of the working from home on continuous nature of it. I mean, I don't think anybody could say they were truly prepared for it unless they worked remotely all the time. So, there's been things that have been a surprise to me I've actually found that I've very quickly adapted to the use of technology in a way that's been naturally very beneficial. And for example, a prime part of my role is to identify projects, opportunity, effectively sales and bring opportunity in. And I find that I've been able to do that more quickly and more effectively than I probably would have done previously. And that's been a real surprise to me that that was a great fear that without the face time with people, you can't build rapport, you can't, so I think that certainly worked very well and also the coverage and engagement you can get in projects because you can engage people, of a broader audience. I wasn't particularly prepared for that, but I think I've adapted to that fairly well.

A: That's good to hear. And with regards to your leader development, so this is more about the human capital of your personal knowledge and skills and abilities. Did you have any kind of programs that helped you develop your leader skills within a remote environment?

X: You mean formal training…?

A: Learning and development can be formal, it can be informal, just something where you really felt you got knowledge out of it that you could then apply within your daily… or work routine.

X: Not particularly. I mean, I think there's a part with the technology, which is useful and disruptive. So, the technology is useful in that it's enabled us to plan better. We've now all moved to kind of centralised programming and resourcing that everybody can access and that we all talk around on a Monday and everybody understands. So that's been really useful, but it's also disruptive in that people that will just call you in the middle of, and it's very difficult to stop that and, and I'm guilty of that as well. In terms of my learning for leadership it's probably been initially finding that communication is, has been made so much more easier and that's great because I can contact members of my team whenever I want, and I can provide the leadership that they need, but realising that that actually starts to become disruptive. And so that the learning that I've taken is how and when to communicate and how to manage the time that you spend in doing that. And as a result of that, you have to be better prepared for the meetings you go into to make sure that the message that you're putting across is consistent and concise. So that probably has been the main learning, but that probably also tells you something about my personality and leadership style… in the way that I answered that question, so there's probably areas that I may be not focus on sufficiently and there hasn't really been an opportunity to exchange and develop in those areas. So yeah, I think the areas where you have strengths in leadership, you kind of adapt very quickly in a new working environment and just

change your approach within that for the areas where you have deficiencies, you probably don't spend enough time on. So yeah, that would be my answer, I think…

A: Thank you. And now about leadership development, which is more about building networked relationships within [company] and creating that social capital. Did you have any leadership development programs that you've participated in this could be at [company] or beforehand

X: No at [company]? I have found that, although it's been very useful, most of the learning and development has been through your day-to-day activity. There's nothing really, that's been formalised to support that. And it's interesting when you look at a business of our nature, where in effect, although, I'm very much a part of and have a good understanding of the [company] culture. Me and most of my team have come into the business for an acquisition. We come with our own set of cultures and values that are, fortunately very closely aligned to those of [company], but there's always nuance in that. And so, when I'm working as part of the senior leadership team, there are bits within that, that you start to kind of go, okay, you learn from your peers and you learn things that you need to adapt within what you're doing, but you also learn that some of the culture that you've brought across is actually more powerful than what's already in place. And so that's been quite an interesting kind of learning experience. So for the past year is that exchange and the development in confidence in what you're trying to do as a leader and knowing that, you take techniques from others, but that you have to kind of stick within the boundaries of your own style and that's what people know and understand you for. So that's kind of, I think that's been really interesting this year, as we've gone through a period of uncertainty, I've certainly found my learning and development has been to take techniques from what others are doing, but to make sure they're applied in a way that's true to how I want to lead and how people know me, and it doesn't become unfamiliar to others.

A: I think that's very nice the way you explained, I think that's important that you can still be your own leader and really use each other's expertise and knowledge to help each other, especially now in the remote environment. It's very valuable. So, if I may ask, how many years have you been in a leadership position?

X: Well, how do you define a leadership position… if you talk about the UK senior leadership team, I've been in post for…18 months now. Prior to that, in the company that was acquired by [company] a company called [x], I was a senior part of the senior management team, but that was effectively the board of that company. If you include that you could probably say the roles are not really that dissimilar other than the titles if you include that period as well. Probably five years.

A: Okay, nice. So, going on to six and half years, seven, almost

X: No sorry, five in total.

A: Great. Thank you. And now I'm going to move forward more to the work-life balance, something you've already touched upon in the beginning. The way I'm using work-life balance in my report is just the personal satisfaction one has with the balance between your work requirements and your personal life, so that may be your family life, your social life, just that distinguishment between professionalism and private life. How would you describe your work life balance since adopting a remote work experience?

X: Inconsistent… If you wanted a word, at times it's quite well balanced at others it's become…as we've taken on projects. And this is always, I think over time, you accept this as parts of working in a consulting environment is that you just get times where you're very, very busy. But I've had periods through the last year where my work-life balance has been quite good. And I've been able to do everything that I've wanted to do outside of work and other

times where it's definitely not been. And that does start to have an impact on your mental health. And you need to kind of a period of recovery when you have that intensive periods where you are kind of giving up your weekends and working very long hours to get things done. And also, I think when you, when you get into working in that way, you offer for me anyway, and this is just probably personal to me, I go through fits and starts through the day of kind of productivity. So that's why you can often end up working additional hours because you get distracted by things like email things like teams and that can mean that you don't get the things done that you need to be to be done. And then you end up…that leeches into your evening and then into the next day. I think I'm trying to learn methods of how to do that more effectively. And part of that reference of productivity is one for me and my own self development around how I can be more productive and strike a better balance around work life. But I certainly wouldn't, I think there's also with work-life, there's a careful balance between healthy stress, which is if I don't have healthy stress, I don't feel involved in my work. And I've had lots of quite healthy stress where I felt quite good about what we've been doing and the way that, and our deliverables as a team and the way the teams come together in periods of difficulty. And that's made me feel very positive about what we're doing. It is quite difficult to recognise whilst it's happening, when that becomes too much. And I think that's the thing that I'm trying to learn more around and being more prepared for those periods and managing the timelines of those periods. I don't know if that answers your question, but I think I assigned to the current working environment, come back to that question of work-life balance. It's easier to manage that work life balance when you have the routine in place. So, when your routine requires you go into a social activity on a Tuesday, because you always go and see your friends and have a meal out, and then you might do a gym class on a Thursday that breaks your work always for those times where you go to do those things. And that's, what's been a challenge is that there's that imperative lockdown there's been nothing to kind of remind you the necessity to have the breaks. Yeah, but that, but no, in truth, it's not really, even though despite we've had periods,

that have been very busy I've always found something positive to take out of those, those periods of time. I wouldn't say it has significantly adversely affect work-life balance.

A: Okay. Well, that's good to know. And what kind of work-life conflict may you have experienced during the transition towards a remote work environment?

X: Sorry, could you just rephrase that?

A: Did you ever have work-life conflicts? So, you mentioned a little already that you're working over hours where the work balance is being tipped. How would you have any other experiences with conflict other than the working hours… perhaps stress or…

X: Oh, okay. Yeah, I mean, that, that's certainly, I think there's a psychological component probably to working in the same space constantly, particularly with me working in a small flat with my partner that you end up talking about work because that naturally, you don't have the break of a commute in between to listen to a podcast or listen to some music and kind of creates a psychological break between work and the home environment. So yes, I do take times of stress into your personal life and start to talk through work more often. But no, I mean I don't think I've felt the effects of stress or anxiety of remote working in the way that others may have done. And there's been widely reported. I think I've managed to adapt and compartmentalise that with the exception of those fairly intense periods, but not in a way that would be that I would notice as a significant difference from the normal working environment.

A: Of course. Great. Thank you. And then this comes to my final question about achievement of work-life balance. How do you think human resource management could help support your work-life balance before you mentioned a little bit more, that they have some form of training and teaching how to bring in routines… Could you think of maybe some other ideas or suggestions, perhaps?

X: I think there's a big cultural concern, which is, as I said…I don't know if I've articulated this well, but it's that I think you need…. so, so we, as a business, we make the business case for sustainability to others and try to convince others that there's a commercial relationship between being sustainable… sustainable performance and economic performance. And I think there's some learnings in that for us in that there's a lot of emerging evidence around wellbeing and productivity that we're not really looking at. We're not really paying sufficient attention to and challenging ourselves. We're almost I think it was like many businesses. We fight the symptoms of wellbeing, so we kind of say, okay, we've got an employee engagement program that you can go to if you feel stressed or rather than we do have some …we highlights some things that people can do. HR have done this too, to kind of, take a break in your day and, and to some exercise and all of the things to promote wellbeing, but it's trying to manage the negative impacts of it rather than making a proper case for wellbeing and promoting it in a way that you kind of say, look, if everybody is well and healthy and the business, our productivity improves, so we really want to push for people to do this. We really want to…without being overly prescriptive, kind of look to have things which become culturally embedded. So, for example…could you do things where you say we'll move away from internal emailing, which is a constant stream of distraction and leading to potential lack of productivity. Could we have days where we don't have meetings... meetings consume a lot of time and stop people from being productive. Could we have some techniques in place for how meetings are run and how you get more purposeful outcomes that make you more efficient. I think there's a lot of things around that, that you could embed within the culture. Probably something else would-be specific days or times where you can't arrange meetings, you can't email. And again, this is avoiding being too bureaucratic and prescriptive, but trying to embed these things culturally on the basis, that there is a direct relationship between doing that wellbeing and productivity and focusing in on the relationship between those. So that would probably be the thing that I would look to, I would look to make a greater business case for wellbeing. And I suppose the other

thing is, tying in things like time off due to sickness and how that impacts your business and how disruptive that can be and how with better wellbeing management, you could reduce the impact of that. So, yeah, I think there's lots more that we could be doing that would be much more proactive and would be really well received by staff. Rather than just considering wellbeing as an afterthought to the symptoms of it starting to appear.

A: No, definitely. I think proactivity is…also embedding in the culture. I think that's a direction that could be more sustainable. I mean, it also works very nicely with [company] that you're a sustainable consultancy firm, but that you're also being sustainable for your employees and for yourselves. I definitely like what you brought up there. To finish off with the detailed, for the case study participant list. Could you tell me what your nationality and age is please?

X: Yeah, so British, and I'm just, unfortunately this last year turned 40.

A: All right. Thank you. Do you have any questions for me or any further details you want to add?

X: No, but I have appealed to our people services team too, to see if there's an opportunity to look at, the evidence-base for… within any business if you're going to make significant changes or cultural changes, you need an evidence base that shows the benefits to that. That'd be a bit just, it's the same with sustainability. It becomes far more persuasive if you can link it into top line or bottom-line benefits. And I think anything that kind of evidence that and the interventions that you can make over time to improve that, no members of staff is going to disapprove of new techniques around improving their wellbeing and encouraging their wellbeing. I think it's just linking that into an evidence-based for why, and the persuasion for the senior leaders and the global leaders of why you should do that and what the evidence base is for making that cultural change.

A: Totally. I mean, that's partially why I'm writing this thesis actually. They're really pushing us to dig in deep for the evidence why it's needed and what are like, what can we do to solve this? Do you have any feedback perhaps for myself with the interview on how I can improve on?

X: No. I mean this perfectly…I mean, I'm here to try and be as helpful as I can for you. I was very much happy to be led by your interview process. One of the things you might possibly consider could be getting quantitative data in is that you could look to scale some of your questions maybe, and say, on a scale of zero to 10, how would you rate this and look at if there's anything that starts to emerge from that, because sometimes, me talking in qualitative terms might not be as enlightening as me kind of giving you a number out of 10, which you kind of say, well, it's pretty evident where, where he sorts of thinks is the issues and the challenges here.

A: So, for instance, when I ask you rate your work-life balance one to 10 or your wellbeing.

X: Exactly

A: Okay, great. Thank you. That's actually a very good, good tip that I'll make sure to do well. Thank you so much, [interviewee], for your participation.

X: You're welcome. Bye

Interview 2.1

A: I'm creating this profile of all the interviewees it's anonymous, but I'm asking for length of service as a leader, nationality and age.

X: UK, British… how long have I been leading a team… for probably about seven, eight years. And what was the final question?

A: Your age.

X: Yeh I'm forty.

A: Perfect. Thank you so much. Then we'll go right into it. So how would you describe your remote work experience during COVID-19?

X: Yeah, it's interesting. I think I come from a background where working from home was kind of coming up on the rails as I was starting out in my career. It wasn't [working from home] wasn't really a common thing. I'm working now about 2005, 2006. The concept of working from home when you were starting out and your career was a bit unheard of really, and kind of leaders of that time rarely worked from home, unless it was part of a doctor's appointment or something really that they couldn't come into the office. And I think HR … I think… it looked frowned upon, people that weren't in the office. I think there was much more presenteeism that used to go on during those during those times. But then I suppose… then quite quickly by the start of 2010 onwards working from home became much more common, at all levels of an organisation. So even graduates would say I'm going to work from home because I need to concentrate on something on Monday and I'll be in the rest of the office that week. I suppose that that's just a bit of context as to, how rolling into the kind of COVID time with remote working. I think on the face of it should have been relatively straightforward, but the oppressive nature of not having a choice anymore that… like me sat here now in a bedroom, basically having to work this way is not out of choice. And I think when you don't have a choice, it may weigh on your mind slightly... that how long is this going to be for, how long do I have to learn

like this changing your work pattern, your overall sense of wellbeing, because if you're not careful, you can just sit in the chair like for eight, nine, 10 hours and realise that there's no demarcation in the day. Like you would have go going out at lunchtime or commuting from the station to the office, there's at least three breaks in the day that you are forced to kind of have. Whereas remote working like this you can… I think my analogy is that you can probably be more productive working more hours now than we ever have been. And unfortunately, the consequence of that is probably health and wellbeing and mental health… maybe certain firms aren't pushing the narrative of, you need to have a break. You still need to take a holiday, even if there's nowhere to go, you need to get some exercise in the daylight and not wait till the end of the day when its dark… all those kinds of things. For me, it's maybe been a slight challenge, but I'm quite adaptive anyway. I just kind of don't get too hung up, but so I think on balance it's probably, yeah, not too bad, but I'm keen to get back in an office. And I think the added dynamic is… and this is pandemic specific. I don't think this is necessarily a remote working kind of commonality, but it's because when the schools were also off then the dynamic between my wife, working, the children needing to be home schooled, me working and still trying to kind of lead a team and keep them, you have these competing….

A: Priorities… all very important… yeah, definitely. I get where you're coming from.

X: Whereas at least if you have grandparents' support or you know that right, I'm going to be in the office this day. So, I can't do anything. You can set that boundary. Whereas when it all morphs into a continuum, it's hard to know where to went to spend quite central time. I think remote working certainly not good from that perspective.

A: Great. Thank you for that answer. And now this is about your personal wellbeing. For the thesis, I took quite a holistic definition, which looks into work wellbeing. It's the overall experience an employee has with their functioning at work. And it also includes the psychological and physical as well as social aspects. If you were to rate your wellbeing now

from one to 10, 10 being relatively good, you're satisfied with your wellbeing and one being low, you're not satisfied. How would you rate it?

X: It's a good question. Yeah, I'd probably say eight or nine, to be honest, I get out to exercise and I can sport when I need to do that and stuff. So yeah, I'd say definitely the higher end than the lower end.

A: That's good to hear. Well, that's, definitely positive.

X: Yeah, definitely.

A: And I mean, it's good that you said you're still able to make time for yourself to sport. So that's very important, especially when you're at home the whole day. So now I'm going to move more into the sustainable human resource aspect of things. I looked at three categories, so leader wellbeing, learning and development, as well as work-life balance. Starting off with leader wellbeing, how involved should HRM? So human resource management be with regards to your personal wellbeing?

X: Do you mean in general or as a business?

A: For yourself as a leader. Let's say more than one-on-one contact.

X: Yeah, … so is this question more about its methods and tools to do with wellbeing?

A: Yes, in a way. If you would want them to reach out to you to be able to have those conversations.

X: Yeah. I think that comes down to how you culturally lead a team to be honest, … if you had to bureaucratic or top down with how you manage a team, I believe that you're more likely to put in advertent pressure on people who then wouldn't reach out. But I think if you run a bit more of a of flatter kind of post-bureaucratic kind of leadership style. I think people will be more likely say look I'm really struggling with the week or my kids are going to be around, but at the end of the week and I'm not sure how this big meeting's going to go on Friday because

I've got them around. So, I think it comes down to kind of leadership style, quite a lot, and leadership style is born out of the culture of the organisation. I worked at [x] before I joined [company]. I'd say general levels of health and wellbeing were severely, were poor, because people hide the pressure or think everything's okay, meanwhile, the firm might be saying we've got these outlines and things you can reach out to, but that's irrelevant because the cultures not right for people to be able to use any of those services. And I'm a big believer in somebody should just have a conversation like this. Say, if you do say, look, I'm feel like I'm struggling a bit. And I think creating a culture like that I think is more important, but then the culture needs the leaders to flow that culture through and actually how they run and manage the team. So yeah, I would say you can have all the helplines and hotlines you like, but actually it just comes down to being human and a bit of emotional intelligence about thinking that they don't seem in form today. I wonder why… or they're irritable, just those kinds of social clues, I think. And that's an issue because people lead in different ways. Some are just like, do this, do that. I'm a much more collaborative or bring people through and help them understand the choices they need to make on things. So yeah, I'd say the cultural elements are huge on achieving the achieving wellbeing within business and within the team.

A: That's great to hear. I think it's an interesting perspective to really bring it down to the culture. I understand where you're coming from that perspective. So, this is now about your remote environment, your work environment, did HR or health and safety office ever reached out to you to assess your environment.

X: Yeah, yeah. So, I'm sure it's the same across Europe, but UK has health and safety regulations and workplace health and safety, so the DSA assessments, like screens and chairs and all that kind of stuff. So yeah, there was… do you have what you need, if not, just get it, you've got a good chair, you got a screen?

A: Would you change anything to your remote environment to facilitate your wellbeing that you think could further it even more?

X: Apart from getting back in the office? Not really, no, equipment wise it's just, maybe it's the sector we're in and as you know, we're in a consulting sector where we're all used to working from a coffee shop or a restaurant or a hotel lobby or a train or a plane, or airport lounge… it doesn't really phase our sector. I wouldn't have thought, but I guess if you're going to be in an office all day and you had an actual office, a glass office and you use that every day, I imagine, that's probably a bigger issue for you. Laptop, keyboard, mouse, decent chair, and that's kind of all you all you need. I was on a call yesterday actually with a client and they were saying how they purchased those yo-yo desks for everybody, like ones that you raise. And that was something they decided to do for their firm, just for everybody. They just sent them out to everybody to give them the choice to stand or sit or just mix it up, how they did it. I guess, yeah, absolutely back to the leadership style thing. There are there are people thinking about this and just making those decisions and saying, well, just give everybody a choice to say, no, rather than give them an option, say, do you want one or not?

A: Fair enough. And you say it's more of the leadership style. Would you say this is more the SLTs responsibility or then human resources?

X: It's a two-way flow. If we're saying these are the issues people have on a senior leadership call, then human resources will inevitably hear that and go, Oh, okay, didn't realise that was such a big issue. So yeah, it's a two-way street, but I think the ultimate action of decision-making on that topic or issue does need to be human resources' call as to how they do that.

A: Okay, great. Now with regards to learning and development, this is more about your agility and readiness with regards to the transition to remote work. I think for you guys, do you fully transferred to remote work in April if I'm not mistaken?

X: Yeah. End of March and early April. Yeah.

A: To what extent did you feel prepared to take on this transition and convert this with your team?

X: Not, not at all. I think in this context, I suppose that there was a… is this pandemic going to be a big thing. How long is it going to run for? There was a bit of overconfidence. We've been a bit "blahzay" that I might just be for a week or two. I guess there was a couple of stages to it, stage one was look, take some stuff home just in case and stage two was, this is going to be longer than we thought. And then three was, this is going to run right until the summer. So you could almost compartmentalise your mindset into those three stages., the first stage is, okay, this isn't ideal, but okay. But then the second stage is like I'm feeling a bit unsure about this. And then the third stage, God is this really going to be over by the summer? Or are we still going to be doing this at Christmas? And I think the narrative in the UK was: Oh, we'll all be done by Christmas. And I think that there's an issue here of false hope that in layer into people's wellbeing, if you give people false hope, you'll be back in the office by December, and then you're not… I think and at the same time everybody's ready and like, okay, well, we've been doing this for nine months. The behaviour is established as to how to make things work and how to juggle and balance. So, there's a negative in terms of how you think about how long it's going to be, but then a positive in terms of, okay, well, I've adapted now. So not that ideal, at least the longer it goes on, the more established the pattern can be. Ironically, I think you get an inverse relationship between length it goes on and how kind of adapted you've become and the more adapted you are the more positive you probably feel.

A: Definitely, definitely. And with regards to leader development. This is about your individual knowledge, skills, and ability as a leader. You can see as the human capital, for instance, did you have any programs that you received to develop your leader skills within a virtual environment?

X: No. I can't think of any. I think people shared some courses on how to do better webinars in terms of a client outreach. And maybe there was one about managing a meeting virtually but yeah, it's a fair point. I'd probably say we were a bit light on that throughout the organisation.

A: Would you want to have more to develop this, or do you think it's maybe too much to add on all the responsibilities you have at the moment?

X: I think it's more a kind of trying to support people internally, rather than putting them on a course externally. I think it's more about…

A: Emotional supports....

X: Exactly… We used to just share, what works in these kinds of meetings, it's difficult, isn't it, you've got 20 people talking at the same time and half of them are on mute and all that good stuff. I think it's a fair point, we probably needed a bit more awareness to have people really know how to manage meetings like this. And for those that aren't that confident at managing meetings normally, does this make them feel more exposed or self-confidence kind of issues to it. On the flip side there's people who I know hated standing up and speaking at conferences and talking to big teams and they feel it's democratised their ability to talk to hundreds of people without the fear factor because it's done like this, which I think is interesting as well. There's probably two sides to this again, some who get positive from the fact that it's just looking at a little screen rather than stood up in front of all those people and those who probably feel they need a bit support in terms of how to manage a meeting and how to bring all the different players in and hear everyone's voices on those kinds of calls. Which when you're in a room, it's easier to see who you might not have heard from. Whereas when you just got little widgets to the side of your screen and people joining and leaving all at the same, from time to time, you're not sure who's there and who isn't.

A: And this is similar to leader development, but this is called leadership development, which is more about the social capital and networked relationships you build between the leaders. Did you have any programs to develop this?

X: Formal programs, no? I think it was just some colleagues set up like a breakfast session where people would get on eight, half eight, and chat, but that caused a few issues because those who had children, for example, couldn't join that. So I think it was much more informal… the social capital was built through informal catchups and again, the positive of the remote working and the pandemic was that it… instead of having to wait to see somebody, you can just ping them on teams and go are you alright, I've heard this or well done on that, much more manageable, easier to keep higher levels of social capital up rather than going, Oh, well, I'm in the London office on Friday. I'll just wait till the end of the week to see such and such and then you think I might not have seen them. And then a whole week goes by before you've seen them. From that perspective, it's definitely helped. I'd say it's probably 50% more social capital through this ironically than I would be in just traveling between offices. Because you lose time… that's maybe an hour and a half lost in your day that you can't use to catch up with people. Whereas if it's nine o'clock and you're thinking of just quickly, 10-minute quick chat with such and such, you can get back to what you're doing without thinking you've lost too much time in the day.

A: Okay, great. We've come down to the last part about work-life balance. So, throughout my report, I'm using work-life balance, the definition that you, as an individual, the satisfaction you have between the division of your personal life and your professional life. For every individual, it doesn't mean it's 50/50, but it's just a level that they're satisfied with. Taking this into account, how would you describe your balance since adopting remote work?

X: Yeah, I'd say I'd say it's probably 70/30 in the wrong way. I think probably more work and less home balance, but that was born out of… nobody knew if we were going to have a job in

April, stay home in the summer. There was additional pressure to work harder and longer to just make sure you were doing everything you could. I think then we thought through the summer that would improve, but what we actually found, and I was guilty of this was going on. I don't want to take holiday because I don't just want to stay in the UK and waste holiday and be the sense of just needing to keep going. What if a client phones up while I'm on holiday and says there's a hundred thousand euros contract and you're not there to answer. I think the sense of, I'd say for my feeling is for most people, I think certainly at the senior leadership level that work-life balance has gone the wrong way, but I don't know. So, I say that actually, but then I was traveling to London two, three times a week, four, five hours of travel a day, each time. So that's what 20 hours a week of sitting on trains, getting home at 10 o'clock at night, leaving at 6:30 in the morning. So actually, from a being present perspective of just being around the house and seeing the children in the morning and towards bedtime actually that's a positive, but think on balance, the dominant failing has been towards just keeping the ship sailing and which might be a personal leadership pressure that we face. And maybe if you're somebody who likes running and mountain biking and getting out for walks, maybe it's like, brilliant. I've got all this time that I can go do those things. So yeah, I'd say for me, it's probably got slightly worse in some ways, because the other thing I should say on that, when you're in a more leadership role, that social capital building can happen by just having a coffee with people or going for a drink after work, even though you're on work time, it feels like you're balancing out your work life.

A: It's not only just professional talk. It's building social capital…

X: Yeah. So even though it's not home balance, it's still a work-life balance because even though you might be with work people, it feels like you're not just talking about work. So, for how you build social capital in this remote environment… we've tried it with drinks on a Friday when people join virtually, but by that time people are sick of seeing the screen and sitting in

the same place. I think the social capital part and the work life balance are so closely aligned that, if you work hard and play hard, then people might not mind up, but if it's working hard without any of the play, then that could cause people to present remote, working more than actually being in the office which might be a kind of interesting positioning in terms of how, for your research, is how do you build social capital and deal with the trade-offs of remote working with social capital on the one hand. It's much more social because you can speak to anybody whenever you like pretty much, because you're not tied to waiting for them to come in the office or, you can spot a bit in their diary and go, well, I know where they're going to be. Which is great. But then the counter argument to that is what's the quality of the depth of that social capital. It's probably not as good as it would be if you were having lunch and a glass of wine or something. Yeah, that'll be my take on take on that, I think.

A: Okay, great… Do you have time for two more questions? I just know you said…

X: Yeah.

A: Okay. So how could human resources help support your work-life balance?... Do you think there's some initiatives they could do or take action, or do you even see them responsible for this?

X: Not really. No, I don't. To be honest.

A: Who do you see responsible for this… yourself?

X: Yeah, I think so. Yeah. But then I come from taking responsibility for the culture we have at [company].   it's them over there… go talk to human resources and ask them like if you need some help go and talk to them. And I have this in a real-life case, actually, I was responsible for somebody and they were driving along the motorway and they were having a nervous breakdown and they phoned me, and I was like, okay, well, just did all the usual stuff, find

somewhere safe to start and give me a ring back and we'll chat. And then I went to my kind of manager at the time and said, look, this has just happened. And now we're just like just pass it on to HR, kind of thing. Which, maybe that was his view at the time, but that culture felt like that there, whereas here I'd probably phone our managing director and say, look, we've got a real problem here and we'd have all sorted out together. I think again, I come back to the, what's the culture of how people perceive human resources' role because in much more hierarchical organisations, the function exists for a reason to not be an annoyance or a, I have a complaint for this factor to people who do the work. Whereas if you're in more of a start-up and venture capital, fast growing business, you're just naturally more fall into all of the roles to what you do. I think certainly how I see it is… I wouldn't even know what HR could really do apart from the odd monthly wellbeing checking session, which people get incredibly cynical about those kinds of things as well. we've got to remember that you layer a load of, …

A: It's not genuine anymore. It's like checking off the box from the list.

X: I mean, do some yoga tick box exercise to get your mind straight before the week starts. You might need options, a spread of things that people can plug in and go, I like yoga. I want to do that. Or I like, I like a running club Strava that everybody's on, I'm going to go for a run and be a part of that. I think it it's about getting something that people can belong to. That is their wellbeing thing because, everybody really senses slightly differently. Where I go for a run, someone else might do Pilates or something a bit less strenuous, but still switches their mind off for 30 minutes. So yeah, I think it's about furnishing the choices people have without it feeling overly… it is a corporate initiative for ticking a box, so, yeah.

A: Great. Well, thank you so much for your time.

X: Yeah. Keen to hear how, how it goes. Cause I think there's no better time to be talking about this stuff and my LinkedIn feed is constantly with… I had once a day from an organisation that

do mental health support for companies and are called ripple. They're an external agent that goes into an organisation and the lady who runs it's really nice. In fact, if you messaged her, I'm sure she'd be,

A: Yeah, that's great. Thank you.

X: Just say I said that we'd been speaking, and I'd mentioned her because, Eileen is her name she's really interesting because she made a leap out of corporate sustainability and kind of realised that there's this whole ticking time bomb around and health and wellbeing and kind of, so she'd have some good perspectives for you.

A: Yes, definitely. Thank you so much.

X: Definitely. Yeah. I'd love to see the positioning, particularly what's the academic literature around all of this, because I'd like to see the theory… as I can see the practice kind of day to day, but it's more about the recommendations. People spend more time to talk about these kinds of issues in some formal way. It's about layering this stuff into day-to-day. So like I'm financials, it's like you keep an eye on the financials all the time. So, why don't I keep an eye on the wellbeing metric or whatever. I'm not sure if firms have that kind of metric, but, if there's a snapshot, I know people do annual surveys every year, but, that's a point in time and you've lost 11 months of being able to do anything until it gets to the point where you do the survey. But if there's a live metric of, like in supermarkets or you go through an airport which I've forgotten how to do, they have those buttons, the green, orange, red one and some kind of, how do you, how'd you do that on a monthly, quarterly kind of kind of basis, you know? Cause that could be quite insightful because then you go, okay, people are annoyed because, it's pay rise time and they haven't got a good pay rise. It's to do with that. So then you need some messaging that says, look, it's been a difficult year. When we've haven't been trading well, but we might be trading well next year. We'll really look at it at half year. You get ahead of the problem

before it spirals into people leaving or yeah, I've not seen, I've not seen a company crack that. Yeah. I think that would be, that'd be really interesting. Yeah.

A: Yeah, definitely. Great. I'll also gladly send you my research, but that will honestly be towards June. I have quite a long timeline for this, but I'll gladly take that. Thank you so much.

X: All good, bye.

Interview 3.1

A: Alright, as you know this interview will take about 50 minutes and the goal is to have an idea on how to help facilitate leader wellbeing within a remote environment by taking on a Human Resource Management perspective. Yes, so starting off can you please state your nationality, length of service as a leader and your age please.

X: Yep, I'm British, I am 46 years old, and I have been probably a leader, I suppose, since about 2005, something like that, 5, 6. I moved into a senior management role and subsequently bought that business and ended up CEO, I ended up owning it. Since then, I think, its fairly clear that I have been in leadership roles since.

A: Great, thank you. Starting off, I'm going to ask you about your remote environment. How would you describe your remote work environment and experience since COVID-19?

X: Yeh, well I'm very fortunate. I live in a house in zone 6 of London, so I have plenty of space to work from, so at the beginning of lockdown, like many people, I didn't expect it to have great longevity. I was working from downstairs in my dining room and my husband, who has always been a homeworker, was working in the front of the house, in his designated study. It became apparent after a couple of weeks, that really, there was some greater longevity than we had anticipated. I started to reconstruct my work environment to make it more like the work environment I would have in the office… with an appropriate chair, stand-alone screen and so on. In September when we entered lockdown two, I decided that the work environment I had, could be better and improved again. I moved up again, up here, which is now a designated study. My husband and I both have different designated studies on different floors of the house, which works really well for us. I am extremely fortunate to have that opportunity to create the right space and environment.

A: That's good. If you were to rate it from 1-10, with 10 being happy and 1 not so, what would you rate it?

X: I would rate it a 10, it works really well for me.

A: That's very good to hear. Now with regards to your leader wellbeing… this is about how you are doing, employee wellbeing wise. This includes your mental, social and physical wellbeing. How would you rate this from 1-10, with 10 being the brighter spectrum?

X: I would say about an 8. This varies of course, over the time, that one is within a lockdown environment. Some of that is related to other circumstances… government restrictions and so on… and some of it is work related, so it depends of course if you are on a particular project or multiple projects with multiple deadlines. But I would say as an average from March to January this year, it would average out to an 8. I am reasonable comfortable with the way that this working environment operates.

A: That's great! Very positive for sure. And then going more to a human resource perspective… leader wellbeing, learning and development, as well as the work-life balance. These are the three specific subjects I've been looking into. How involved was human resources with regards to your personal wellbeing?

X: That's a difficult one to answer, I would say professionally, not very involved. But that's partly because I choose not to involve them rather than because the infrastructure isn't there. But on a personal level, my relationship with [name] with our people's services team is really strong. On a personal level, [name] and I have catch-ups and coffees and so on. Just for a bit of a natter and whatever, I would say they are 75% work, 25% personal. And we set them up in the early days because we missed having a gossip over coffee in the office. But I would therefore say probably there's more of my wellbeing and so on being swept up in those other conversations by default. But they weren't really established as part of the standard approach to leadership. I wouldn't know whether other colleagues in my position for example, had the same experience.

A: Yeah. You have more of the informal conversation, but you felt those were more productive and helpful.

X: Yes, exactly. I'm a fairly independent leader, I always have been. And so I tend to reach out when I need it rather than to expect it to be offered to me.

A: Okay. And how could human resources actually become more involved with ensuring your wellbeing while working remotely?

X: Well, I think there are lots of initiatives that are in place. And they're broader than probably just what you might recognise as HR, because in [company], the way that we work, we've got our people services and our health and safety team working really quite collaboratively on this topic. I've been really impressed with the amount of material that's gone up on our SharePoint sites, for example, and the amount of sort of collaborative efforts around getting people to take exercise, particularly as the nights got longer colder, darker. There was a real push in the sort of autumn/wintertime that came from not just the HR and health and safety functions, but also from other leaders elsewhere around the business to really encourage people to have sort of meeting amnesties over lunchtime. They could go out during daylight hours and those sorts of things. From my perspective, I guess I had some benefit from that again, being a leader myself, perhaps less than another employee might have, because it was about really giving them permission. Whereas I don't tend to feel like I need that permission. I would take a break if I wanted one. But I do think that those sorts of shared initiatives. I don't know if you know about the walk around the world, for example…

A: No, I haven't heard…

X: Okay. So that was one of the initiatives. I think it was started in my team actually by colleagues with a sort of wellbeing and health and safety focus, and then it got rolled out to the whole company. And the idea was we recorded all the mileage that we did in a lockdown and started in the [HQ company] London office and walked our way actually oddly to the middle of the Pacific …don't know why we stopped in the middle of the Pacific. But we went basically all around the European offices and out to the middle East and China and the Philippines. And

we were heading back towards Brazil when we got to the end of the year, I think. And there was a lot of focus on all of that sort of stuff. it was shared by the managing director, for example, in our global town halls and so on. There was a real consensus that it was okay to take time out and walk so that plus the stuff that's on the SharePoint which actually includes all sorts of great ideas. So, yoga classes… early on there were life yoga class is actually being run by colleagues of ours who are personal trainers and wellbeing managers which were posted on our SharePoint site. I mean, there's even been something recently on menopause… focused because of the sort of stress and the fact that people are in isolated environments. I thought it was quite interesting to see that sort of advanced thinking. I don't know many companies who would post stuff on their SharePoint that was specifically aimed at helping women going through that difficult time. While again, I tend to feel perhaps that they're less aimed at me and they're more about me promoting them or at all coming up with some of these ideas. I would know where to access all of that information and I would feel comfortable using it. I think it's a really good resource.

A: That's good to hear. Also, very interesting how… I feel like it's a very open community at [company] that you can discuss these, and they acknowledge more personal transitions as well. I think that's very nice to hear. With regards to your work environment, you already said how your office set up has evolved over the months of COVID. Did you ever have human resources or a health and safety officer check upon your work environment?

X: Yeah, so health and safety. I think we're probably the main people behind that service called [name] at [company]. Again, you've probably heard other people reference them. There's a risk assessment that we do, there's the ergonomic assessment of whether your workstation is set up in the right way. So those materials are being provided to colleagues, including myself. And especially in the early stages, there were emails out to colleagues saying the office is going to be open if you want to come in and collect items, keyboards and whatever else. And in my case, actually around Easter time, when I realised that it was going to have some longevity, I requested a chair specifically sent from the office and it was couriered to me within a matter of

hours. So that was all managed by that sort of central resource effectively combination of health and safety office manager and human resources. And that was available to me as a leader. It was also available to other colleagues across the whole business.

A: And would you, I mean, now you've said you made quite some changes. Would you have any further changes you would make to facilitate your wellbeing even more? I mean, you're quite high on the spectrum already…

X: Well, I mean, if you could reduce the amount of work coming in, that would be nice, but that's not unique to being in lockdown. Would I change anything? No, I don't think I would actually. And like you say, I mean, I've been through evolutions and different seasons have meant different things. You might be able to tell I've currently got lots of lights on, which is not necessarily very sustainable, but it provides the optimum work environment for me. I like to feel like I'm in a sort of, you can probably tell actually most of my lights are actually a yellow glow and I find that better than the office. The lighting in our office is quite harsh. It's a white light and it's strip lighting…quite bright. There are benefits that I've been able to create for my own personal work environment, my own preferences here. But as I say, these lights, I kind of brought in only a month or so ago. I think it's probably a continual kind of evolution and having worked. I mean, I've got 25 years of experience working in different offices and so on, you kind of learn what works for you and what doesn't work for you. And I'm fortunate again in the position that I can actually have the space. I have the resource to be able to bring in additional things if I need them, whether it's lighting or a change to my workstation. Actually, at one point I changed, when I moved from downstairs to here, I changed the height of the desk because that worked better for me. It's very fortunate that I have the opportunity to be able to do that. And I do reflect that not all colleagues will have the financial resources or the space to be able to do that.

A: So, you've already mentioned that you're quite an independent leader and you've got control over your role. There's this theory that I've read upon from Guest and Conway, that they said, there's six elements that help facilitate a positive work environment, which links to wellbeing. This includes manageable workload, personal control over job, organisational support, positive work relations, and a clear role that you have. And lastly, a sense of control of involvement in organisational change. Taking these six elements into consideration, how would you describe your work environment when thinking about workload and personal control or organisational relationships?

X: Well, I'm a victim of my own ways of working. Let's say that… I have high level of control. I have a high level of involvement in the [company] strategy because I sit on the senior leadership team. But I also participate the global three-year strategy which is global development. And I'm currently sitting on what we call the activator agenda program, it's the 10-year vision for what the company would like to achieve doing the UN's decisive decade. And so that means I've got a very high level of visibility and a reasonable level of influence over the corporate direction and the way things are managed. I have pretty much complete autonomy over my own, what we call community. You would call it department or team here. To the extent that last year, actually, I kind of sort of promoted myself into a new role that I titled head of solution because I have a very aspirational community coming up underneath me who were ready to lead communities. And the only way I could see to do that was to split the community that I had into multiple different groups and then sort of manage those groups myself. Although I did take that to senior leadership for decision, ultimately, I faced no challenge, and I implemented that new structure. I promoted the people within my team. I gave them the autonomy. Now you might think that that therefore having that level of control means you can control your work level too. That was partly what that was about… delegation for improvement. But actually I'm, this is why I say I'm a victim of my own behaviours. I just fill the time with additional strategic or billable work. Yeah. I mean, I enjoy the work that I do

with clients. It's a lot about why I do the job that I do. And therefore, it's like the law of available space in your suitcase. When you go on holiday, the more space you have, the more you put in the suitcase, it's exactly the same. I could change that. I'm sure I could. [Company] is the sort of organisation that will take as much as you're prepared to give it doesn't necessarily ask for that, but it won't prevent you from putting those hours in either. In lockdown, my hours rocketed. I would say in the office because of the hour-long commute in each direction, which I did work on… when I could get a seat on a train but typically that created a kind of natural cut-off point in terms of the number of hours that one would spend in the office, particularly lockdown removes that. My hours have rocketed to, I mean, before Christmas, I was doing consistently 14-hour days just to get things done before the break that isn't an [company] behaviour necessarily, but you won't find it's unique in me either. And I think that is the case with lockdown that you find a lot of people will say, well the computer is always there. It's always visible when you're in lockdown, there's nothing else to do. You may as well fire off one more email or finish one more report. The other challenge that I think has come out of lockdown, which probably leaders feel more maybe than some other colleagues is the intensity of the working. And I don't know if other people have mentioned this to you, but if you were in an office environment and you had a meeting, you would naturally expect to have a break before the next meeting as a minimum, you would say, well, that meeting that people might take a little time to vacate the meeting room. I'll allow a 15-minute window. Then even after that, you'd have 15 minutes of people arriving, making coffee, having small talk, taking a coach, their coats off and so on. You naturally get an opportunity for your brain to kind of refocus. It doesn't happen when you work with people like this when you're a leader. I mean, my examples, I could go, my first call was eight o'clock this morning with a client. I was on that phone call talking about the pharmaceutical sector, really deep technical information, but also with three very senior leaders. You're also kind of trying to build the rapport, which means you're double handling that mental capacity. I came straight off that onto an internal

management call about colleagues who want to work in different international environments because we're in lockdown. They want to go to their home countries or travel elsewhere. So completely different focus from a very technical, very senior conversation to a very strategic, very internal focus conversation with absolutely no downtime in between. And my days are typically like that I could have eight hours of back-to-back meeting with no break at all, no lunch, no 15-minute breather. And before Christmas, in fact there were three days in a row when my husband bought me two meals during the course of the day to the office, because I didn't leave this room. And I think that that is a particular problem associated with lockdown and associated with behaviours like mine. It's therefore very difficult to give you one rating for all of what you were talking about because actually that's in my control, I have a much higher level of control over whether or not I feel my wellbeing is addressed, as I said at the beginning of it. But my personal behaviours tend to mean that actually I put my own wellbeing at the bottom of my priority list. I don't know how you would rank that if you were going to ask me to do a one to 10 rating of how well I feel that those six parameters kind of influenced my wellbeing at work. I don't think I could actually provide one number that would allow me to give you the understanding of that. But do you need me to do that for you?

A: No, it's fine. The way you're describing it gives a very good picture. Also like you said, it's, you can't really average it out because some periods are just really back-to-back meetings and other times it slows down. This is why I'm doing interviews to get more of the qualitative aspect to really understand what's going on when, thank you for that. Now with regards to learning and development and your agility and readiness for the transition to remote work, how did you feel, did you feel prepared for the transition?

X: Did anybody? I don't think anybody saw it coming, do they? And I've never worked consistently remotely before. In my whole career I have been office based. I had maybe two to three years, I suppose, at, [company] of moving towards a day a week at home, which for me

was unusual. And not necessarily particularly… I would find excuses not to do it. I was trying to do it for wellbeing actually, because it would allow me to spend more time with my husband or to do more exercise and so on. But actually, if there was an excuse not to work from home, I would take it because I enjoy being in the office environment. I particularly find that I used to work… I thrive on busy environments. If the office was quiet, I was quiet. If the office was busy, I would get much more done. I was much more productive. My natural reaction when we went to full work from home was one of minor concern. How's this going to work? I'm going to have… in fact I bought a speaker, so I could have some sort of radio and one of my colleagues suggested if you put on a radio station in the language, you can't understand, it has the same effect as lots of people buzzing on phone conversations, it creates that sort of energy. Actually, I never did that in the end, but that was my thinking was I'm going to have to create an environment in which I can thrive and be productive. But actually, what I found really quickly was because everybody had moved, I didn't have that fear of missing out because nobody was in the office. And I also found that I, we naturally gravitate to… so [company] has this teams set up from the beginning. We were very quick to adopt a lot of very effective online tools. And what I found was probably before I left the office, maybe 40% of my week would have been on video calls like this anyway, because I work in international teams. In February, for example, just before the lockdown in March, I was actually in Arizona for a week working with our US team out there at a conference called GreenBiz. I generate quite a lot of follow up work, which in the US time zone, which man would have done those calls anyway, remotely like this on video camera. But also it suited me to be at home because eight hours behind me they were just sort of getting ready to have a call at four o'clock in my afternoon. So that transition was assisted by those two things really by the fact that I had a lot of work that would, that meant, I still saw people, I was still interacting like this with people on video cameras. And I was interacting with them in a way that suited me because I could still finish that call at six and still go for a run. Whereas if I'd been in the office, I wouldn't have been home too late or

8:30 in the same environment. I think that definitely helped. And yeah, very quickly I got to the point where I realised what the benefits were of being at home. I think within a week I handed back a season ticket for travel that I'd had for 21 years. I felt a bit emotional about giving up after 21 years. But a week later I was like, gosh, I never have to stand on a train squashed under somebody's armpit. I never have to arrive at a station and discover that there's a huge queue of people because the trains aren't running. And very quickly you realise that actually there are a huge wellbeing benefits in terms of blood pressure, stress, and the ability to find time to exercise. I really, in the summer, I really embraced the opportunity to be outdoors very quickly in a way that I wouldn't have been able to if I was in the office.

A: Yeah. Well, that's really good to hear. So now this is going to be more about your leader development. This is about the human capital, so knowledge, skills, and abilities that you have did you ever have any programs this could also be before [company] that helped you develop your leadership skills that felt applicable for leading within a remote environment?

X: Yeah, lots. I'm really fortunate in that. I have a coach, who you know, in the [company] teams… three years, I think we've had that relationship and is hugely valuable, really, really useful. We did our [company] voices, five voices if you've come across those. Yeah. It's a bit like Myers Briggs. It tells you about your personality, preferences and ways of working and so on. And having done that just before a year or so before the lockdown gave me lots of opportunity to explore that I'm a pioneer guardian or guardian pioneer. One day, I want to save the world. I need a plan. Sometimes I need to plan to save the world. It's the same thing, but sometimes different parts of my brain take over and understanding what that meant actually was really useful for the lockdown. For example, a guardian needs a plan, right? We need a structure; we want to know what's happening. And so very early on, I went into a sort of process of saying, right, well, what's my key person strategy for this team. For example, if everybody starts to become sick with this, where's the work going to go? How are we going to continue

to meet numbers? Because that was something that was keeping me up at night not having a strategy or a structure for that was really important. So that sort of training, I suppose, and understanding of my preferences may made me okay with putting a plan together. And I knew how to communicate that because I knew how it would be received by colleagues. I know how many other guardians versus creatives I have in my team, for example. One of the other things I'd focused on a lot in my coaching sessions for example, was prioritisation. So just focus on three things for today and do them well. And again, that's really useful when you're faced with a crisis with everybody working from home, people clamouring for, I haven't got a suitable work environment. Can you help me? Where do I get a screen from? So-and-so sick, I've got childcare issues. There was stuff coming at us as leaders from the team, that we didn't have answers for, we have no way of dealing with that because we had no precedent. And so again, having that sort of coaching support that was like, right, step back, prioritise the top three things, be a guardian, put a plan in place because if schools are closed over here and they're affecting this person, they're going to have a repercussion over here. Write a plan, that's going to solve that in a fairly standard framework. So those were certainly very useful. I think probably those are the two most useful things, but I mean, loosely, there are all sorts of things that I'm a trained facilitator and chairperson for example, have been for years since early 1990s. And I find that those skills were incredibly useful for moving to online communication. So being able to know how to facilitate a meeting meant that when you go to an online conversation and you've got six clients, for example, all on at once, you automatically default to some of the facilitation techniques, you would have used in a round table conversation, to stop people, all talking over each other or to give people equal input. You don't just hear from the loud voices and not the quiet ones. And I'm sure there are a suite of other things that were useful, but those are the sorts of examples that come to mind.

A: Great. I mean, definitely the coaching. I think that's something that really helps a lot of people and prioritisation. This is about your leadership development, about networking and

building relations. So social capital within [company], or also outside in the remote environment, did you have any form of development or programs for that?

X: Not during lockdown, no, but we did have informal conversations with some of our colleagues about it, which was really interesting about three or four months into the lockdown period. August… something like that. We realised that actually we were picking up quite a lot of new clients during this period for a variety of reasons. And the relationships that we were building with those new clients seemed to be much deeper and more personal than some of the clients that we have the equivalent contracts with, that we'd been working with for years. And we had a conversation at a senior leadership level within my community about why we thought that might be and what we could learn from it. And the conversation identified that it's to do with authenticity, that when you're in an office environment, you wear a suit you're in a standard meeting room that looks the same as every other meeting room. And people tell you as much as they're prepared to, or comfortable with sharing. You only really ever get a sort of very high-level understanding of a, some, not everybody. Some people are very open but when you are working in totally different work environments, like you saw my cat, I've been on meetings where one of my clients children's snuck in and stuck a lit firework in her hair. You know, there is nowhere to hide, I've been on another client call when a whole load of railway sleepers were delivered unexpectedly to her front garden for her… It was part of her landscaping program, but it arrived in the middle of our call and you've seen her sort of running around, she still had a headset on and was still talking to us but running around and taking the delivery. When you have those sorts of insights into people's personal lives and the work environments they work in, we discovered that actually that authenticity leads to much deeper relationship with somebody, better understanding of them and a better ability to meet their needs professionally, as well as get on as a nice working environment team to work with. While it wasn't training, we then decided that actually we would roll out a further conversation with our clients and with other colleagues in the team about this whole idea of it's okay to be open

and vulnerable and things go wrong on these calls, embrace them and use them to your benefit. That's probably the only one that I can really sort of think about to answer that question.

A: Well, you answered it nicely, I think it's a good perspective… to think of building rapport. Work-life balance can be interpreted differently and the way I've been interpreted it for my research was that it's the satisfaction an individual has with their balance between professional and personal life. If you think about your work-life balance, how would you rate it in a division?

X: Well, first thing is I went to a conference some time ago where actually they said work life blend is a better way to think of life now in lock them. Or actually they were talking about it originally in sort of modern millennial and gen Z terms because everybody's got a side hustle. Everybody does their online shopping during work hours, but then they'd log on again at 10 o'clock at night for five minutes or whatever. Right. I embraced that when I heard this idea of work life blend. And I think it's exactly the point that you're making work life balance in place that actually I should do this many hours sleeping, this many hours of working and this many hours of something else, but a blend actually works much better for you in locked down when you've got, computer on, but maybe, I don't know, you've got an hour spare and it's still light. You're going to go out for a run in that hour and then look back on again, eight o'clock tonight and check. Once I kind of caught onto that and the power of that way of thinking in lockdown, it changed the way in which I sort of started to think about it. I would say I'm currently probably a double to six or seven on your scale in terms of happiness with that balance. There, and again, I could change that. So back to your question about what level of control actually, if I wasn't such a control freak, workaholic, I could push that up to an eight or a nine, probably it's within my control to do that, but that's not my type of personality. My type of personality is I will find work and I will do work as long as there is stuff to be done because I'm passionate about the company and the sustainability agenda. It gives you a slightly false reading. It doesn't mean

I'm unhappy being at a six or seven or that I would be happier being as an eight or nine, actually. That is where I feel comfortable.

A: Yeah, definitely. I mean, for sure, it's very personality drive… it's lovely to hear how passionate you are about your work. And then exactly, it's nice that you can dedicate your time to that. So how has remote work actually influenced your work life balance if you compare it to your time when you were at the office?

X: The really big differences is… I can think of three. The first is that I actually spend quality time with my husband, which is really nice. As you, as you've probably established, I used to work relatively long hours. I had an hour also commute at the end of the day. And by the time I got home, I didn't want to talk about work, and I probably didn't want to talk about the fact I'd had a hideous train journey home either. Therefore, the quality of the time and the conversation that we had was pretty limited. Now, interestingly, I've heard friends say in lockdown, they found they've got less to talk about with their household, but because I have a hugely diverse work environment, I'm talking to people all over the world, all sorts of different problems. And because we have the international buddy system, I quite often say to my husband over dinner now, Oh, you know, this really interesting conversation with so-and-so and it could be about, it could be anything, could be about a plastics project I'm working on for a retailer, or it could be about somebody's dog… my [company] family has created an opportunity for me to share information and sort of talk to my husband about things. And the remote working has given me the time to be able to do that. I'm hugely benefiting from that. The second thing is exercise. The only exercise that I used to get really was at weekends, which meant I jammed in long runs or long bike rides, or I'm an open water swimmer in the summer. I had to go three days in a row at the weekend because there was no way I was ever going to get there otherwise. Which is not necessarily a bad thing, but it's not the most balanced way of doing exercise. Whereas now I run as a minimum. I run three times week during work weeks.

So usually Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, that's a huge benefit. Spreading that out and you now know my age. As I get older, being able to spread the running out is really good cause it's taking less toll on my body. I feel like it's having a better benefit being able to spread it out like that. It's not just the benefit of running. It's actually the benefit of being able to choose when I do. It makes a huge difference. And the third thing is, is a bit of a weird one, but I would say in the five years I've worked for [company] on 70%, 80% of my working days, I ate my supper cold on my own often my husband had, because I came home so much later than he did. And just the nutritional value of actually eating your supper at the time you want to, at a temperature you want to, is hugely beneficial. And I don't know if I ever really appreciated that, I was gobbling down called supper at nine o'clock at night, but now I no longer have to do that. I really realised that was something I never want to go back to.

A: Definitely. That's good that you get to time manage your work life nicely. Did you have any kind of conflict that you've experienced since transitioning to work remote work?

X: Wow, I suppose so. I mean, I wouldn't call them, would I call it depends on your definition of how serious a conflict is. I suppose my challenge is always that it's always here, so I've always worked weekends if I have to. I used to always bring a laptop home from work anyway, and I always had a work environment, I could use my husband's office or the downstairs dining table I used in the start of lockdown. I would say I probably always worked weekends. I would say that probably has increased in lockdown as has certainly the late-night involvement. But the counter to that is that actually I might choose to do that because it relieves pressure in a following week. It might be possible. It might possibly be the, actually, if I really evaluated it, it's probably balancing itself out. So yes, there's a conflict between my weekend working and other things I do at weekends. But am I allowing that to happen because there's nothing to do at weekends because I'm in a national lockdown… probably. Is it there for maybe creating a structure for me in a weekend, which is good for my wellbeing? Probably. I mean, I'll give you

an example over Christmas, I chose not to work, and I needed something to focus on to do. I'm a very active doer. And I went through every cupboard in the house, and I cleaned them, and I emptied them, and I threw out a whole load of stuff and, actually, that's all there is to do lockdown. And so actually, is it possible that the, what I might view as a conflict in one lens of working at weekends and not doing something proactive, but weekends is actually also doing me good because it's providing me structure at weekends in an otherwise very dull and boring weekend. I might be gravitating to doing work for an hour or two on a Saturday because actually in its own way, that's fulfilling my need. I don't know if it's a conflict. I honestly couldn't answer that. Again, it's my choice, right? I'm in the position in [company] where I could choose to, or not to do that. In many instances, probably some of what I'm doing, nobody would notice if I didn't do it. I don't feel like that conflict is being pushed upon me by the organisation. And in some instances, I probably wouldn't even consider it a conflict, but I think it's, it's an interesting question. And as we can tell from my rambling answer, I haven't really thought about it before, but I'll leave you with that. Cause I think it's quite an interesting insight into psychology.

A: It definitely is. And like you said, you have the ability to control what you want to do. And if you feel you need to do that to then make your life easier in the future, then that's the case. And wellbeing, for one person, this means wellbeing for another it means something else. It's very different. I'm also that person, too... And this is the last question I have for you is how do you think human resources could help support or do you feel that it need to actually support you with your work-life balance? Because from what I understand, you're quite satisfied with what you do.

X: In the organisational structure we work in, I don't think that there was anything else that HR could offer me to be honest. I would recognise that that's different for different levels of leadership. I mean, you're talking in this instance to somebody who's at the senior level within

the management, but of course leadership means different things. You could have a fairly inexperienced consultant and project manager, leading a project who would give you a very different set of answers because they don't have the same level of control. There they're a leader in that sphere of influence, but they don't have the same level of control as I do. So it would be, I would be quite interested to ask that question to [company employees] more broadly in more junior leadership roles, because I suspect that actually they might think that there is stuff that they could have either help with or insight into. I mean, I come obviously with 25 years of work experience, but also, I ran my business for six of those years. I'm probably different from some of those other leaders who are less experienced or haven't had those life experiences that I have. But from my perspective, I don't think there's anything else that they could do. I think the [company] approach has been really good. Like I said, at the beginning, the whole idea of let's get together and do this HIT training or let's do this yoga class and the girl in Bristol will run it for us and we'll record it, and we can share it. And there've been chat groups and, actually an interesting example recently was we used to have a coffee morning on a Wednesday, I think in the office every other Wednesday in the office and early on in lockdown and everybody moved it to virtual, we need to have that opportunity… And then over time it kind of stopped being quite so impactful. Most people stopped going or put meetings over it. And HR, were one of the driving forces behind getting that back. So [name] and people services identified that there were some people who weren't maybe interacting as much as they should have been or could have been. And I've had a couple of conversations with [name] about colleagues in my leadership role, but about colleagues in my team about I haven't seen them on social events for while I'm a bit worried and can we just do a check-in process? And [name] been really good at reinstating those coffee breaks. And we used to do something on a Friday it's called booze and news, but it was mostly about drinking, not about sharing news very much, but that's come back as well. And, she's been really open to that, but also very open to a range of different things work for different people. So online resources…let me just read something, work for

some people, links to podcasts for other people work well. She was talking the other day about something to do with it's on BBC sounds, I think sports people talking about, sort of series on motivational talks basically, but quite a lot of that is relevant to dealing with wellbeing in these sorts of environments. And she was talking about posting some links to those podcasts, for example. They'll work for different people, the actual being together on a virtual environment, drinking coffee and, and talking about cake together works for some people, there was a film club for a while where people got together and recommended in a Netflix series and things to watch. I think that HR has done a really good job of kind of saying right, different people with different preferences and personality types and different social environments that…some people are working in their bed set, they're living, working, eating, sleeping in the same space. Reflecting that their needs might be very different from somebody as fortunate as me. And I think that's been really well thought through. I honestly haven't had much involvement in that, and I haven't needed to take much from any of that as a leader. It'd be interesting to see what other people think in that in the company. I think it's been a really important mainstay for keeping people connected and balanced over the last nine months or so

A: Would you actually say that the [company] culture has gotten stronger or closer through remote work?

X: Well, I would say my relationship with people has, I don't know if that is always the case across all the teams or all the leaders. It'd be interesting again, different personality types respond differently to these sorts of environments, but I've had conversations with colleagues who've actually reflected on why they feel they can have these conversations that I would never have had in the office. So difficult, personal circumstances have arisen... as you can imagine, they've got children at home, they've got partners furloughed, all sorts of difficult circumstances have hit families all around the UK this year. And in the past, people would have felt awkward about having conversations about my husband's been furloughed. We don't have

enough money or, my kids at home, my wellbeing is being impacted because it shows vulnerability and weakness. And you don't want to show that to your senior leadership team. You want them to think that you're great, ready for the next promotion ready for the next pay raise. Right. But interestingly, when I was talking to one colleague who raised some very personal issues and we had a very emotional, both of us were quite upset about the conversation. And I said to her afterwards, do you think we would have had this in the office? And she said, no, the reason she felt comfortable talking to me in this way was because she had control. At any point she could say, Oh, you are freezing, hold on. I'll call you back in five minutes. Even if I hadn't, she had complete control over how that meeting went. She was also in a home environment where she felt comfortable, so she didn't feel exposed, but somebody might walk into the meeting room or somebody might see us walking around a park and see she was crying, and I was upset? And I thought, well, that's really interesting that it creates an opportunity where people feel they're in their own environment, they're comfortable and they're in control of what they say when and how, and when they stop the discussion, it builds that, that deeper relationship. I can certainly think of a number of people with whom I have got a much stronger understanding of their personal preferences, their personal ways of working their personal circumstances. And that means hopefully I can help them to be more effective in their work environment, but I can also help them to understand what my expectation is. And half the time people think I have an expectation that's completely different. They assume that I want the piece of work done a particular way by tomorrow when I might actually be thinking God, if you've got it done in two weeks, that would be good. You know? And so those sorts of relationship discussions I think are really useful because I can tell them this is what I'm thinking. I'm not thinking what you expect me to be thinking.

A: Great. Thank you so much. Do you have anything else you want to add or any questions you have for me?

X: No, I don't think so. I mean, I've given you a whole load of fray rambling on…

A: It's useful. I think that's quite interesting because I mean, for my study, I've done quite a few different interviews, but through the virtual environment, people are opening up so much more like you've mentioned. I've had really interviewed where I'm sitting for six minutes just listening, like, yes, keep on talking. It's great. I'm excited to go through it and analyse it.

X: Well, you're welcome to come back. I mean, I'm very supportive of the sort of work that you're doing. Cause I think it's very important. And actually, the thing that would be interesting to look at, and I don't know if your study will allow for this but is the differences in the respondent's age and sort of position in relation to technology. I'm particularly interested. This is just a personal interest in the differences between my leadership style and my generation and the millennials and the genZs who have very different experiences. You know, when I first started work, you could smoke in offices. We have one laptop between 200 people and there was a typing pool who used to print the emails off and deliver them on a trolley. So that's completely different to what my youngest leadership team members have now experienced because they've had, technology's probably since, almost since birth, it's a completely different way of them working. So actually, I mean, if there's anything you can share as an output from any of this, that helps me to understand if there is a difference in how the different types of leaders that you've interviewed mostly within [company], but broadly have experienced this and what I could take out of it as a leader in the position I'm in, that would help other more junior leaders or less experienced leaders to take something different from this. Or indeed if there's something they could teach me; I'm really interested in that. I don't know when your study will be completed, but if you find anything along those sorts of lines, do you think would be worth sharing? I'd love to hear about them.

A: Definitely I'll do that. I will tell you right now, it's really just focused on the strategic leadership team because I've switched up my study as well. I have two studies within one now,

it's quite evolved since the last time I've spoken to [name]. Essentially, I'm doing a second round of interviews end of March 2nd, last week of March because the aim is from these first interviews to find a solution to then implement at [company], to roll that out and see how that influenced it. But I can gladly send you my findings and the full report if you want. That's going to be towards June.

X: I'm interested in it. If it's available, then by all means, send it over.

A: Definitely. Could I then also send you an email later on in March for a second round of interviews. Would you be interested?

X: Yeah, I don't suppose I'm going anywhere. Yeah. I mean at the moment March is pretty empty.

Interview 4.1

A: Can you please start off by mentioning your nationality, age and length of service as a leader?

X: I am British and in terms of how long I've been a leader… within [company] I have been in a leader position the past seven years… then another organisation, so I would say in total probably 10 years.

A: Great, and what is your age?

X: I am 43.

A: Thank you. Now starting off with your remote environment, so where you are now during COVID-19. How would you describe your remote work environment?

X: Physically I work at home and I have a family… so with the kid situation, there are a lot of people around. My work situation is fitting in within that family environment, so I live in a fairy small town house. I don't have my own separate office or anything like that, so I work generally in one room, but I move around the day sometimes to enable others to live in the house and do any activities they need to do. So it's that flexibility that's required because the situation, so that's my physical environment. And I do chop and change in terms of, my position… I've actually been standing up since the beginning of the year and making that a more permanent arrangement, which actually helps in terms of being too sluggish later on in the afternoon. And then in my environment, in terms of, as a leader within the business, all the team members at [company], there is a significant drive to support the business. And that can mean that work hours roll on. Being at home, obviously with little other stuff to do, there is a real risk that, especially as a leader with lots of responsibility, that you're working as soon as you wake up and then working until you go to bed.

A: Indeed. Thank you for that answer. So also leads towards the work environment. This is a theory from Guests and Conaway, they have this idea that there are six elements that help facilitate a positive work environment. So that includes a manageable workload, personal

control over a job, organisational supports, positive work relation. So with your colleagues and a clear role, and lastly, a sense of control of involvement in organisational change. So reflecting upon these six elements, how would you describe your work environment?

X: An amount of workload that is some degree, a personal accountability to that, especially as a leader and involved in the doing as well. So understanding your ability to be efficient and effective and where those limitations are. Almost despite the pressures that the business puts on me and that's something that never works perfectly. And it's an ongoing challenge. And so I suppose with many years of experience in that situation I generally feel that that's something that I have a handle on. But it depends on where where you see that balance and that line. And that for me, certainly isn't in any contractual time that far exceeds that. That is an acceptance of the role now, whether that's correct or not, is sometimes difficult to see from the inside. As a positive work environment, it's also really important that I am setting the standards for the rest of the business and for my teams. In showing what a positive work environment looks like and making clear that I am taking that balance with works, that I can be effective and efficient so that they can then see that and then follow. Personal control over the job is varied. There's huge amounts of autonomy within the structure of the business that it allows for you. And so that can then support in the way in which I decide to lead… is fairly open in some aspects. But certainly not all. And that that control… sometimes lack of micromanagement might mean that you then have a sufficient amount of control on the other hand, if you don't then have a clear steer, or if you don't always have the right expertise in all areas of leadership, then that personal control can actually become a lack of control. Your ability to be clear on what your role is sometimes vaguer or isn't there. In terms of organisational support, I think there's really importantly from an HR point of view, there's two aspects to it. There's the values and the personal engagement and the behaviours. And then there's also the systems side of things. And I think in terms of organisational support as an individual, as a leader to be able to live on my leadership requirements I think there is a very good amount of organisational support from the

personal aspects, the behaviours and the engagement but actually really quite limited often and restricting within, I suppose, more of the processes and systems, and we do try and actually avoid bureaucracy. But where things can't get done efficiently from central support or could just be dealt with quickly or as expected that actually can create quite significant constraint. So moving on to that positive work relations. Clearly with you and I speaking to you remotely, rather than sitting around with a coffee and a table, that's the same with the team, in an environment where things are going well. And it's not so difficult, but obviously where you're looking to encourage and requiring much stronger leadership to individuals or to groups, the remote aspect of it becomes therefore much more difficult. Both in terms of being able to provide the message but also just the general engagement, because it's a lack of understanding of an individual's specific position. both generally, and at that point in time. There are a lot of other pressures that you would otherwise feel by being in an office and close to someone that you just are not aware of. I mean, I can have a pressure right now from, that not work-related that the other person wouldn't be aware of. That can often build up and you're just not aware and also the ability to not have to be specific in your engagement. Others can sometimes get lost and forgotten about it a bit, out of sight, out of mind. And that last point about control and organisational changes, we do suffer a little bit from there being clear intentions around leadership roles but that actually still some changes are made outside of that by a smaller number of leader individuals without sufficient engagement with a wider leadership group. And that's often from a legacy of what their roles were previously and therefore I certainly feel sometimes a lack of control in that we can't all know everything and make all the decisions because that's inefficient, but at the same time where there's a significant impact and where there's a need and an importance and a desire on my side to, to provide input that's sometimes that's limited.

A: Well, thank you. Throughout my research, I take on a holistic view on leader wellbeing within work. The actual definition is an employee's quality of experience and functioning

within a work environment. This still takes on also the physical, mental, and social aspects within well-being, but within a work environment. So if you were to rate your overall leader wellbeing from a scale of one to 10, 10 being very satisfied and one not so satisfied, how would you rate this?

X: I need to qualify that a little bit, so there's in the moment wellbeing versus general wellbeing over the period of which we've been within COVID. It's also worth a reflection on what it was previously as a benchmark. General wellbeing pre COVID probably would have been fairly good, within the six or seven mark. Through reflecting on the period over COVID, wellbeing has been brought down quite a bit because of strains so that's move around the four five mark and right now probably within that space maybe a bit higher, so five and a half or six.

A: Thank you. Like you said, it's hard to really quantify it to one number. Could you tell me, if you had a lot of experiences of fluctuations between your wellbeing while working remotely?

X: I think in your ability to have a work-life balance can erode without really realising it just because you're trying to deal with a different situation, again you can have that control around leadership and understanding how to adjust to that. And there is a wider challenge, which is helpful and identified in the business, but personally for myself being a leader, it becomes a of question of what the definition is. And while that might be fairly clear, the training and the support, and being able to be effective in that as through most of my last part of my career, it's very much been true through trial and error rather than being given explicit support on certain areas. That's a function a little bit of all of where the business is growing and it starts small and it's to have access… which is less likely a large corporate, but that has definitely created streams because there isn't a go-to approach that you can then apply during more difficult situations.

A: Thank you for mentioning the support aspect of things. This actually leads me into my next question about people services. Reflecting on your people services, how involved were they with your wellbeing specifically your individual wellbeing?

X: Yeah, but I think there's a little bit to your point that maybe your tutor was suggesting, focusing on the leadership wellbeing. There is a very strong desire and intention to make sure that the wellbeing of your team is being well-managed. And there is a focus within the leadership. So I sit in the UK leadership, so 90 or a hundred or so people within the UK, their wellbeing is in a good place. And so a lot of effort and exploration by the leadership group to achieve that and put in place controls to support that, does mean that actually the leadership is less or often left wanting. The expectation is that they just managing things. I suppose if on a spectrum zero to 10, but with zero normal being no help, but actually the opposite, like more of a hindrance, like shift systems are really difficult or people that are really unhelpful, then going into the battling against it. You get into a norm, I do feel like we're not there, but from my point of view, there is very little focus on my wellbeing. I mean, that said, were I would shout and say, I'm not coping… where I'm getting into a stress, a permanent stress crisis point then the business would probably react. But that is not preventative. That's a symptom in the end. It's a need jerk of right, we're going to see if things go really, really bad. So put your hand up and then see what we can do. I will say that we have a long way to go to try and support leaders.

A: Thank you. And do you have any suggestions for how people services could become more involved with ensuring your wellbeing more specifically while working remotely?

X: I think there the need to have the base requirements of what are we thinking about wellbeing that we're doing a fairly good job with maybe more junior staff is that HR actually takes an approach to make sure that they are included in the business as well and sometimes they're a little bit of a view that, well, we lead this, we've got this sorted… don't worry about them more about us. And I probably suffer from that slightly as well. It's more important to keep that delivery team working really well. So we can meet business objectives but clearly, if you don't have the leaders at the same place as well, then things start to fall apart. It's making sure that

basic wellbeing requirements are applied across the board and not excluding leaders because they just felt that they're dealt with, and then secondly, having specific wellbeing requirements that are for leaders because they have a different role to play. That doesn't exist at all. And what that looks like, I suppose I haven't really given that much thought. And that comes far more during COVID and the work environment rather than it being just specifically to remote working.

A: Okay. This is more specifically about your assessment of your work environment. I heard you have a health and safety officer, and they work closely together with people services. Did they ever assess your remote environment?

X: So yes, I have had that. I also have some basic health and safety training from my career. So I feel very comfortable about what the needs are, in terms of immediate work environment. So more from a musculoskeletal requirement and taking breaks as well. So I suppose the basics of making sure that my desk is set up properly and that I'm not causing myself injury over time. That's fine and there's no gap there, there's also, again, that ability that there aren't blockers in the way, which is appropriate to anyone in the business. If I just need to have a second screen, then I can get access to that. Or if I need to buy some new headphones, whatever, that's just not a limitation. I think it then goes much more to the things we've already spoken about, which is the longer-term wellbeing aspects, more on the emotional and mental states.

A: Yes, definitely. And from what I understand about your environment, you're quite satisfied with the way it's set up. Do you believe there could be changes that could help facilitate your wellbeing?

X: Yeah. A garden with a shed that I can live in as my office. Yeah. Everyone is suffering in different ways. It's about trying to facilitate the best work environment for everyone with the limitations they've got. I'm very lucky that I don't live in a shared accommodation, I have space. I suppose the expectation is that from a physical environment, the leaders are more mature,

longer in the tooth and therefore probably have a more settled environment and have access to better accommodations. Some of our juniors, I don't think that's a constraint.

A: Definitely. I was looking into learn learning and development and how that could really prepare you for remote work. This is about specifically your agility and readiness to the transition towards remote work. To what extent did you feel prepared for the transition?

X: It is important to say that I was working one day a week remotely pre COVID and in a very different environment because it was just one day a week, so I was planned to have very different meetings on that day where possible, it's different structured debt. And that was partly intentional for my own ability to fulfil my role of being out of the office, limiting engagement on that day to work through activities that were more cerebral. Please remind me of the question.

A: To what extent did you feel prepared for the transition towards it?

X: It did seem like a massive hurdle. I think that's partly… the helped and hindered because you don't realise that you're suddenly doing a five days a week… the strains that causes, and haven't really thought them through because it's just halfway there or fifth of the way there. The HR team have worked really hard to explore what potential issues might be arising. Generally, and again, it's about the distinction between leadership and the rest of the team. And IT issues sometimes pose a little bit of a difficulty, and then there's an attempt to get those results quickly, but that doesn't always work in practice. And that's a lack of resource availability within the people skills team rather than an attention to do otherwise. So, broadly, okay.

A: Mm. Okay. Thank you for that. And with regards to leader development, this is about your specific knowledge, abilities, and skills, you can see as the human capital. Did you have any programs in the past or at [company] that helped you develop your leader skills for remote environment specifically?

X: No. None and the question is you can take away the remote aspect of it, there was, a very little either. We're talking about an environment where new leadership training is extremely ad hoc and released on the job rather than specific training. The idea, we would have specific leadership training related to remote working, that's working way down on the priority list because we didn't actually have more general leadership training.

A: And do you, so you said it's relatively low on the list of priorities, but do you believe there could be some form of initiatives to help further, it doesn't need to be very specific to remote work, but just some form of leader skills that could be adoptable to remote work or doing everything virtually.

X: I don't think I was clear. So what I'm saying is that the business was not providing and does not provide general leadership training. So the idea that they would then provide specific remote working leadership training is not going to be there. It's not that I don't prioritise it actually quite the opposite. But actually if you're not getting the basics…. that's not yet there. I do feel that, in terms of what sorts of training, it goes to your ability to understand, and the manner in which you lead and the extent to which that is then forced to work or not work, or to be limited because of where remote working. We all lead in a very different manner and that is effective or becomes much less effective, I suppose, the extent which becomes less effective through remote working. I might be a really hands on the idea that the team works well through my fairy active engagement, maybe even being a micromanager… it's not a good thing as a leader… or I might be really hands off and actually have a stronger hierarchy so that, then there are sub leaders. And so the difference in that leadership style will then require an understanding of how that's readjusted to remote working. And I suppose with that assessment, would be the first important part of that to then be able to explore when actually there's a tweaks or quite big difference and changes to your leadership style and obviously changing the leadership style is not easy. Especially if it's not that trained, because it happens more

iteratively, therefore becomes very behavioural. So they will be the key factors and aspects on what you want to focus on as training.

A: Okay. And with regards to leadership development. This is about building and networking relationships. The social capital aspects you could think of this also your relationship with the SLT and with other leaders as well within or outside [company]. Did you have some form of like teaching of each other and conversations that where you really felt, Oh, I really learned something from this, and I can apply this within the remote environment and see it as a tip sharing situation.

X: Yeah, so that happens through our own initiative. As an SLT, we are a fairly strong group, we immediately set up social breakfasts and I facilitated that and other personal relationships between the group and individuals within that group… I would have confidential conversations… sharing struggles and seeing how do you do it? How are you finding it? As well as then speaking to the wider SLT saying, look, how are we going to work through this? And what's the range or at a group level to say, tell me how you're getting on with certain aspects of day-to-day work. So that hints and tips, I think it's exactly right. It's the enthusiasm and the desire to help out your peers within SLT. And I think that happens across different grades across the business. And we try not to be hierarchical, but clearly the SLT for me is seen as a peer group, as one very helpful peer group for me. And I have others as well within the business, which are more of a mixture across the different teams.

A: That's nice to hear. I think it's nice that you referred to it as a peer group especially you can really help each other out, I think that's very important in these times. So we've now come to the last part of the question, which is about work-life balance. You hinted a little bit about it in the beginning. Essentially, it's the personal satisfaction a person has with their division between their professional and personal work life division. Taking this definition into account, how

would you describe your work life balance? And if you could perhaps also rate it from a scale to one to 10.

X: Yeah, again, I think it's worth benchmarking what my work-life balance… how happy am I with it generally… it's that subjective objective, isn't it, the definition is not about what's healthy, it's what you're comfortable within. The business generally has a high expectation of performance, we want people to perform well within their contractual times. And that's very rarely the case, we have an enthusiasm to get stuff done. And as taught personally, I really enjoy my role. I feed off the success of it. And therefore that does mean that it has to be an intentional attempt to try and achieve work-life balance. And while I would like to see that is in my control and sometimes that control is taken away from you just because of pressures on the business and that just ebbs and flows all the time. So within the period of remote working, the work-life balance has not been there. So that goes back I assume a similar state of what we talked about with well-beings and probably within a five out of 10, about what I would like it to be. And that's something that both actively working on with an individual, but also as part of an organisation and the expectations the organisation puts on me without putting in place more diligence in devolving responsibility, downwards in delegating and also that succession planning so that it's a comfort that there is an opportunity to, if not ability to pass on some roles straight away, that there is an expectation that can happen. So there's a future proofing of future work-life balance.

A: That's nice how you explained that. And how would you say, has remote work specifically influenced, like, what changes have you noticed that then in your case, maybe inhibited your work-life balance?

X: I suppose, I mean, there are obviously some positives in terms of… the yoga session this morning and I'll go for a run sometimes in the light today. But then I cycle to work usually in the office. I usually get into my exercise that way. And that commute in one hand is good. It

gives you that time back, but actually my commute was not wasted time. If that makes sense. It's a really important time for me. While for most, that would have been a benefit for me actually it has been a suggestion by my wife…. why don't you just cycling to the office every morning and it's like back again. Seeing my children much more has been a real benefit. And so in one aspect there is more time available, much less wasted time. But that does just very quickly get sucked up into work. Work is work…. I used to work in the bedroom to begin with like at a little corner of the bedroom, which I had to change because that was just really unhealthy. So it's about putting in those boundaries. So where it has been more inhibiting, is really the fact that you just don't have that gap between… There is always someone having an issue. You know whether that's someone having an issue with being in a different region. early in the morning for Europe or then later in the evening with the US. And so as a leader, it's really important that we're bringing the business together. And so you need to have that extended workday. And therefore that can really cause some strain. And I suppose, cause remote working, if you're out of the office, you can say like, Oh, I'm leaving the office at 18:30. I'll see if I can pick up your email, but there's a that lines, the difference between [X] now left, so I can drop him a text or an email, but he's in a different world where he's in personal time and there's a respect there, but if you just aren't then you're just on.

A: Do you think that you're more likely to gravitate towards the work because you're in lockdown? ***leading question so it was scraped from the interview***

X: That's a very leading question.

A: I know, actually, we can scrap it.

X: I, yes. I mean, I think, I think that's clear, I suppose there's two things there's when you enjoy something, when you feel in control of something and work is generally something that I feel in control of when there is all this change in your world, you can then hide in that environment. And therefore that is definitely a factor there for me personally, is the prime,

~~well, I can just be in that work bubble. And so, everything else can just follow fall around me. And that's something not helpful. So there is that tendence. In terms of my standards… something we haven't spoken about, in wellbeing, is understanding your daily routine, like, you have different tasks to do, and those different tasks have a different burden on you or a different requirement. You have everything from filling in an expense form or doing a time sheet requires zero cerebral effort. But it's gotta be done and it's tedious. And versus you're trying to grapple with a more complex problem or to be creative versus analytical. And I have worked out an understanding of what environments I need to be in for that to work well. And the one part is the time of day, I am a morning person, I would never do my time sheets or admin in the morning because I'm wasting that quality of time. I do that later on. So that would be my usual routine. So I feel that, I get into the office very early and then would get that stuff done and then save other work for later on in the afternoon, which or maybe more social engagement or like catch up with people that I can do that later on the day, knowing that I've completed that more difficult challenge. That does erode a bit. So I do find myself working on in the evenings on, I'm never going to get this done in the same manner. So that's something which I think has been impacted by remote.~~

A: Okay. Thank you. And with regards to work-life conflict, you get to interpret conflict, as you wish. Have you experienced any conflict transitioning into remote work, like within your work life where you feel like you're having difficulties choosing between the two?

X: Yeah. So that's something that is inherent to a consultant and to a leader in the business like we are anyway. It just becomes much closer, like this conversation will be happening outside of my family environment, but that's now not. So you just have to deal with that. I have responsibilities now, that I didn't have previous. So I have responsibilities for school and schooling my children. While my wife is a key worker, so she's a teacher. So there's that

pressure. And the respect for others requirements that I didn't have to respect because I was in the office. So that conflict is fairly constant.

A: Okay. Thank you. And the last part about achieving work-life balance, what changes would you make to help you achieve a satisfactory level?

X: It's been trial and error period. So far, this is working. I'm going to try this. So that's like changing the types of exercise or changing the ability to have social interactions. I have a dog and so I have to enjoy it, I have to walk the dog a number of days a week. And actually I'm now trying to do that with we're allowed one other person to exercise the UK. So where are you based there?

A: I'm in the Hague. We're in lockdown.

X: Okay. Fine. So actually doing that with a friend and actually being able to see someone, is actually something that I've learned to realise actually that's really important. I can do both, you know. Saying it was just to get to talk about trying to put into different habits? And I would say with my headphones, I can then actually get out for a walk and speak more relaxed conversations with colleagues, where we're just exploring some ideas. I can go off and walk and that doesn't really have an impact. So yeah, there's some of the things I do think then the last point I'll put in again, is that that training aspect about, how to be a more effective leader, I think understand, and invest in that training might make me more effective and then help with my own wellbeing. And my ability to have a work-life balance because I'm not so concerned about some of the aspects that I might solve.

A: And how do you believe people services could help support your work-life balance to further it?

X: I think first of all, for them to have an understanding of leadership skills and leadership requirements, I don't think that's necessarily there or that that's available to us. And therefore to then apply that into training and support, which is less ad hoc and is almost a requirement

and that we can access. I think there's a need to solidify some systems which are just not there and taking far too long to work through. Which tends to create some unhelpful situation… There are a couple of things.

A: Great. Thank you so much. Those were all the questions. Do you have any questions for me?

X: No, I don't. We're at time, so hopefully it was useful. It was quite nice of me to reflect on the questions in advanced. I suppose clearly this is to support your thesis, which is great, I'm keen to make sure that then the outputs of this is then to support our progress going forward for other leaders in the business.

Interview 5.1

A: Starting off. Could you please tell me how long you've been a leader? So your length of service as a leader?

X: Oh, that's a great question. So I've been an associate director at [company] thesis for, I'm sorry, I'm just pulling up my LinkedIn profile. You realise I should know this… but hang on. When did I start doing this nonsense? Four years. So let's call it that.

A: Thank you. And what is your nationality and age?

X: I'm British and I'm 35.

A: Perfect. Thank you. How would you describe your remote environment during COVID-19?

X: In terms of the environment? So, I mean, I'm working from home quite, quiet lucky living at home, with a lot of green space around we moved just before the pandemic hits actually. So it was quite good to kind of spend some time at home, cause we needed that. It's interesting, I kind of feel quite fortunate because I've got a dedicated, quiet space to work. I have a little girl and in the first lockdown she was at home, it was quite challenging managing it all. Luckily, she's in school this time for a few days, which makes things easier. So that can be sometimes challenging. You know, my wife's also often working from home, so it kind of, it can sometimes be a little crowded for Wi-Fi and broadband and things like that. I suppose, yeah, I remember leaving the office. When the news was coming out, there's going to be a lockdown and thinking this is going to be a strange month and we're going to be coming for a year and like a couple of months' time. If someone told me I'd be at home for a year and they'd probably gone mad, but the fact that it's kind of introduced in stages has helped. Yeah.

A: Thank you. So I read about this theory from Guest and Conway, where they say there are six components that help facilitate a positive work environment. And these six components

include manageable workload support from the organisation, positive work relations, control over job, a clear role, and lastly, a sense of control of involvement in organisational change. So taking these six elements into consideration, how would you describe your work environment?

X: Okay. That's a good question. I mean, in terms of workload it's an interesting one from a leadership perspective because in a consultancy professional services business like ours, if there's a lot of work around, that's a good thing. And when there's not enough work around us a problem, and as a leader workload turns, it becomes more stressful to the point where, you know, this is going to sound like a going off topic, but hopefully it's useful… we're in sustainability and the last sort of economic crisis, 2008, I was working for [x]. I was just beginning my career working in their sustainability team. And in 2008 when sustainability wasn't quite the mainstream principle, it is now it was a bit of a nice to have and the market fell away a little bit. It was quite challenging. So when it's like, okay, well there's going to be a pandemic and it's going to be a lockdown and there's going to be an economic slowdown because of that, it's like, well, is it going to be 2008 again? Or are we going to maintain, and a bunch of stuff closed. But a bunch of other stuff actually stayed and got bigger and because the clients we're in things like technology, things like life sciences, things like investments, it stayed. So the workload actually was there. But in terms of the employees to meet that, you know, having team members, people also had childcare people, weren't able to kind of tag team with the partners… where I was and things like that. So we ended up with few people to do the same amount of work while trying to maintain level of cohesion, levels of contact with quite a big team, we run quite a big team. And so that became quite challenging or with the sort of aftermath of uncertainty of is this going to go away or is this a temporary blip or whatever. So certainly kind of the early summer of last year, it was pretty stressful. And what I've found is, if you're not out and about, you're not going to an office and coming, but I did work from home a few days a week before anyway, but if you're not traveling, you got less of an excuse to stop.

And so you just fill more in and most of it you fill in at a time available with the tasks. So I found you tend to work more just because of where you're at and there's different challenges, which is always interesting. My leadership experiences in terms of sense of purpose. You know, I think over the summer we went into what I call survival mode. So it's kind of like looking at, okay, well, what is our core business? What are our core clients? And sort of almost felt like a bunker mentality on like, how are we going to sort of survive through this as a business and as people and make sure everyone's okay. And as it became apparent that our business was going to survive and thrive, even, it was quite difficult for me to kind of unwind from that mentality of being like, no, we're weathering the storm to unwind a little bit which is interesting, but we've always felt that we had control of our own destiny because we will require a lot of autonomy to our business and providing that we, as leaders hit the outcomes we need to and display the right values. Basically the stuff in terms of what we do all day is up to us really that's our problem. [Company] is very grown up. It's like, well, there's providing good kind of doing the right thing. That is your problem, how it happens. So I think in terms of the internal stuff that we've got our arms around, we've got a lot of control on that, but we can't control the environment where we can only control how we react to it. And you can look back on your reaction. You just think you should have learned a bit sooner probably, but you know what, we've survived, so we must've done something. Right.

A: Definitely. Yeah. And with regards to, for instance, positive work relations and for yourself having a clear role of what you're doing. You've mentioned you have a lot of autonomy, and you take on that responsibility….

X: Yeah. I mean I'm very fortunate, I work with the core group of people who I've worked with for a long time, and we've got very good relations and even as sorts of responsibilities and roles over the time, we're quite good at bumping up together and figuring out what the new normal is. And I think actually some people weirdly, there I speak to more because we've had this

challenge to kind of tackle things like video calling it become a lot more commonplace and kind of the norm than it was before. Kind of, that'd be a bit more, more rare. So I think some people I've actually kind of built stronger bonds with as we've tackled this common problem together. That'd be interesting to see would that have been the same if it hadn't gone as well as it did? I don't know. But you know, kind of it did. So with that, whereas, you know, I picked up a whole new team doing this remotely, so there's a bunch of people who now report into me who I've never met face-to-face which is odd. And it must be quite strange for them as well because they don't know what I'm like, and you get more of a sense of kind of the people that I knew from before we've maintained that relationship. I wonder how well you can build it quite as much. Yeah, I don't know. Or it's more like the relationship I have with colleagues in the United States who I talk to a lot, but maybe I've only met in person two or three times.

A: Well, that's interesting to hear. And with regards to organisational support, how would you describe this at [company]?

X: Yeah. Good. So I think good support, you know, we've always been very clear about, okay, this is what we're going to do here, compared to other businesses I've been at, I've had the experience at [company], they're always pretty transparent. Good and Bad. I always say to people who come into the management team, the good thing about [company] and management is, you know, what's going on. The bad thing is, you know, what's going on. And so I think from that point it's been good, there's only so much you can do. I feel kind of some people, particularly early career professionals, like if you're in a house share in London trying to work through this and like a couple of years into your job, you know, it must have been really very challenging working in that environment. And there's only so much we can do for those guys. You know, we can give them a screen and can give them a mouse and we can talk to them a lot, but, you know, we can't move house for them. That's been, I imagine, a lot harder kind of within that environment, but I think broadly speaking the organisation can be very supportive,

A: That's great to hear. With regards to your wellbeing, I take on quite a holistic approach where I look at work wellbeing, which entails the overall quality of experiences and functioning at work. However, it also takes on the mental, physical, and social aspects of wellbeing. Taking this into account, how would you rate your wellbeing from, let's say one to 10, 10 being very strong and good and one not so?

X: I think it depends on what that week is if I'm honest. So I'm probably at a seven overall. There's good days and bad days, which I think is normal, but they seem to be a bit more acute within this environment. I don't know why.

A: And could you please describe the fluctuations for me?

X: Yeah, absolutely. So I suppose I never really liked being confined, which in a locked down environment is quite challenging. I miss adventures and things like that. Yeah. I miss the traveling; I miss going out and meeting people. Yeah. But on the other hand, I've been able to spend much more time at home and I've got a much better relationship with my daughter, particularly than I had before. So that's wonderful. So I don't think I'll ever go back to exactly how it was before adding some sort of blend, but I do miss going out and sort of meeting people and that sort of aspect to it. So I think there's that. Yeah. I'm eating better and spending less time in the pub, which has got to be good for my physical wellbeing. But you now can't go out and swim as much as I used to. So it's sort of this trade-offs. I think it's that sort of thing, is that you're able to do some things in our lives and sometimes that's a good thing for your wellbeing and sometimes it's not. And that thing of being totally confined is not something that I get on with personally.

A: Thank you. This is moving forward more to a human resource perspective. So when you think of their role, how involved is people services with regards to your personal wellbeing?

X: I mean, I talk to people services quite a lot as a manager, how much of that I'm internalising. I'm not sure it tends to be in relation to other people, the business has been very active in terms of promoting wellbeing programs, in terms of taking the temperature at the mood at the business, because fundamentally we're a people business. We don't make washing machines. We're totally reliant on our people and how they're feeling is super important to how we do as business. We're not [company x]. We can't just send everyone a masseuse around or whatever. We can do, is make sure people know that they've got someone to come and talk to if they've got any problems too, we know that we can actually do something to allow that flexibility, to allow them to work how, and when they want to. And I've always felt able to do that. You know, I can duck out, do the school run, or I can go out and do a work walk and that's totally fine. I think it's important as a leader, you lead by example. I think it's pretty important that every now and then I say, I can't meet with you then because I got childcare. Cause it sort of makes it okay for everyone else. And I do have childcare. So that's the kind of the thing. And so I think from that point of view, the flexibility that's understood the point of wellbeing initiative, the kind of the cohesion sorts of common things. They have, virtual walks that we all kind of participate in and things like that I think is really helpful. So yeah, I think there's a kind of good culture doing that. This appropriate to the size of it.

A: That's good to hear. Could people services potentially become more involved with ensuring your wellbeing while working remotely?

X: I mean, I suppose it's very difficult to understand, think realistically, what else they could do beyond programs in place, let you know, they're there and they're encouraging you to use them. You know what I mean? We're quite careful to make sure people do workstation assessments, make sure they kind of work in ergonomically. We think it has best to allow people to take breaks and build that in without saying, you've got to take an hour out of your day there only for them to have to do that hour at 10 o'clock at night because don't do it during

the day. So it's, it's kind of a balance of all of that. And I don't think anyone, any business in the world has got that totally right. And I think if you did get it totally right, because these things are so flexible the next day it'd be wrong again. So it's just kind of trying to go with the flow of managing it. I'm sure there's other things that could be done, but they're doing a good job.

A: Do you perhaps have some suggestions that you could come up with…?

X: People services, I suppose quiet, often initiatives they're about things like sport. Well kind of like sport and mindfulness tend to be the sort of default and there's a spectrum of the stuff. They can sometimes be a little bit exclusive to, particularly sporting people, you know, kind of more able-bodied or have more time, or kind of have access to that sort of thing. And it's about consideration of what access looks like as well. So we've tried to do…you know, for our Christmas party, for example, within our team to do something that there was accessible to people that didn't, drink or whatever, because quite often Christmas parties, you know, are going to the pub. So we did sort of things around kind of online wreath making, where you do that, but then what became apparent… and the idea was you go out and you forage for things in green space around you, which where I am is dead easy for actually a bunch of people that live in the city. They didn't have an access to green space. So I think even sorts of recognising what accessibility and inclusiveness looks like is a bit of a challenge in all of these sorts of wellbeing initiatives, because they assume a certain kind of default way of relaxing or recovering and they assume, my level of access to things that not everybody has. So it's a quite difficult balance. So it's having that range. I think there's not one size fits all.

A: Definitely. I agree with that. Thank you. So you've already touched upon this subject of having your remote environment assessed. I've been told the health and safety officer also

participates in this what actions did they actually take when assessing your remote environment?

X: They send out a questionnaire to look at it, you know, things like how you sitting, what kit you've got, do you have any needs, what level of lighters and things like that? There's all bunch of stuff. I can't remember it all, but it's kind of that sort of thing. And again, I'm quite lucky. I can tick all those boxes, I suppose, what I was thinking for some of the people that aren't in that position. Like realistically, what can we do? Cause they've got to work from home, and I suppose that's the kind of challenge. And I suppose as this become more normal, it might make people revaluate where they want to live and things like that.

A: And do you believe, there could be changes to your current work environment that could help further facilitate your wellbeing?

X: That's a great question. I mean, at some point I'm going to move on to the shed down in the garden and when I finished insulating it, but I could use more technology better, but this is more of a behavioural thing for me, you know, I should really get a second screen set up and use a mouse and things like that. And that's more my poor behavior rather than the business. So like I could get all those thing, just haven't.

A: This is now with regards to learning and development. So with regards to your specific agility and readiness, to what extent did you feel prepared for the transition from office work to remote work?

X: Life didn't change that much really. Because you know what I mean? I think about what my job is. I spend a lot of time on the phone, and I still spend a lot of time on the phone and using the same machine and most of my clients when they are in the United States. So mainland Europe anyway. So in terms of… to do my job, if I've got a laptop and a cell phone, I can pretty

much do it. It's that connection. I just suppose it really hammered home that, you know so I think from that point of view, I suppose there wasn't really a training requirement cause I can just take what I was doing in offices or on trains or on planes or whatever, and just do it at home.

A: And with regards to leading in a remote environment. How did you feel about that?

X: Yeah, so that's interesting because it's sort of… I suppose how different is it? I don't know, you worry that you find it difficult to be authentic and that's a really important part of leadership is sort of being authentic and being relatable and showing we understand them. And it's sort of like you can't celebrate with people when things go well, as you could, which is a shame, but I think more importantly when things aren't going well. Yeah, it's harder to read body language, it's harder to show body language. You can't just go to someone and pat them on the shoulder and say, let's gone talk about this in the coffee shop down the road. Yeah, the reason I was late for this call is I've got a member of the team who is feeling pretty unhappy and yeah, I'm just wanting to…I probably wouldn't give him a hug, but it'd be a lot easier to have that conversation if we were there together and he could see that I was listening, I was being attentive. I was taking it seriously. You wonder have much is landing, you know, we'd done a little bit of a restructure in our team over recent weeks and months and years kind of like people still don't, it doesn't seem to have landed with them as a thing. And I wonder if in the remote environment some people don't engage quite as much. And it's like, how do you do that? You know, kind of when someone sat in front of it, they got listen to you. Right. So I suppose… it is up to me to be more interesting, I don't know. It's quite hard to be more interesting about finance, there we go. So I think from that point of view, yeah, tough conversations are a lot harder and it's just about kind of making sure that the camera's on and you're concentrated more on what you're doing and things like that. So I think from that point of view is a little harder. And you know, people can see you in the office, they can come over and ask a question. Whereas I think people

feel less inclined to do that on teams, even things with instant messenger. And so I think from that point of view, it's a little difficult and I suppose kind of the lack of presence you sometimes wonder, do I have the same sorts of credibility and authority that I used to have. In leadership, you have sorts of anxieties anyway, you just don't know how real they are. I think kind of being remote and away from people can sometimes magnify those.

A: Okay. Thank you. With regards to leader development, your specific knowledge, skills and competencies, did you have any programs in the past and [company] or outside that you feel helped you prepare for remote work and leading?

X: I mean [company] has never been big on learning and development, to be honest with you, it's sort of have a go at this, and you're either going to succeed or not. And I think it's something we want to kind of alter over time. Can I get more defined career pathways and training programs and within that, but it's kind of the stage of that evolution, we've been as a business. It's not really been a thing. And before then I was at a very, very large business where career pathways look very different. So I don't think there was anything kind of really in place other than the fact that we do a considerable amount of remote working, sorry, like global projects where you're going to manage like a team in Asia and a team in the US. So I suppose in a way it isn't any different to that. And it's made us really revaluate. Do we think about colleagues in the same land as in the same office differently to the guys in California or whatever, and we probably do, and we probably shouldn't. I wonder if it's going to help with that

A: Interesting perspective and with regards to leadership development. This is about building networks, relationships, you could see as the social capital, have you had some form of leadership development programs that helped you build this at [company]?

X: No, really. I don't think so. We've always been learning by doing. And so seeing what sticks and what doesn't and what helps and what doesn't, and hopefully doing more of the good stuff than the bad, I think we're probably going to change that over time.

A: Would you see it as necessary that it's something that [company] should start doing is creating more distinctive learning and development opportunities?

X: I think so, because I think it's a way that we're getting to a scale now where you can't have your arms around everything and yeah, they don't promote your culture by everyone knowing who you are and knowing you all right. I lead a team of like 45-50 people there and they don't all know me, and I don't really know all of them. And I do worry sometimes it's that create a two-tier system of people that know me, versus, the people that don't probably. And we're only going to get bigger, right. We're not stopping here. This problem is going to become magnified, and we can't just sort of… relationships are super important, but we can't lead only by relationships because you can't have the same level of relationship with everyone at that level. So I think training to help us and how do we do that? Well, there's processes and culture and culture always trumps process. So we need to find a way of spreading our culture around, which I think is a very good one. And I think kind of the training at all levels should help do that as we scale.

A: Thank you. This brings me to my last part about work life balance. This term can be interpreted very differently. The way I interpreted it throughout my thesis is the idea it's the personal satisfaction an individual has with the division between their personal and professional life. Taking this into consideration, how would you describe your work-life balance since adopting remote work?

X: I mean, it was never great to start with and so, it needed to be better. I think what I've observed is it's very difficult having your work and your home life in the same physical space

all the time. So kind of like difficult conversations with clients and colleagues, which you know should happen from time to time feel considerably more intrusive when they're in your home… is something that I've found. I sort of resent those conversations more when I've got to kind of then immediately walk out of here and go make dinner… for one, I'm just kind of like, why are you being a d*** in my house? You wouldn't have that feeling in the office. So I found that quite a challenge. So I think that's been a bit of an impact on the work-life balance. You don't get that physical break that you get to catching a train, getting out of your system and coming home when you just open the door and your family's there. I find that quite difficult to deal with and that's been a negative impacts on work life balance, because you're not as present within the life thing, you're thinking about something else. And so I think where I've been trying to do sort of strategies to kind of put a bit of a firewall between them mentally, I think because the kind of person I am, you hear people say, well, Oh, I do a fake commute. I go walk out in the garden. I just am irritated… I don't need to do any of that. So I'm trying to find a way that kind of works for me to put that balance between the two or just accept the fact that it's going to happen from time to, but then make the most of the other times, or look at how scheduling my diary and things like that. People have no respect for your diary and find out, even you block your hours busy, people still just jam stuff in there, like no respect whatsoever for that. But then again, it's amazing how many people will look at a slot in your diary that says school run, and they'll try and put a meeting in there. And it's like, I'm not going to leave my kid at school gate. Like, what's wrong with you? And so I'm going to, I'm going to be provocative. I wonder if people think if you're a bloke, you're probably okay to suck off the school run, but you're not. Maybe it's just this theory.

A: Yeah. It's a fair theory.

X: Yeah. So you do still have these responsibilities, even if you're, even if you're senior or having to deal with these things and, you know, fundamentally I can't leave my child at school.

They think I'm really funny about that sort of thing. And so there's that kind of thing. It's been quite challenging sorts of trying to manage that at the same time. And you kind of find that intrusive on a personal level and there's this, the perennial problem of checking your phone at night, which you really shouldn't do…Particularly because we've got colleagues and clients in the US got colleagues in Asia there's stuff happening all the time. So you are going to see something so you shouldn't do it, but I do.

A: Okay. And what specific changes would you say occurred to your work-life balance since adopting remote work Full-Time?

X: It's that thing of having everything and you're having space. I think, you know, everything else I was very bad at before. So, kind of checking phone outside of hours and things like that. So it was always like that that kind of mental thing of not having the physical division of work happens out of their home happens in here that I struggled with. And so that's, what's changed is this role where kind of remote working and the fact that because of the situations that we're in, in terms of the lockdowns, it means you've got more kind of family responsibilities during work hours, and it's very hard to file all around those.

A: Definitely. Okay. Thank you. And what kind of work-life conflict have you experienced since transitioning to remote work?

X: I suppose the protocol, that stuff that I was talking about really, which is, yeah, things tend to drift because you don't have a train to go catch. And so there's always time to fit one more meeting, one more phone call and having it in the physical space. Having to kind of balance childcare around that.

A: Okay. Thank you. This is the last part about achieving a work-life balance that you are more satisfied with. What changes would you make to achieve that satisfactory level of work-life balance?

X: I think just checking my phone out of hours but that would probably been the case two years ago and then probably the case two years, but I did need to start doing it. And what else? So I'm wondering if you had kind of the ability to have a workspace that's a little bit away from the house might help to do that. But also just the prospect of breaking it up, hopefully at some point like life can resume again a little bit and there will be kind of, you know, not every day will be identical in terms of format and that'll help as well. It'll give some space for those difficult conversations. It means you can go and have those in person and still kind of remain that the flexibility of how I'm working, which is beneficial for the reasons.

A: And what benefits would these be for instance for yourself?

X: Well, commuting in the UK is expensive. I don't know how it is where you are, but I really enjoy not having to give all that money to the train company every month. So that's pretty good. And in theory, you can be a little bit more flexible with your time because you're not having to go to a physical place, which is ways away and then come back. So I think that's been helpful. So I think kind of, I think some sort of blend would make sense from all those sorts of things.

A: Okay. Would you prefer to go back into the office, taking the whole pandemic into consideration or would you prefer blend?

X: I definitely prefer blend. I think… I wouldn't want to go in kind of five days a week, but I think probably like two days a week or two days a week kind of traveling or whatever I think would suit me better than the current scenario.

A: Okay. And this is the final question with regards, how people services could help support your work life balance. Do you have any actions you think they could take to help you facilitate it?

X: I mean they could join the list of people telling me to stop checking my phone. I wonder if we need to think about kind of, again, further legitimising stopping and starting and things like that demonstrate how people do that and making it okay for that to happen and things you know, people services probably take a role in that.

A: Okay, great. Thank you so much, [name], do you have any further details you want to add?

X: No. I just hope this has been useful. So I seem to have done a bunch of talking, so hopefully that's, it gets the point.

A: Yes, it really was great thanks! Do you have any questions for me?

X: Tell what when you're handing in.

A: My final thesis is due in June, so it's quite far along and I'm actually also going to do a second round of interviews in March. So the goal is from this first set is to figure out what kind of people and services practice I could help create and roll out the implementation then hopefully in the beginning of March. And then afterwards evaluate if I had a positive impact for you and [company] for the leaders on the SLT.

X: Yeah. Yeah. Well, it sounds really cool. So good luck with it and if you have any follow up questions, anything that doesn't make sense. Do you feel free to drop me a note?

A: Perfect. And would you be all right with me then reaching out later on in March for a second interview? Would you be interested?

X: Yeah, absolutely. Really useful. Yeah, no worries.

A: Great. Thank you so much. I really hope you have a good day and talk to you soon.

X: Brilliant. Have a good day. Nice. Cheers.

Interview 6.1

A: Starting off can you please state your nationality, length of service as a leader and age.

X: British, I'm 48. Length of service as a leader… since I was 30... so 18 years.

A: This part of the study looks into your remote environment and your leader wellbeing. Starting with the environment how would you describe your work experience and environment during COVID-19.

X: So my work environment has been okay and that's partly because I was increasingly working from home anyway. From that perspective, I already had a proper desk and a proper chair in a quiet room within our house. I already had that sort of facilitated to an extent anyway, so the environment, is fine. That was already sorted. I think the great part of the question would then relate to how has the experience then being permanently here rather than in the office with clients, et cetera, et cetera. And I think the overall answer to that is probably using the word intense because, and partly because this would caveat everything COVID has coincided with my area of the business also becoming incredibly busy. Whereas some people have worked from home and had less to do. I've been working from home at a time when we have had a substantial increase in client activity. And therefore working from home has removed the barriers from me having longer and longer working days because it's removed the commute element. That has created an environment where I can in theory… rather than not getting to the office before eight and getting to six and thinking, I really must go home. Or if not earlier, and if not later in for a variety of reasons I now can be sitting here from seven to seven without that sort of that pressure, because there is no commute.

A: Definitely I understand that.

X: I suppose the only other thing to add into that discussion of how the remote working experience is, but the other crucial element of that is less so now, but definitely during lockdown one, we also had the experience was complicated by home-schooling. So, I mean,

that's the secondary pressure and that manifested itself by, obviously a distraction and less focus time, and then also crucially four people sharing the average family broadband and WIFI doesn't work and that leads to connectivity issues.

A: I got that. Experienced it myself as well. Fair enough.

X: Is that enough?

A: Yes, that explains it. Thank you. With regards to work environment, I've read about this theory from Guests and Conway, where they've identified six elements of a positive work environment, which includes management workload

, personal control over job, organisational support, positive work relations, a clear role, and then also a sense of control and involvement with organisational change. So reflecting upon these six elements, how would you then specify it to your work environment?

X: Well, so my workload became unmanageable through sheer volume. Personal control of my job is actually still and has remained relatively high. The only failure of control has been related to the management of the workload. I'm a director, I'm responsible for a part of the business and an area of discipline within the business. So I have control. The only thing I can't control is clients and the number of them and their demands, and also other people's personal circumstances. So clearly if a member of staff turns around and says they need to cut their hours because they need to home school, well arguable I could contractually turn around and say, no, you can't… I'm not the devil, so it wouldn't have done it. Organisational support was relatively good. I suppose the caveat to that would be within the bounds of the staff that are available. So there is only so much support staff and that ran through in terms of it and their ability to support. So there's a little bit of an absence in that regard, but it was still in the grand scheme of things. And I think… hopefully if you've interviewed others, they've said this

because we'd done the teams transition in advance of COVID by chance. We were set and we were ready. So the only failure in that regard was people not having gotten themselves savvy on it at that point and all their own broadband issues, really. By positive work relations, do you mean with…

A: For instance, networking, social capital.

X: Yeah, that was absolutely fine. The nature of the team I work in and particularly my closer team is such that we've worked absolutely fine through this. A clear role, again, not an issue because my role is relatively defined within the organisation and lastly the sense of control over involvement in organisation. That's, again, fine, I sit on the UK board. So from that perspective… well the global board can still do things that I don't know about and aren't aware of. From a UK perspective, I was probably messing with other people's lives.

A: Okay. Fair enough. Thank you. Now this is with regards to how you perceive your own wellbeing. So in my report, I took on a holistic approach where I look at work wellbeing. So this entails the overall quality of experience and functioning at work yet it also incorporates the psychological, mental, and physical and wellbeing And social…

X: Okay. So at the end of this point, COVID, I am the most aerobically fit alcoholic you have yet spoken to. And I both just got to the place where I thought when my colleague ran the virtual London marathon, I thought to myself, I'm not having that. She run something further than I've run… we're both runners. So I've done so much exercise over COVID. That over two weeks, I just got myself up to the marathon distance and just ran one. Against that, I drunk most of France in terms of red wine. So you know, what's my wellbeing, is I've managed everything by doing really, quite a lot of exercise, but the funder, and you probably had this routine as well. The propensity to have a drink at the end of a working day, and partly in order to provide a… in a normal scenario when you travel home that provides a break. And I think I

fall into the category of even if I went for a run, I then got back from a run, have a drink of water, then thought it was time for a glass of wine now. I do think you'd have to break out as a peculiarity about COVID that in a normal home working environment, you might still go and do something different, or if you're my age, you might then still in the evening have to drive one of your children somewhere. So that again, provides a break from the imprisonment, I suppose. So that's has been the extreme negative. I would say the overall quality of the experience has been that it's just been seriously hard work because we have been intense and there have been routine 10, 12 hour days obviously a little bit of a break for lunch, and it's slowly descended from finding time to sneak out for a walk, take the kids for a run to just an intense day. And that built up. That's partly built-up A the workload got heavier. And B this culture presuming everyone's available for a call. I repeat zoom calls, et cetera, et cetera, has changed the working pattern to the extent that you can find yourself in those sort of back to back on calls throughout the day. That has been the other negative of the arrangement, because of course, no one's going to meetings. No one's going on site no one is doing anything else, so everyone communicates and therefore everyone thinks they can put in a call in your diary. And so that's messed with the intensity of the day. So it's been tough and it's been longer and harder work, but, in the grand scheme of thing, it has been fine and there's been plenty, more people had far worse experiences than me.

A: And could you perhaps rate your wellbeing from a scale of one to 10, with 10 being you're satisfied and you're doing well and one perhaps not.

X: I would still say my wellbeing is something like a seven in the grand scheme of things. I'm healthy fit, wealthy… I'm just working intensely and it's all a bit boring, but is my mental health at risk? Probably not. And I do think that's, and please don't get me wrong in this. I do think that term is moderately abused. Now, any dissatisfaction or annoyance becomes mental health, it's just tedious, how's it not having an appropriate release?

A: If I'm understanding correctly, you don't feel mentally or physically drained from the increased workload.

X: I do feel to an extent mentally and physically drained, but not to the level that is detrimental to my health.

A: Okay. So healthy stress is that perhaps a way you could interpret it?

X: Yeah. In hindsight when we look back and when my liver falls out, that's because all the drinking you did in COVID, I'll refine it. But beyond that, in terms of management for sport, getting out, et cetera, absolutely fine.

A: Great. This is going to move forward to leader wellbeing, which is an aspect within human resource management. I want to ask how involved was people services with regards to your personal wellbeing?

X: Very minimal, I would say that their interest in my wellbeing was to the level of general stuff in terms of desk, work environment… in the same way that everyone else was asked to complete forms, talking about, their workstation setup. I got looked after in the same way. I do think as an organisation, we are guilty of being leaders or the big boys and they don't cry… You get on with it. So, no, I don't recall HR turning around and saying, [name], how you're feeling. I may have found myself on a get together call of other senior leaders. [Name], who is our head of HR asking how's it going, but not as a form in the same way she would have said to anyone else, but on that call where we surveyed differently, no.

A: And how could HR become more involved with ensuring your wellbeing while working remotely?

X: I think at the simplest level, it's a question of HR making it a mandatory requirement that everyone is checked up on. And in the grand scheme above me is the UK managing director and the board. So we are at that sort of place where know, if someone asks me how I'm going, who's asking them how they're going. And I think that's where it does get difficult. And I think part of the reason I'm in the position I'm in is because I'm presumed to be… don't take this in sexist sense… but one of the big boys and that is a risk area. So I do think there just has to be a question that the systems force you to inquire after people's welfare. And interestingly, organisionally, whilst we all looked down our own teams and checked on people and asked how they were. I don't think the systems actually forced us to do that under any circumstances within the business as a whole, in a real sort of tick box fashion. Were we at the board all asked to ask our staff how the gang on… Check yes, we were... And we have to tick a box somewhere to say everyone under me, I've spoken to, and they're fine. I think there's a rule. The systems absence that the tick boxes can be abused, but I still think they are sometimes important just to ensure that reach out does happen.

A: And could you perhaps think of an alternative than just making a tick box mandatory thing to do if you think of it making more adaptive to [company].

X: Would say within our culture is that we all care about each other and look out for each other anyway, and it should be inherent. And the really interesting thing that this is, I think in many respects with exception, the leader element, I think that happened but if you think of a million times that you either, some, it comes up in the news and they talk about the telltale signs, which were missed… there's a reason as devious a systems can be, there's a reason and it's to ensure that everyone could get asked and everyone did it. So I do wonder what alternative… whether there are other tools and remote tools that could be deployed. You know, whether it's, you turn your computer on, something pops up. A little bit like, so how did you rate your service levels of smiles? Do you have to press something on a day than just to force some level of feedback

or honesty? All of these things have potential drawbacks, failings, and the human nature by themselves is difficult. And people might just look at it and go, you know, big boys don't cry. I think that you have to potentially have some form of control in that… the [company] spirit is strong. Against that, it also arguably gets lost in mythology that the [company] spirit is this amazing thing. We all look after each other, et cetera, et cetera, but you know, all such things that just the more you believe your culture is amazing, the more you can potentially… there can be gaps. I wouldn't want to overplay it.

A: No, of course, no, I was just curious what you thought about it.

X: Yeah. As a whole, as an organisation… a lot of the senior management of [company], were all managers at a company called [X]. And I'd actually say it's a shared culture. That hasn't, it was the same there as well, to an extent though, I think there's that sort of the leaders don't get looked after as well.

A: Well, thank you for clarifying that. You've mentioned a little bit before with regards to having an assessment of your remote work, what actions did people services and the health and safety officer take.

X: This is quite interesting now, because we were very proactive, early doors. So back in March, April last year, with getting people to explain us situations what they had, et cetera, et cetera. And then I think that if people had gaps in their physical requirements, chair, things like that. We acted to try and plug that. I believe it was some form of survey monkey type method of doing a mass data grab. But then beyond that, it's been quiet, unless you've reached out or shown an issue. So, to my knowledge, have we done a follow on and discuss on… it looks like you're in for a longer haul? Is there anything else you need? No, we haven't, in some respects, our priorities have been more around making a return to the office on the two occasions that has become a possibility as safe as possible. So that's in some respects stolen the focus.

A: Do you believe there are changes that could be made to your environment to further facilitate your wellbeing?

X: Yes, there's two answers. One of them is cheeky. One of them is knocking down my neighbour's house, which is that way. So have a view better than the side of their house, which is the dreariest part of their house. Very nice, expensive house, but it's also very dreary. At the simplest level, if I was going to be a standup desk and a better monitor would be the two things I would turn around and say, I want, because my level of sitting down too much is starting to kill my legs, but that's the sort of thing I'd want. Beyond that any improvements of welfare would relate to actually being able to go back out and meet people, et cetera, et cetera. Well, that's not happening. So, let's see.

A: Great. Thank you. With regards to your agility and readiness towards the transition to remote work, to what extent did you feel prepared for the transition?

X: So, I mean, back to my first command, I was very prepared, well more prepared than others because I was already working from home more. No one was prepared to home school and all the rest of the other negatives we discussed in terms of length of day. So, on the whole, I was in a relatively good place. And in many respects, the other point here is that for me, thinking time type work perspective. And so, I do a relatively large amount of report drafting proposal writing. I fundamentally struggled with the noise of our open plan office. And that's partly because in my previous job as a partner in the business, I had my own office. So, I had the ability to close the door. If I need to get some work done, I need quiet. So, in some respects this has been preferential to having to go into the office anyway.

A: How did you feel about taking on the leadership role within the remote environment, so leading a team virtually?

X: Absolutely fine. As part of my argument, what tempts my answer is because I have a relatively small team anyway. Up until recently there was effectively three of us working as a group, but part of a larger global transaction and ESG (Environment and Social Corporate Governance) team. So, I have always been more used to working with colleagues who are in different countries, in different locations anyway. That's part of my way of working of the three pillars in my mini team in the United Kingdom. One of the guys is based down in Devon, so he's remote from us anyway. And [X], my number two, she like me as a parent and was working from home a little bit anyway, in order for quality-of-life issues. So yeah, it's made no difference and my team are big grownups for another phrase. What I more mean by that, it's not a question of emotional maturity, it's the question of professional maturity. So, most of my team and the people I work with don't need to be near me to work. And it's that less supervision issue, slightly different to that leadership bit, but I felt completely able to communicate with the people I need to, from a leadership perspective, albeit that there is the absence of the ability to have some proper one to one time be it in a meeting room, sitting in the park round from the office, going for beer…is missing. Is it a problem? Does it appear to be a problem? No. I suppose the only other thing is, I do wonder whether we all end up having wasting time having tind whinges, because the environment we're in now where you can go on teams and you find yourself able to have a whinge and that kills time and it's inefficient, but I don't know.

A: Okay. Thank you. And this moves forward now to leader development. So, your individual skills, competence competencies and knowledge, you can also refer it to as human capital. Have you had any kind of programs that you've received to develop your leader skills that helped you then take this into a remote environment and do remote leading?

X: No. So, there's been nothing. I've had no training that is specific to this environment. And in fairness, actually in my time at [organisation] and I've been around for three years, I've not had any leadership training either. So that's partly probably because we're a new company and

we haven't invested in it. If we have invested in its leadership training, it's a level below me. I'm a director of the business to an extent they got me through the door because I already could, but there's not been any training to this environment. To be honest, I'd be really intrigued by what training is available so quickly in this environment based on what research they have.

A: Definitely. Yeah, it's still very new, right. So even though remote working in virtual working has been around, it's never been around to this extent. But like you said, you came in with experience, so then that set of abilities already then prepared you for what you're doing now, which is great to hear.

X: And then if I think back, I'd say the last five years that the leadership and not really leader training there, it is, it isn't, added to my social capital as you put it. The best investment in me and it was in my previous firm was external mentoring and the ability to have a chinwag with someone who's not, who is an experienced individual and really crucially is not part of the firm…

A: For that external perspective…

X: Exactly, particularly because…. [X] our CEO, would dispute this. There is a [X] type, it's classic. Yeah. There's nothing special about this. Whilst there are a variety of individuals on the board, they are of a certain type and generally meet with [X] expectations and they generally share a vision of what a leader looks like, et cetera, et cetera, and the shared vision and direction of the firm, not unnaturally, but as a consequence, if you find yourself in a mentoring arrangement where it's that sort of individual it doesn't allow you the ability to think and express your thoughts in quite the same way. Independence is always better and actually more valuable for organising. Cause it means obviously different opinions can be drawn in.

A: Alright, indirectly you've also talked about the leadership development, so that's great. Thank you for that. Did you feel like you had any form of moments where you were able to build your network relationships in remote environments within the SLT?

X: Yeah. So, within the SLT possum, that's a very good question, actually. So, there is nothing like a crisis to get to really know people. And so, the SLT in the UK was assembled as a new entity, literally as this happened. So rather than having any bedding in time, we were all suddenly into crisis management mode. It's in real terms rather than potentially having petty and overly thoughtful discussions about it, we were relative. We were forced to have very serious conversations very quickly. And therefore, that forced us into very direct and frank conversations as a group very quickly. So, from that perspective, I think we were able to come closer as a group and our relationships became stronger far quicker. And also, not least actually, because there was a point at which we were having a weekly hour to two hours catch up on a Friday rather than a monthly board meeting. So, the process got very little to do with remote working, other than the fact we were remote working, but as more the crisis. I think trying to develop management relationships remotely is in some respects, a tougher gig because a lot of it comes from being able to have time to have independent, off the cuff discussions, things like that. But that said, I've had working relationships with international colleagues for a few years, and most of those have become very strong from working on projects and that forces you to interact and get to understand individuals. So, it's the quality of interaction drives the relationship.

A: Okay. Nice. Thank you. This brings us to our last part of the interview with regards to work-life balance. So, the term can be interpreted quite differently. I take the perspective that work life balance is individual. So, it's the satisfaction a person has with the division between their personal and professional life. Reflecting on this, how would you describe your work-life balance since adopting remote work?

X: My work-life balance has been poor since this started, but it's heavily driven by the circumstances and going back to the start, the level of time and the intensity of time requirements on me. I didn't really get over it, but pre-Christmas extended into quite a lot of weekend working, which is excessive. Yeah, it's not been good. I am doing my best to ensure this side of Christmas, that there is a greater control on it and we're trying to recruit, which will make a big part of the pressure was an absence of people. The more people we have that will reduce the pressure. So, it's not been good, but it's being improved. But it's also just, we are a growth business and I'm in a leadership position within a growth business. And therefore, there has to be an assumption that if we're going to take the level of reward for the equity, we have in the business that we want, you accept your work life balance might get rather messed with.

A: I get that completely good. That's the sort of sacrifice you take for the growth.

X: Yeah. It's just, COVID it's rubbish.

A: Definitely. That's true. Locked down in general. And you mentioned already that your workdays were leaching more into your weekends. What kind of other work-life conflict have you experienced since this transition?

X: I don't know. It's mostly just been the intensity of the days. I mean, everything in so many other respects, it is positive, not commuting three hours a day into central London where I live in [location] has been good. I'm saving three and a half thousand pounds a year on the train ticket. There is a whole selection of boxes of Apple products sitting behind me that they got recycled into in Christmas, but in so many respects there's been some positives. It's mostly just been the intensity of it. And I suppose just some… again in the COVID scenario, some of the more interesting elements of what I do in terms of the people I meet, there's some of the human interactions that they've been missing. So, I get to go and visit some really, really interesting places in terms of what I do because I go and visit all sorts of different industries historically

around the world now domestically. But I do that, and I get to meet lots of interesting people and a lot of my clients stroke co-advisors, I've been working with for years. And so, they are clients/friends. And so, you know, I'll meet up with them in their offices and 30% of every meeting is catching up with a mate. And so, the absence of that detracts from the quality of the enjoyment of what you do, I suppose, but beyond that the only real negative has been the intensity of it.

A: Okay. Thank you. And with regards to achieving a work-life balance that you're satisfied with, what changes would you make to your current routine to help achieve the satisfaction level?

X: Also, I suppose, am I allowed to think about this in a non-COVID sense?

A: Of course.

X: When COVID is over I'm very comfortable that what I will do… say COVID has turned out personally to be relatively positive in the singular regard of... So, my preference is to work from home. Other than when I go into London to visit clients or go somewhere else to visit clients or go into the office to meet people, I'm very comfortable, partly because I'm also the dad of teenage boys. We've got other things going on, to permanently move away from the idea that I'm going into the office to work. And so, from that perspective, COVID has changed a lot of the goalposts and at least probably for the next year, there's going to be no mass return to the office. And a lot of firms, us included, will reconsider our real estate. And so, the firm will be more open to the idea that no one's expecting me to be in for the sake of being in. And so, I will go in to interact with people. But I'm not going to go in to sit in a noisy desk and not be able to do the best piece of work I can, because all I can hear is everyone else naturally on their calls, chattering having a laugh, et cetera. So, to an extent I'm quite positive about the change

that will happen. The key thing is getting back to that point that, this is my base, but I'm also having variety in terms of some of this time, some client time.

A: Great. And how can people services help support your work life balance?

X: They can fund my special lifting desk that I've spotted, which is more expensive than they want me to have. Give me a better monitor. I'm not sure they will, to be honest, it's a question. I think that it's supplying some additional practical support. Most of the other tools are in place. If I was thinking about it more, there's probably some more IT… there are other things in the business around supports and with which will actually improve my life rather than anything HR would do. But then I'd go back to our earlier conversation to an extent, I do think we have to have some level of system or protocols within the firm. That means that the leaders are looked after. Ultimately, I have had low moments where I've felt really quiet p*** off and, it's possible that my boss knew about it, but if he did, he didn't mention it. And he's this guy who would mention it. So, it's clear. I think it's pretty clear that we don't have fail-safes in the system, and we probably should.

A: Okay. Thank you. That actually brings us to the end of the interview. Do you have any further details you want to add or discuss?

X: No.

A: Great. And do you have any questions for me, perhaps?

X: No. Well, the as is always the way my only tip of the phone down, I'll think of something, but no, I don't.

A: Shoot me an email if something comes up and I'll definitely help explain.

Interview 7.1

A: Could you please tell me your nationality?

X: I'm British

A: And how long have you been a leader?

X: I've been in this role at [company] for two and a half years, and then I've held leadership sort of similar roles in other positions probably for the last eight years. But my career has been about 20 years.

A: Great. Thank you. And your age please?

X: 47

A: Perfect. So, the first part of my study is to look into your remote environment and your experience. So, taking into consideration where you currently are, how would you describe your remote environment during COVID-19?

X: So usually I was based in London and now I'm about 20 miles due South of London in a small village. So out of the city, into vintage environments and I live in a house with my husband and two children, and we're fortunate that we have enough space within the house, so we all have our own space to work. So, we're not on the kitchen table or anything like that. I've got a room that I've sort of like turned into a study and has a door so I can shut out the noise as well. So, I think out of a lot of other people, I'm in quite a good location and space to be able to work in as well.

A: Nice. And how would you describe your overall experience taking on that full work from home?

X: I used to work like a day a week anyway from home and that would fluctuate during the week, depending on workloads and meetings and things like that. So, I had previously done it. So therefore, it wasn't alien to me as soon as we started going into lockdown. But to do it constantly and to also be always on videos and on the screen the whole time. It feels as though it has been quite intense. And I think the intensity is that there's no real break from the screen.

In the office, even if you on the screen for the majority of the day, you walk around more to speak to people face-to-face other than all screen time. So, this is the intensities, the amount of time you're talking to the screen or looking at the screen.

A: Great. Thank you for explaining about that. So, I've read upon a theory from Guest and Conway. They identified six elements that provide a positive work environment. So, the six elements include manageable workload support from the organisation, positive work relations, control over job, a clear role, and lastly, a sense of control of involvement in organisational change. So, reflecting upon these six elements, how would you describe this specifically to your remote work environment?

X: Do you want me to go through each one. Is that helpful?

A: That would be great. Thank you.

X: Do you want to just let me know one, and I'll give you an answer to that…

A: Manageable workload.

X: There's two parts to it is there's managing workloads in a remote environment and then there's managing workloads in the COVID environments. And for COVID, it was the uncertainty of everything. And because there was never a clear understanding of what was going to happen next week. You always had to be on the fly. And the thing about my job is I am head of marketing and communications. And so, communications is incredibly important during a crisis and they need to be able to make sure that you're communicating to your staff and turning things around quickly. So, you hear something, and you have to communicate about it, within an hour usually. Yeah. So, the difference about managing your workload is it's hard to manage because you don't know when it's coming. You don't know when things are going to change, you don't know if you're going to get someone who's got COVID within the business and therefore you'd have to relate to that. So, it's managing something that you can't plan, which gives extra complexity to being able to manage things.

A: Thank you. And with regards to your control and clear role, how would you reflect upon this?

X: Sort of clarity with my role, well, I definitely knew what I was doing in terms of what my responsibilities were. I have a team and I think, in terms of managing your role, you have to be responsible for other people as well. And in a role where you would be just doing your work and it wasn't really related much to anyone else, and that would be a simpler activity, but when we're going through a home working environment, scenario and a pandemic then you've got to be making sure that you're also connecting with how other people are feeling that you have a line manager responsibility too. So, there's like the work of art aspect of it and also these personal and people aspect of it.

A: Okay. Thank you. And with regards to organisational support and positive work relations.

X: Yeah, because we were all going through it together there a common bond that we can all link on because you have a common bond to that, you've also got the ability to have honesty as well, that you haven't got all the answers. They're all trying our best. If we stumble on something it's not intentional, that it's just part of our journey. So, I think that's is almost like a positive because everyone feels that you're in it together.

A: I understand where you're coming from. Thank you. With regards to how you perceive your wellbeing, I take on quite a holistic definition throughout my thesis. So, I look at work wellbeing, which entails the quality and employee experiences and their functioning at work, as well as looking into the psychological social and physical wellbeing. When you reflect upon these components, how would you describe your overall quality of experience in functioning at work?

X: I would say thinking back, how we've been in the last year and what we've had to go through I think I've managed it on both aspects pretty well. I'm quite a positive person. And so, I think that actually helps when you're going through something like this, that you can dial up your positivity and try and find the positive parts. Other than if you were more of a negative person,

then it's easier to fall down. So, I think that was a positive. I also fortunately have a very happy and fun family life. And actually, one of the good things is we've had more time to spend together. So, at the end of a stressful day, at least I have a release in the shape of two children to be able to entertain me and a dog. I was making sure that my well-being was fine from a mental perspective. And also connects to that with a health perspective, I've got a Peloton bike and I basically start every day doing the cycle. And that to me just allows me to have a bit of calmness in my day and the distraction from things and get the endorphins running and all that type of stuff before I get onto the screen. And so, if you do that for me, I do that beforehand before the day that makes my day so much more different than if I decide to do it at the end of the day. So, I recognise where it fits best in my sort of wellbeing.

A: Interesting. Well, that's really good that you were able to recognise that for yourself, especially everyone has something different that works for them. Would you perhaps be able to rate your wellbeing from a scale of one to 10, with 10 being on the higher spectrum and one lower.

X: I will probably say, I'm not saying I was sort of like sweetness and light the whole time. I would probably say I was around a seven. And never really below a five, I think, because I was surrounded by the right people in the right environments. And yeah, having a dog, having space around us, being able to do some fun things, makes a big difference in the sort of situation.

A: Okay, great. Now this is going to go more into the human resource perspective of things. I want to know how involved was people services with regards to your personal wellbeing?

X: They would be more related to other people more than me. And the reason why is because someone within my team looks after the wellbeing communications. And so therefore I'm involved by her about what they're doing, and we talk about it in the situations. So, I would hope that people services is doing a good job because it kind of reflects on what we're doing as well within my team. But from the team that I know they were really conscious of how you try to encourage wellbeing across different approaches as well. Not everyone wants to meet for a

coffee morning. Not everyone wants to do yoga. No one wants to do HIT training, which is some of the things that we did, but you might want to do one of those three. And so therefore if you try and offer lots of different opportunities and activities, the hope would be that there's something that people like to connect with. So, they seem to do a lot of activities to try and cater for all people. And that's really from a UK perspective because that's where geographically I am located.

A: And do you have any suggestions how people service could become even more involved with, for instance, leader wellbeing specifically?

X: So firstly, from a generic perspective, I think with well-being, you need to be very conscious of changing it frequently because people get fatigued with a particular activity. We now have it when there's a coffee morning on a Wednesday, no one really goes to it because we've all moved on. We don't want to be doing that. We want to be doing something else, then send us something that's more interesting and that'll change our approach to a particular activity. So, for leadership wellbeing, the positive that's come out of this, as a leadership team, we spent more time together. Therefore, we've again, going through this thing together as a one group, we've used each other as a bit of a sounding boards or therapy when we're talking about it all, talking openly about, okay, well, this has been really tough, and this is what I'm finding. And actually, when you have the ability to talk to other people who understand what you're talking about and can relate to it, then actually that is part of a wellbeing activity, that's therapy. So having empathy with other people or joining together to recognise that there is commonalities in how we're dealing with it. I think that's a real positive without actually being an activity in itself.

A: Nicely explained. And with regards to your work environment, what actions did people services, as well as the health and safety officer take to assess your remote work environment?

X: There's an assessment that we could take. There was the option to take equipment from the office. And if we all do at home, we could find buy a monitor and people could see if they

needed, a desk or a chair or a laptop stand or keyboards or things like that. So, there was the option to be able to get the equipment that you need. We're quite a laptop led organisations. So therefore, everyone had the laptops anyways. So that wasn't a difficult situation. I think that the trouble was at the beginning. We thought it might be a couple of weeks, we didn't know it would be a good few more weeks than that. And so, there's a situation of sorting out for the short term as to sorting out the long term. I think there was a time in about September when I realised that this was going to take much longer than we thought. So, my husband and I kind of went off and bought our own desks and proper chairs and actually went, okay, let's do this properly rather than just working on a small desk or laptop screen and all that sort of stuff. And I think there'll be more people like me, that sort out their home office. So, it's designed for how they want it, rather than relying on the office the company to fund it all as well.

A: And you already mentioned you created more of an official home office space. What changes in your remote environment could further facilitate your wellbeing?

X: Less meetings and shorter hours? I think I've taken myself to the point where if I had to work in this environment forever, I wouldn't be happy working here. Yeah. I've kind of got myself to a very happy set up. I don't need to do anything else, but this is a big step from where I was last March because I was working downstairs on a laptop and now, I've got, you know, a desk that can stand up with me, a wide monitor, wireless, everything. And that makes a difference. I've designed the rooms. I've kind of put more things in my background now as how I want it to be, whereas before it was just sort of like something where I was sitting in a corner of a room. So, for me, and I only did this this year, that was almost like how I present myself. I wanted to come across on calls that's I was in a good environment rather than just in a bedroom somewhere.

A: You feel happy and that's perfect. That's great that you were able to do that for yourself. Thanks. Moving forward now to learning and development. I want to get an idea first about

your agility and readiness with the transition towards remote work. To what extent did you feel prepared for going full-time remote work?

X: I think if it hadn't been a COVID environment and that we were just told we close down the office, everyone worked from home. I think that would have been different to the situation that we've got, put on a pandemic on top of a change of work environments then we didn't know how long it was going to be. So, planning for an unknown length of time is much harder than coming for a six month or 12 month or forever scenario. So that was for me, and because I've also got kids at home, the dynamics of more people in the house, did we have enough WIFI to be able to accommodate four people on zoom calls? That's all came into play quite a lot. So, I was happy to be working from home, but you have to put all those other dynamics over. Well, that's fine if it was just me, but I have three other people and the dog and the pandemic. Then it was fun, but there was one point during the summer when it was glorious that I had the laptop outside, and I was sitting in the garden working. And that was a beautiful time of year. I loved it. So that was a definite blessing to COVID though was going through those summer months as well.

A: Nice. And to what extent were you prepared when you think back in March when it happened?

X: Do you mean prepared mentally or with the equipment?

A: Mentally, but also to lead a team virtually.

X: What happened was literally right before we knew about the pandemic we changed from Skype to teams and with teams, we got the video functionality that we were never using before. So previously on conference calls that I'd have with my team, it would just be voices and it wouldn't be their faces. Literally, as soon as we went into lockdown, we had the video functionality. And I think that was just very poignant that we suddenly could see their faces. And for me as a manager, it was much easier to be able to judge how they were feeling based on mannerisms and the way that they were presenting themselves, rather than just hearing a

voice and their image being masked. And then for me not being able to see how they were, it's so difficult for you to have an hour call with someone and to mask how you're feeling for that length of time. So as a manager, making sure I had the frequency calls, but the idea that we've now have video actually helped me be more prepared because I was then able to be a manager that I was happy to be.

A: Great. Thank you. With regards to leader development, this is about your personal skills and knowledge. What kind of programs did you undergo that helped you develop your leadership skills, which could be applicable for leading remotely?

X: Yeah, I haven't had a huge amount of training and training sessions in my career. A lot of it is just been on jobs, learning from other people, having sort of peer networks outside of work that I'm part of…other women that I talk about work with. There's nothing I can really think of that actually set me up to do this. I suppose the good thing is I've been a people manager for 15-18 years. Something like that, pretty much all my career. I've been responsible for other people and genuinely people who've always been different locations to me. So, I've always had that remote manager expertise or situations. So, it's not a new thing for me to being managing people remotely.

A: Okay, great. And with regards to leadership development, so more on the social capital, you already mentioned you have a network with other ladies where you talk about work. Did you ever have any experiences where you felt that also really helped you develop your remote working?

X: I'm trying to think what we talk about. No. I would say that I… given who my network is, I feel that I would be giving them advice rather than them giving me advice. We're just at slightly different places in our career and responsibilities within work. So frequently people would ask for my opinion on things rather than me taking learnings from them. I'm open for anyone to share any great tips on how you do it, cause I'm sure there's better ways to do things.

A: Okay. And do you want to experience more learning and development like formal opportunities?

X: Yeah. I'm always up for learning new skills, doing training sessions. Whilst we don't have anything... there's a new program in place soon that I'm going to be supporting on, but I'm sure that there's some lessons as well that I can learn from it. I think everyone should be in concerns and more learning and developments. It definitely can't hurt

A: And how do you envision it to go? You've mentioned you've learned more, let's say informally through experience through others. If you're taking on more of a formal approach, how would you envision the setup to be?

X: I suppose it would have to be online itself. And I think where I would probably get the most benefit is if it was in a small group where it's sort of like peer to peer learning with a group that was of a similar level to me, similar type of initiative, it doesn't have to be within, [company]. It could be an external it could be an external course that's related to people who are dealing with teams of, 10 people on top of things, sort of similar groups that would be relevant to me. Yeah, smaller groups rather than big webinars. When I'm looking at what I get the most answer, I get the most out of when you've got interactions, you can share your conversations, not just spoken to and not having any ability to talk through certain situations.

A: Okay. So more of an individual approach…

X: Yeah. One too few, one to one, but not one to many. I think one to many would be too much. I would gain more form a smaller learning environment than a large one. There's just too many distractions these days. I was listening to a webinar earlier with someone from their financial times at the same time as emailing something has same time as eating my lunch. You know, if you're doing a training session and you know, you have two parts of it, then you're going to give them your attention. And that's where I think that we need to make sure that your time is spent the best and having engagement with that person, that trainer would be the most valuable away.

A: Perfect. Thank you for that elaboration. This is about work-life balance. You've mentioned a little bit about it previously. The definition I actually took for this term was the individual's perception and satisfaction of the division between personal and professional life. How would you describe your work-life balance since adopting remote work in COVID-19?

X: I think when you are in the office and my journey from the office to home is about an hour and a half and my trains every half hour. I need to be structured to leave at a certain time to get that certain train, to get home, to allow the nanny to go home. Therefore, the end of my day is very structured, I need to live at six because I'm getting a train at half six to get me home for half seven, eight o'clock to allow her to leave. And that was my sort of like flow diagram. If you take out the travel, you take out the nanny, there's no reason why it has to be a point to finish work. You can continue working. And therefore, the balance between work and life flips, it goes more in the favour of work than it does the favour of life. So, you need to be more structured in policing yourself about how you manage that. And like I mentioned, I've got some children, so they generally need some food at some point. So that's a good point that I'm like, okay, I'll feed you. And if I come back, then that's my choice, but I'm taking that away from a time that's I could be having some fun with them. So, there's times where I'm like, have a word with yourself, think about what you're missing out on. And don't make it into a habit that you are working from, seven, eight in the morning till nine, 10 o'clock at night, which is really easy to do. So, even though there's not the normal cut-off points, when you're in an office environment, you need to introduce some of those same milestones when you're in a remote environment to stop yourself, just keep going and going and going, because my work and I'm sure everyone who you've spoken to at [company], there's never a finish. There's always things to do, the list never stops. So therefore, there is no, Oh, okay. I've done all my work, I'll move away. You have to actually, physically log off and go do something else. So that is something you have to self-police because no one else is going to tell you, especially when you're at the levels I'm at and other people that you've spoken to say, Oh, you shouldn't be sending emails

at eight, nine o'clock at night, but also it sets the wrong precedence to my team, if they're receiving emails from me late in the evening that they feel that they might have to answer, I don't want that to be seen as, okay, well, you were at home, you can just work as much as you want. They need to be conscious of their work life balance.

A: Yeah. And how would you say you've been able to police yourself?

X: I make sure I don't start too early. So usually, getting on the bike and doing something like that, rather than getting on the laptop is a good way. And I know it's more positive for me as well. And at the moment with this year, I made sure that during the lunch here with my children, I've got I'm downstairs and I make a sandwich. And I do all that stuff at that time rather than make it in the morning and saying, just get it yourself. It's about, being present in their day as well. And that actually that half an hour slot that I take allows me to catch up with them, have fun with them, be a mum for that half an hour, but also have a bit of thinking time about what's happening as well. And just away from the screen. And then in the evenings, what I try and not do is I try not to have any calls after 6:00 PM. So, if I choose to work, then that's fine, but I don't want to be having conference calls or team calls later in the evening. Cause that's just a different mindset. Your brain sort of works fast on those calls. And it does if you're just getting on with work and it's also generating more work rather than getting through work. So, I try and do that. I also, in my calendar, I block out usually every morning until 10 o'clock so that I can actually get some work done. First thing, so I feel like I've achieved something before I jump on calls or anything like that. And for me, that's just really helped because if you can cross off a few things off your list, early doors, then from a wellbeing perspective, you feel that you've achieved something and you're not going backwards. So, one of the Microsoft tools that allows you just to block out certain like focus time. And I do that. And since doing that, that's helped me just be able to manage the workload, manage my start to the day as well. And that I'm not just getting calls that sort of half eight, nine in the morning and I'm sort of like, okay, right.

A: And would you be able to also rate your work life from one to 10 from the same scale?

X: I would probably say at the moment it just feels like it's got really busy really quickly. So, I would probably say it's a five out of 10. I would love it to be more at the seven and eight out of 10, but I'm still sort of feeling challenged at the end of the week that I need to get things done before the start of the following week, but we're just at a busy time and it's kind of like a positive busy rather than negative busy.

A: What kind of work-life conflict have you experienced since transitioning to remote work?

X: That you're always you know, a couple of steps away from the office that the temptation to get things done is stronger because you can walk into a perfect setup to get work done. You haven't got to go and put the laptop on. You definitely know it's charged. You got a nice comfy seat to sit on. You're not trying to find a quiet spot in the house. There's less of the barriers to stop you or hurdles put in place to stop you thinking, Oh, I'll just go and do some work. So that is the barrier that weekend work can easily become the norm even if it's just for a couple of hours just to try and get on top of things.

A: Yeah. Okay. Thank you. Now with regards to achieving a level of work-life balance that you're satisfied with, what changes would you make to achieve the satisfactory level?

X: The important thing is that we need to be **more disciplined** about the type of work that we accept from other people. Also making sure that the right person is doing that job. And so, they do it in, you know, the optimal amount of time. So therefore, when we've got the team structure, that's helpful because there's ways that we can move things around. Sometimes I can be too involved in a particular activity that actually I don't really need to, but I might enjoy it. And so therefore it's a discipline for me to actually go, okay, I don't need to be on this call, then I'll cancel my way out of it. I'll give myself an hour back and then I can get more on top of activities. So, there's a certain discipline that we need to enforce to make sure that we're doing the right work. And therefore, not extending our days or not losing our breaks during the day as well.

A: Okay. And how could people services help support you with balancing your work life?

X: I suppose from a training perspective, they could put into place some training about how it's being more disciplined and it's not necessarily managing stress. It's just about managing workloads. I don't feel like I've got in lack of being able to delegate work or to be able to say no to things, but just in an environment where we don't want to say no, because there's so many great opportunities out there. People services, I think from my perspective, knowing that there's someone there to be able to talk to if you need it is a real positive. So just having the relationship with people services is important, making sure that the person that if you wanted to talk to, that person would be someone who you would talk to is important. So, you know, who in people services is leading that discussion is an important aspect. If you don't like people services, if you don't like the head of people services or who you talk to, you would probably avoid them. Therefore, just making sure that that person is approachable and could offer advice or could help to seek your advice. If wasn't something they could do themselves is important at the leadership level.

A: Okay. Thank you. That actually brings us to the end of all my interview questions. Do you have any further details you want to mention on this topic?

X: I think so, as you get higher up the business. And so, as an example, I report to the CEO, I don't generally want to be giving the CEO my problems and, whereas if it was someone who reports again to me, I hope that I would be more accessible than thinking about, you know, the CEO. So therefore, at the leadership level, there might need to be different programs that suit that group rather than more junior members who might have more day-to-day contact with their line managers, you know, more engagements. So, from what you're talking about in terms of leadership there has to be like different approaches to suit different audiences.

A: Okay. Definitely. Do you have any questions for me, perhaps anything you need clarification on?

X: How long are you doing these interviews for… where are you through the process?

A: I'm actually almost done. I have one more interview, maybe two for the first round of interviews…

Interview 8.1

A: Could you please mention your nationality?

X: British national, although I have Irish nationalities as well.

A: And your length of service as a leader?

X: I was running a business called [x] which was acquired by [company] back in 2016. I took on leadership of that back in 2008 and I was the director since 2006. So about 17 years.

A: Thank you. The first part of this interview is more about your remote work environment during COVID-19, as well as your personal wellbeing. How would you describe your remote work experience during COVID-19?

X: It's been a mix. I mean, in reality it's been both excellent and sorts have been not great. I think that's probably the pattern is you get these sorts of peaks and troughs. And I guess because one is more remote it's more noticeable that you're in a sort of peak or you're in a trough and in particular that's kind of impacted by both the work situation and what's been going on through that period. So, there is a sort of an innateness about it alongside a sort of dealing with issues as they come through. I think in general, it ranged from very good to excellent, to really quiet a gruelling, if that makes sense. I would probably be best described as that.

A: Okay, great. This moves forward to your work environment. And this is the theory I've read upon from Guests and Conway. They have this idea that there are six elements of a positive work environment, and these include manageable workload, personal control over job, organisational support, positive work relations, a clear role, and lastly, a sense of control of involvement in organisational change. Reflecting upon each of these six elements, how would you describe them to your work environment specifically?

X: So manageable workload is interesting in that the volume of work is unlimited. And so am I able to manage it is largely down to whether I have a sense of sort of control over whether I can shut off. And I think the answer is yes. So, I would say the, the amount of work is extremely large, but it has been manageable thus far. Yes.

A: Okay great.

X: In terms of postal control over job, my roles somewhat changed now I've had this kind of floating role, so I've been kind of creating a role for myself. In that respect, yes, the question is whether that is relevant for other people within the organisation. I can think I've got the best role in the world, but if no one else knows I'm in that role, then it really has no sort of organisational meaning. And I've been sort of fairly clear about what I've been trying to do. The ability to communicate that out and engage with the wider organisation has been somewhat habited. And the personal control of the job has been very high and that's really as a matter of circumstances, which I personally have been through over the last sort of 18 months to two years. Simple answer is yes. Reasonably high personal control… organisational support. I think that has not been a particularly high; I suppose, what you'd look to first and foremost is your, in a sort of traditional sense, you look at some sort of line management structure, you look at HR support, you look at your peer group. And I think most of that has been pretty informal. There is a sort of senior leadership team that I'm part of that has regular meetings. So that's been reasonably effective of good amounts of engagements with certain individuals such as [name], certain members of the SLT. I'd say it's been, as a matter, so that support has come as a result of having to go through the situation that we've all collectively been through. It's been informally there, if that's the right way of thinking about it, but yeah, I'd say that's probably been less sort of structured and organised than the maybe it's could have been. Positive work relations. I think there are some great people within the business. What it has done is through my personal experience, as well as the kind of general work environment in terms of being

remote is that it's meant that you sort of focused on the number of work relationships that have reduced and then become more concentrated in areas that have more kind of day-to-day meaning. And I think that's generally been pretty good, as an organisation, we are quite sort of social and networked and also driven as well. There's been a sort of coming together on a number of key relationships, which has been pretty good. In terms of clear role and sense control. I think, again, it comes back to my point is I think I've been fairly clear about what I'm pushing for, but that hasn't been sort of formally supported from the leadership in a public sense. I have no idea whether large sways of the business really understand what I'm doing other than when I'm saying on a sort of virtual platform saying I'm presenting that zero here. People would go, Oh, that's here. But there's been no sort of [name] is this, I'm still waiting for that announcement. So maybe that comes, and the sense of control involved in organisational change because my role has somewhat shifted out, I currently have no items, no line management of people. I'm driving forward an area in that area, being the development of our net zero services. What I'm also aware of having run a business is I have some thoughts and ideas about how we can develop. Things like becoming more market oriented rather than service oriented, things like that. I've been chipping away at that probably for about two years. And it feels like, not just me, but we're getting sort of feedback from other actors that we need to move in certain directions that I've been advocating. I no idea whether it's, because there's some of the advocation that I've been doing or whether it was just I'm one of many voices saying this is the way we need to adapt, I think probably the latter, but anyway, so I can start to see some of the changes coming through I've been advocating. Sense of control I'd say loose, but you are listened to.

A: Thank you. And with regards to your personal wellbeing, I take on a holistic definition throughout my thesis that looks at work wellbeing, which entails the overall quality of experiences and functioning at work that an individual has. However, it also still takes on the

psychological social and physical aspects of wellbeing. So how would you describe your overall quality of experience and functioning at work?

X: Again, I think it varies, it's quite hard to maintain a level of high performance and focus day in, day out when you're sitting in a room, it's a bit like being as close to incarceration as I ever want to go. And that might sound quite extreme, but what I mean by that is that sense of having to build a routine in order to create structure and that routine means that actually in the outside world means that you're quite limited. And what I think the key ingredients that's missing is novelty. It's really hard to find any newness or any surprise or any excitement. The day is very predictable, in the same way that if you are incarcerated, you know what your routine is, and you stick to it. So, this is close to that sort of regime as I ever want to get. Having said that though there are so many new subjects that are coming up so intellectually I think and sort of mentally, there's a lot to be engaged in but actually physically the inability to really kind of experience anything new is quite challenging. That impacts your mental state as well.

A: And could you perhaps rate your wellbeing, let's say from a scale of one to 10 and 10 being the higher spectrum and one the lower, I know you said it varies, but let's say if you were to measure those peaks and troughs.

X: Yeah. Okay. So probably ranges from about two to eight. You find yourself sort of sitting here going, what am I meant to be doing, understanding that there's a huge amount of piled up they should be getting through, but you just like… the other thing is that because I'm sort of working, semi-independently, it's not pressures to deliver work, come in a sort of ad hoc, random fashion. You're sort of driven by other people then stuff that you're going to be doing gets in pushed in the bottom of the pile. So that's the low end, the higher end it feels like you are making some real breakthroughs in certain areas and that breakthrough tends to happen. The highs are associated when you make a breakthrough, right. When something you've been

intellectualising and pulling things together, and then you take it out to a wider audience. Suddenly you start seeing it picked up. You are in sort of a massive it, when you can't really see anything clearly, and you're sort of struggling, and then you get this moment of clarity and you put it down and then it takes you up to the next level.

A: I get that. Great. With regards to your leader wellbeing, taking from a human resource perspective, how involved was people services with regards to your personal wellbeing?

X: Yeah, pretty limited. I mean, understandably managers and leaders tend to look towards their people quote unquote staff first because that's part of the responsibility and because it has been so challenging, I think that's taken a huge amount of the focus and rightly so, but equally, sense that there are certainly some people who are a source of really struggling, really flagging in that kind of senior to middle management, middle leadership role. I think there is support needed for those people.

A: Okay. And you mentioned, you could imagine that there should be more support. How could people services become more involved with ensuring your wellbeing, while remote working?

X: Yeah, it's really difficult because my sense is that that you can put in structures such as mentoring, coaching, those sorts of things, which are highly experienced in the past, that does work very well. It could have been that there was coaching sessions put together. They are very expensive.... And the business has been very focused on for a whole range of reasons sort of guarding its expenditure, you know, whilst your furloughing people. It doesn't look great to then spend a stack load of cash up on coaching sessions, expensive coaching sessions for senior leaders. There's that, but I would think that that sort of assistance could be really good if it could be sort of justified and put together in a different way. I mean, in some respects [name] is playing that role informally or informally formally, but whether there was sort of outside in view, would provide a different level of support, I think it would. So that would be the

suggestion I would make. I mean, it's also really interesting. I don't quite know where this fits in, but it was really no supple in terms of this Christmas. Right. And the number of people that I spoke to that actually came back properly refreshed, in saying, you've got this global pandemic demic running, you've got just horrors out there. And yet a lot of people came back and went Christmas was great, I did nothing, I actually shut down. And I think we need to notice that in terms of how people genuinely refresh themselves is actually just stopped working and because of where we are, it's really hard to stop working. The shutdown was really important. And I think we need to notice that and think about ways that we can capture that and take it forward. So that would be something that, that I feel would, could be looked at.

A: Definitely. Great. And with regards to your specific work environment where you're in now, what actions did people services and the health and safety take to assess your remote work environment?

X: There was no kind of external assessment. I suspect that there is an expectation that the leaders are paying attention to the advice that is given. I think there was some brilliant advice developed that was put out there, whether we've got the capacity to do for [name]. He's also doing delivery work, to virtually go around everyone's house. I mean, I think that's a massive task and I'm not sure whether it's realistic to think that that could have been done. There was some brilliant guys put in place. I almost think it is a responsibility for senior leaders to walk the talk there and to read the advice and make sure their environment is set up. So early days I went and got a second screen. I've got a webcam, we're lucky in that I've got a space that I can separate myself and it's quiet. So, I don't get disturbed mostly. I feel that the environment is pretty good here, but that was really as a result of understanding what was being put out as advice and applying that advice.

A: Okay. And let's say you have the ability to make more changes to your work environment. What changes would you make to further facilitate your wellbeing where you think this will really help me?

X: Yeah. Is this referring to the guests and Conway definition of work environment?

A: It can, but it can also be about your physical work environment as well. What you prefer.

X: Hmm. I mean, I'm not sure. I think, I actually think I've got it pretty good here. What I can do much better is take breaks, take proper breaks, exercise, meditate… those sorts of things to break up the day and critically find something new, find that novelty. Cause I think that novelty is very rejuvenating. And to do things like, okay, I'm just going to go and do this today. Haven't planned it, just going to go and be spontaneous and do something different stay. I don't want to say planning spontaneity because that's kind of like contradictory, but that would be the thing I'd want to do more of.

A: Okay, great. Thank you. With regards to your agility and readiness with the transition to remote work, to what extent did you feel prepared to make that transition?

X: Relatively prepared… It's quite hard to sort of remember what life was like. I really miss lunchtime because we had great food around us. We had some amazing food, and you just don't get that. But on the other hand, I'm saving a lot of money. I've learned to make lots of different things. I was relatively prepared for it. I welcomed it initially just as a means to break out because again, going into the office day in, day out spending a little bit of time working from home was okay. But I was ready for a change. Now I'm ready for another change. So yeah, so something in between.

A: Nice. And with regards to leader development. This is about your individual knowledge, skills and abilities. What kind of programs did you receive to develop your leader skills?

X: Yeah, there was some, so [name] started to put some things in place sort of coaching skills and so on and so forth. And then that got put on hold for understandable reasons. I would say, in general, they haven't really focused on leadership development. Certainly at [x], we did quite a lot of leadership development. I don't know whether it worked, but we were aware that actually the business needed to develop its leaders and we did get coaching. For example, we were lucky enough to be able to afford, to put quite a lot of money investment into that side of things, to coach people up and help them to get framework. For example, I was coached and partly sponsors to do an MBA. We were quite invested and associated with various consultancies and leadership development frameworks. So, it was really good to answer. There hasn't really been any of that at [company], there has been more, get the thing going in some respects that's sort of state of immaturity, where I mean that it's just been drive, drive, drive. Now as we enter another stage, it feels like investing, not just in today's leaders. I'm looking to transition over time and it's really about developing. If I were the business, I'll be thinking about who's coming in in the next three years, who do we need to train up to bring in to then take it on to the next level. And at that is where I'd recommend investing time and money. Part of that is to serve certain individuals who in current leadership positions will be reluctant to let go. And they will need help as well. But that will look very different. I suspect from the help that is needed or the developments needed for those folks who are going to come in and really run the business in the next three to five years.

A: Okay. Thank you. Have you had any sort of development in that sort of area with building social capital, creating those networked relationships?

X: I don't think anything formal as a business we are culturally open to in-house social networks. I was blown away when we first joined. And you know, you just kind of put a question out into the ether and then suddenly you get all these people coming back and it was wonderful. It was really wonderful. I think that culture has maintained, so I'm involved, as I

said, in this sort of net zero development piece. There's groups that are formed around it, that really do network very well. And the amount of knowledge that's shared or the capital that's built that knowledge capital is another layer, a slightly different layer. It's a related layer, but for the social capital. So those things kind of go hand in hand. I would say that if you were to be able to measure knowledge capital, you'd see that almost as a proxy for the social capital that's developed, to go mutually supportive. I think it's been informal. I think there's nothing wrong with that. I think is very positive and strong if you're developing social capital in a formal fashion, I think you put in formal structures, my own belief, as you put in formal structures, if it's not happening, if it's happening in an informal fashion, then actually that's a pretty healthy sign for an organisation, but I am an extrovert by nature. And so therefore I will reach out and I'll do those sorts of things for those who are more introverted. Then you know, I'd be interested in their views as to whether they think that that is the case.

A: Definitely. I mean, that would be an interesting perspective to get. And if you could think about some form of programs or learning and development that could help facilitate and improve your wellbeing, what would that be?

X: Sabbatical for three months? I can go to Nepal. That would be brilliant. That's what I'm after….

A: Fair enough. For development, it doesn't need to be formal. It could also be informal, anything that you think could be value adding to wellbeing.

X: Yeah. We're trying a number of things, so things like zoom calls where you have an after call, personally, I really hate them, it's like, Oh God, not another zoom call to sort of enhance our wellbeing. Spend all day on teams or zoom. So, we've done a few little things, challenges, sporting challenges where there are one or two folks who like that sort of stuff and they have gone Strava and we set up a little group, that's actually been a sort of companywide group.

We've got 50 people around the business have signed up and they're on this little club and sort of tracking things, raising some charity for that was really good. Gets you living out of the work and into the community, as it were thinking about raising money. And it also physically gets you out and mentally stimulates you. So those sorts of things appeal to me. I'm just wondering whether, and I know this wouldn't work, but the question in my mind now is how to replicate what we did over Christmas. How do you replicate that sense of just closing off, taking breaks and thinking about things, focusing on the family, focusing on being outside, those sorts of things that I'd love to sort of bottle anything and sell it, it would be, how do you replicate that on a sort of regular basis in order to create that sense of wellbeing and rejuvenation.

A: Definitely. That would be interesting to look into.

X: Could be something like you know, once a month you have a three-day weekend or you work five days in four. That sort of sense of flex and empowerment is really difficult right now because we've never been busier, but it's super hard when you're already…. where you look at things like obesity and stuff, we are designed more for sort of famine or starvation type conditions. When you have abundance, you want to stuff your face and that's what we're kind of doing now is we're hording, we're stuffing our faces. Partly that's because we are seeing these peaks and troughs, these booms and busts. And so, you make hay while the sun shines, which means you just max out. Now the question is, is it boom or bust, has the world finally woken up and said, right, we've got to fix ourselves here. So actually, this is about making sure that we are long-term fit as opposed to short-term cramming as much in as we can. Yeah.

A: Great, this brings us to our last part of the interview about work-life balance. Work-life balance can be perceived differently. I take on the perspective that this is the personal

satisfaction, an individual has with the division between their work and personal life. How would you describe your work-life balance since adopting remote work?

X: The working days have definitely got longer, the breaks definitely got shorter. Whether I am more productive as a result of that or not, I have big questions about, because I think you can just take far longer to do something, to do a task because you're going to say, well, you know what? I understand that you're going to be here to until seven, eight o'clock. So, what's the rush to do this all is going to happen, if I rush this, is just the next thing is going to drop through and I'm never going to clear it all. You can take longer to do it. You can get distracted; I think there's the opportunity for less productive distraction here. Whereas if you're in an office environment, you can be quickly distracted, but actually that can be quite productive stuff. Whereas here, because your world has got smaller, a temptation is you're on Twitter. And so particularly when you got things like the US elections going on, which is hugely fascinating, but hugely distracting, you can find yourself tuning into that and its addictive. You get that sort of dopamine hit from what's the latest that Trump says or so. So, there's been that it's been quite noticeable. With long days, I argue productivity. In general, being able to sort of cap it off at a reasonable time in the evening has been the case. I have most maintained good levels of exercise through and sort of structure it more. Yeah. I'm thinking in general; I actually can't remember what your original question was… I say in general, if I could give it a score out of 10, I'd probably put it at about a sort of seven.

A: Great, thank you. And what kind of work-life conflict have you experienced since transitioning to remote work?

X: I'm very lucky in that our kids are a bit older, so they haven't required, the hands-on for home-schooling. That has been a massive conflict for so many of my colleagues who have

younger children in particular… conflict… Hasn't really been any conflict if I'm honest with you, I've been very lucky in that respect.

A: Great. And then to our last part about achieving of work-life balance, what changes would you make to help yourself get to that satisfactory level of work-life balance?

X: Not being guilty about saying I'm going to go and do a ride for an hour and a half, two hours go for a run for an hour and just go for a walk, do something different midday and not feel actually like that's an issue because you know, you're going to make up the time. But I think that I'd be more productive if I was more willing to say I've hit a lull here, just put this down for even three hours, then come back and do it later and see even when you're feeling a bit livelier. That would be the thing that I would like to do. And I think how you achieve that is, you know, I guess we kind of tuned in this way, but other people are understanding more colleagues that are doing that, having a greater awareness of how creating flex in their lives would then give you a reference point to go, okay, well that's what I kind of want to do, but so creating social norms around being able to work in that sort of flexible way. I think that would be the thing.

A: Nice and how could people services specifically then help support you with your work-life balance?

X: Yeah… people services creating awareness of what people do. That would be probably the best thing, socialising that, socialising that knowledge would be the best thing that people services can do. Ultimately, I think people services has a role in facilitating this stuff and making people comfortable and raising awareness that would be the biggest thing you, I do you think coaching would be the biggest thing that people services could support and enable on an individual level for myself and for others. But yeah, on that work-life balance side. Yeah. Creating awareness as to what other people are up to that would be great.

A: Okay. Great. Thank you. So those were all my questions I had for you today. Do you have anything you want to add?

X: I don't think so. Just a comment really in that, we are 10 months into this in terms of having shifted entire organisation to remote environment. Everyone understandably sees the world through their own personal experience. Right. I'm very lucky. I get that. And the fact that we've still got a business, which seems to be performing pretty highly, I mean, using sort of YC by web numbers and the conversations that I have as a proxy really for how we're doing as an organisation, I think we're doing pretty well. But I do understand that there are many, many colleagues who have had to really put up with much worse environment than I have. And I see it and I sort of feel it when engaging with them. Now how much control people services have over those sorts of issues about children, the accommodation where they're staying and the environment outside is very limited, but what people services could do, I guess more broadly is be that ear, right? So, whether it's people services directly or coaching managers to have that sort of empathetic support that's what's needed, is people feeling listened to, heard and empathise with, I think if people services is involved in that, it's not really people services. So, your empathy emergency crew maybe could be something that could be developed.

A: Thank you.

Interview 9.1

A: Can you please mention your nationality and length of service as a leader?

X: I am from the United Kingdom. I was born in Wales but I'm British. And I have been, so I've been responsible for the UK operations [company] for the 12 months. But I've held leadership positions in various companies over the last 20 odd years.

A: Okay, great. And could you state your age please?

X: I am 54.

A: Thank you. How would you describe your remote work experience?

X: It has been pretty monotonous in a day-to-day working capacity. I think we're all in Groundhog Day kind of cycle. At times the blurriness between work and home can be advantageous, but it can also be disadvantageous as well. I think I finished work yesterday at about 1:30 this morning. So that can be really useful in terms of, if I want to fit something in… I finished at 1:30 because I needed to help my daughter with a social science project which was related to discrimination of specific religions and I went running in the day. But I still had a bit of out of time, but then other things that compounded. There's degree of monotony and there's a degree of kind of extending working days, both at the start and end of days, which when you travel to, from an office whilst you still may do something in the evening, there's much more of a defined kind of beginning and end to the working the day, which is defined by the environment.

A: Definitely that's completely understandable. Thank you. And with regards to your work environment, I've read upon this theory from Guests and Conaway, where they have identified six specific elements that help contribute to a positive work environment. These include manageable workload, personal control over a job, organisational support, positive work relations, a clear role, and lastly, a sense of control within the organisational change. Reflecting upon these six elements specifically, how would you describe your work environment?

X: We are in a very dynamic, fast growing work environment. We've got a whole load of external factors out at the moment, which are extremely exciting and positive and driving a lot of opportunity and change within the organisation. There's a huge amount of dynamism, which

is manifesting in pressure on the organisation and individuals as a consequence. So organisational support is good. And there is a certain commitment from top through the organisation in terms of supporting individuals to achieve their aspirations and objectives. We recognise at the moment that we're out of sync, particularly in terms of some of our delivery teams, we're seeing a massive growth in opportunity levels, which at this moment in time, we're struggling to resource. Again, there's kind of those kind of day-to-day issues, which we're struggling to manage. We're also going through a period of organisational change and that's requiring us to manage the ongoing day-to-day delivery commitments whilst at the same time, responding to how we organised restructure for the organisation to deliver the best outcomes for clients and for the organisation and for people. That's particularly challenging at the moment in terms of how we progress that effectively and efficiently without disrupting already over busy people.

A: When you reflect upon your personal role and control over what you're doing, how would you describe that?

X: I'm in a privileged position in terms of what I do. I have quite a lot of autonomy and associated with my responsibilities. It's down to me to organise my days. And I guess that also enables me to flex things accordingly. There are obviously requirements that I need to fulfil in order to ensure that I can maintain regular reporting cycles and the kind of governance needs that are a week to week, month to month need. But I have the ability to work within those requirements to deliver what's needed.

A: Okay, great. Moving forward to your perceived wellbeing, how you recognise it. I take on the definition of holistic perspective. This includes the psychological social and physical aspects of wellbeing, but it is also still focused within work. So, your overall quality of experience and functioning at work. So how would you describe your work wellbeing?

X: I guess, you know it's pretty intense at the moment. Born out of circumstances associated with the pandemic, which, is definitely putting constraints. I've got a daughter sat above me, who's in online school as we speak, another one at the back who I hope is online in online school. So those kinds of disruptions have been an area that encroaches on your daily work life. I do try and take advantage. So as an organisation, we've encouraged colleagues to, particularly during these dark winter months to try and flex their time to get some daylight hour outside time. I try and take advantage of that as much as I can, do I practice as much of what I preach now. I don't, you know, I should be getting more time outside than I currently am. And I miss some of the things that I managed to interweave into my working day, like my bike ride to and from work, quite miss that. So those kinds of routines that are good. I have made up for it. So, if I do a comparison of how fit am I in January 2021 compared to January 2020? I think I'm probably quite a bit fitter cause I'm running a lot more than I was this time last year. I'm substituting some of the things that I miss in my day-to-day activities through doing through other things I'm fitting in and around work.

A: That's very nice to hear. And could you perhaps rate your wellbeing then from a scale of one to 10, 10 being the higher spectrum and one the lower,

X: I would say I'm in seven to eight kind of category.

A: Nice. Thank you. Moving forward how involved is people services with regards to your personal wellbeing?

X: Okay, so my personal wellbeing… good question. They have been very active in trying to make folks aware of, what we should all be doing. They've created a fantastic arrange of resources and they have also been super supportive of ensuring that we are communicating and messaging colleagues effectively to ensure that they don't feel that they need any permission to do things that support their mental health and their physical wellbeing. From that

perspective, I think the people services team have been fantastic at trying to set the right kind of tone particularly going through the pandemic. I think I probably need to reflect on how much I've acted on their advice myself personally. But I think they have been amazing in terms of trying to support, encourage colleagues to take more accountability for their wellbeing.

A: Thank you. And how could people and services become more involved to ensuring your personal wellbeing?

X: They could or should maybe get me, is to guilt me out of my own inactivity. So yeah, they perhaps need to get on my case. And I guess if senior management do not seem to be walking the talk and then we perhaps shouldn't be surprised if we don't get all of our more junior colleagues complying to what we're encouraging them to do.

A: Okay. Great. And with regards to your work environment, what actions did people services as well as the health and safety officer take to assess your remote work office?

X: Yes, we did the risk assessment and to ensure that, workstation and immediate surroundings all kind of compliant. We also were given the opportunity to pick up bits and pieces of equipment that we felt were required to support us in what we're doing or buy bits and pieces of equipment that we felt were necessary. I have a lot of my workstation, it's an old kitchen table that my wife and I restored, so it's got deep sentimental value, I had to buy a chair. So, I bought myself a chair and we had an old monitor that was relying around in the attic. And I dragged that out and thought, right, we're going to use that. I have got myself pretty well set up. In terms of it, I have a workstation that functions pretty well for me, maybe why I spend too much time at it because it works really well for me. Yeah, it's great. My two screens, I also have another laptop here, which you can't see, which has got about a hundred gigabytes of music on it and that serves as my kind of daily news feed. I just have it on a browser. I have

connections to see what's going on in the world here, then work here. And yeah. It works pretty well.

A: That's great to hear. Do you think there are any changes that you could do to even further your wellbeing within your remote environment?

X: I probably need to think about my… I don't stand up a lot and I stand up to go out for a walk around or whatever, but yeah, probably need to tidy it up, sort the paperwork but yeah, no, it functions reasonably well. I guess we're fortunate in that this room, it does get used by other members of the family. And there's a fire in here. So, at night if I'm working late, I'll light of fire and the kids will creep, the dog always comes in here because it's warm. It's quite comfortable work environment, maybe too comfortable, which is why I ended up staying in here longer than I should have been... Yeah, I'm really fortunate, extremely fortunate.

A: Perfect. Thank you. And this moves forward more to learning and development and your skills and capabilities in terms of agility and readiness, to what extent did you feel prepared for the transition to remote work?

X: From an infrastructure perspective we were really super prepared. All our colleagues have laptops. So, in terms of when the government instructions to work remotely, if you can, you have to work remotely. We just told people to, when you go home tonight, make sure that you take your laptop with you and any work that you feel that you need. And it was literally overnight. We had fortunately concluded the rollout of teams, the integration of teams into SharePoint. So that was just literally an overnight. Yes, we were ready. I guess, we did have to do some of the other things with colleagues in terms of making sure that they had the necessary equipment and tools to be able to do while they were at. We were in a really good shape to flick the switch on remote working. I guess there was an element of re-alignment in terms of our expectations. And I think maybe for some colleagues as well, a kind of an adjustment in

the employee, employer trust dynamic. Some colleagues perhaps feel that they need their team with them so that they can be sure that everything's going on in the way that they want it to go on and all of a sudden, they're remote. And that requires a different way of kind of engaging and maintaining communication to ensure that everything that is being done is right. We went through that adjustment fairly rapidly through the spring summer. The other thing to mention is, we had a significant portion of colleagues who did work remote. They didn't work from home, so they were already set up working from home and no change. For those colleagues and some people, I guess, you've got a good portion of it working remotely. It was just shifting the slider on how much in office to how much at home. And I think that transition worked pretty well.

A: Great. And for yourself specifically, how did you then feel during that transition?

X: Yes. I guess, okay. In so much as the immediacy of what we had to do I mean, pretty preoccupied of so, but missing the office and the commute and all those kinds of things came down the line. The thing could be in the initial phase, we need to make sure that we've got people to safe, got their work effectively that they're not getting stressed out by the fact that they are working remotely. We had other considerations; we had a bunch of folks that were shielding. We had other folk that were trying to look after children, whilst their partners were key workers, we had a whole bunch of things that really kept us preoccupied which I guess took minds off, some of the day-to-day lives in terms of working in an office environment. I guess for me, it got progressively difficult, more difficult as we went through the summer months.

A: Okay, perfect. And with regards to leader development what kind of programs did you receive in the past that helped you develop your leader skills that you felt were also applicable for remote work?

X: Very good question. I've been fortunate that I've had a couple coaching mentoring support over, particularly the middle part of my career… more senior responsibilities, which was really helpful. And that stuff that I guess I go back to quite regularly around has used empathy and understanding of putting yourself into the shoes of colleagues. I think over the last 12 months, the biggest challenge that we've faced in a leadership context is, unfortunate. My kids are 14 and my day-to-day distraction levels pretty low. I have an amazing place to work, and I can do that, if I need to work later, I can do. But not everybody is able to do that, so I need to ensure that I can see the situation that we're in through the eyes of everybody. It's not just people, who've got the management challenges, but people who are living in shared accommodation where they don't have a dedicated place to work where people with small children who they need to dedicate a portion of their working day to home-schooling, and then how they fit that in, within their other lives, people who've got ill loved ones. Some of that early coaching and mentoring that I received has been really useful in terms of trying to understand the range of complexities that we face. The other thing is just in terms of the messaging and the communications, we've really up to the level of communication really early on in the pandemic, because there was so much uncertainty, nobody knew what was happening. I would say back in March last year, it felt like the early stages would be the global financial crisis of the nineties. We were behaving like; it was a repeat of the global financial crisis of the nineties. We were over-communicating, we were trying to prepare for what, at that time it felt like an inevitability that we were going to face some kind of economic downturn, and yes, we have faced an economic downturn, but we've been fortunate in the areas that we're working, that we've been insulated to a degree from those economic woes. But we were preparing ourselves for that kind of impact communicating, engaging, finding ways to support our people again. Drawing on that training that I received, those mentoring and training sessions that I received back in my early mid-thirties, which was pretty useful stuff too. Colleagues were really helpful as well in terms of communicate, look, I found this article in the New York times or whatever it was, this

looks really useful… Harvard business review is do a thing on managing and leading through the pandemic. This looks really useful stuff we should… so we were trying to assimilate all the information that we could see that was out there to try and ensure that we were changing and shifting the way in which we behave, recognising that we need to be visible. We need to maintain visibility and engagement. And that's not walking through the office and say, Hey, how you doing? And let's go and get a cup of tea and talk about that. It's how do we replace that kind of that connection with people in a virtual context. In March, we had, four staff meetings, you know, to make sure we were telling everybody as soon as we were getting information, we were getting everybody together and communicating what we were going to do.

A: It's very good to hear. And you've already touched upon this topic about the network relationships and connections you have. With regards to the social capital, did you have any form of leadership development with building networked relationships amongst those people you work with?

X: Formal training?...I don't think I have… can I come back to you on that area?

A: Of course. How would you describe your experience with the social capital at [company]? How are you building relationships with fellow leaders, with other employees, with your team? How has that changed during remote work?

X: I substitute what I would do in a real world into a virtual, so scheduling regular calls and catchups. That might not necessarily be any particular purpose. The other thing is I do use teams in that if I'm working in the evening and I can see a colleague in North America is online, cause it's their working day, I'd want to take the opportunity to just send them a message, how's it going? And are you available for a quick catch-up? So, I have used teams quite extensively to just kind of make sure that I'm catching up with people. Instant messaging has been pretty

useful as well…you may not have time to set aside for conversation, but just dropping it, how's it going? So, you guys want that piece of work, looks really good. And, you know, if you need any help with it… So that's been really helpful, I think in terms of using the infrastructure to build social capital amongst colleagues. At an organisational level, we've tried to do virtual coffee mornings and virtual drinks, and everybody's been doing the quizzes and I think we've run out of steam towards the end of last year. People were getting a bit tired of those fully informal formal virtual things. And I think it's probably something we need to think about because I can't imagine that we're going to be back in offices at least until the middle of the year in any degree of a regular kind of cadence to it. So, we probably need to turn our attention to how we can leverage those kinds of things to great reflect.

A: Thank you. And this is going to go moving forward to the work-life balance of what you've been experiencing during remote work. This term can be interpreted quite differently. And for my thesis, I've chosen the definition that this is the individual satisfaction one has with their division between personal and work responsibilities. Reflecting upon this definition, how would you describe your work-life balance since adopting remote work?

X: Okay. I probably think it's probably 70, 30 ish. It's pretty intense. Yeah. I come into this room at about eight to 8:30 every day. I'll pop out and have lunch with my kids and my wife. Didn't do that normally, so that's quite nice. I'll come back in here and I'll stay in here until six, 6:30, and then I'll go and have dinner. And I'll come back here in the evening, tidy up and do a few bits. I spent a lot of time in this room. Yes, 70 30. I try to concentrate work efforts into the working week and try and protect the weekends. And that's something I've always done, obviously, if it means I have to work to midnight four days a week in order to get the weekend, yeah, I'll do that and then take a proper break at the weekend. That's usually been oriented around trying to do stuff away from home at the weekend. Therefore, if you go into the mountains for the weekend, then you want to get everything done because you're not going to

be able to do that drop in drop out of work. I guess, the slider has shifted a bit on that during June, this period, because we're not leaving home. The temptation to say, Oh, I'll pick that up on Sunday afternoon, has grown. But I do try and protect weekends to just get some downtime.

A: And how specifically has remote work influenced your work-life balance?

X: I guess just some of the activities that we've got on at the moment have been particularly intense and managing through the pandemic that did demand an additional amount, so there was more work to do. So that has definitely been an influence on things. The type and the nature of work has changed which has demanded more hours of day in the day to do it. That's just where things are, which hopefully will bounce back.

A: Perfect. Thank you. And what kind of work-life conflict have you experienced since transitioning to remote work?

X: Good question. I'm, again extremely fortunate in that I'm very supported by my wife and my kids. Kids probably like it, because I don't get on their case so much. I would say minimal to be honest, again, I'm fortunate, my kids are 14. In terms of the amount time to spend with them doing schooling related things. It's not as great as if they were eight years old. I think my wife was well, she's reflected on the fact that, over the last 12 months, I haven't been traveling, so it's a significant portion of my work-life previously was, jumping on trains and heading down to London or Bristol or wherever. As a consequence, that it's been easier on her because I've been here, so there's been less conflict from that perspective. So yeah, I would say really low.

A: Okay, perfect. That's really good to hear. And what changes would you make to achieve a satisfactory work-life balance?

X: Yeah, there's always some of the things I need to do to achieve a satisfactory work-life balance probably applied out of COVID as well as in the COVID. And I am very conscientious, I love what I'm doing. I care about what we're doing as an organisation. I guess all those kinds of things add up to perhaps… more towards spending more time doing what I'm doing in work rather than not. So, I think I probably need to have a good talking to myself to try and redress the balance between and get my work-life balance better organised. The other thing is that [company] has gone through an evolution where we are emerging from the first phase of start-up and the first place of start-up is intense and has been intense. I don't anticipate the next phase of our journey is going to be any less intense, but I think it does open up the opportunity to leverage the infrastructure and the management teams a lot more to try and carve out more time and to do what I need to do. And that has to happen irrespective of whether COVID is a thing or not and whether we're remote working or not. I think my work-life balance is in a way independent of the remote working circumstances that we're in at the moment.

A: Okay. Thank you. And how could people services help support your work-life balance?

X: They are supporting in terms of helping to evolve this infrastructure and lightening the load on sort of the core administrative and governance tasks, which is great. If you think about where we were, back in the early days, everything cascades down to a handful of people. So, they provide massive support in that regard. And I think they also need to perhaps get on my [inaudible]. I think they do need to be my conscience more… Hey, we should all be autonomous and be big enough to make our own decisions and to take a degree of accountability about what we should be doing. But I think sometimes having somebody prod you and just remind you, Hey, you should be doing… is helpful.

A: Okay, nice. That actually wraps up all the questions I had. Do you want to go back to the initial question about the social capital and building the networks relationships?

X: Yeah. Okay. So, from personality, if we look at Myers Briggs, I'm a connector. With looking at a five-voice thing, I'm a connector. So, my natural instinct is to engage and connect with people. And I guess as a consequence of a lot of the kind of things that I'm involved with at the moment, about naturally enables me again, I'm in a privileged position, that they do get the opportunity to engage and to connect with people on a regular basis. Which is great. It's a function of my role and responsibility that I get the opportunity to speak with folk on a daily basis. Some people would say probably too much. I guess I have… flipped…you can't replace the kind of opportunity to bump into somebody, you know while you make a coffee and like have that kind of informal conversation, but I guess I have been indifferent to try and replace that in some capacity by using technologies. Oh, that person's green on teams. I'll just very quickly check in and see how they're doing. We're also fortunate in again, through our people services colleagues, they keep us informed of what's happening in the organisation. You know, so I have made good use of informal formal kind of information that we've been provided by colleagues to try and ensure that, when I do have the opportunity to engage, I can engage at a personal level as well as a business level opinion. I don't know whether that helps in terms of responding to the question.

A: It definitely does. It brings a good perspective. I think this is maybe the way I interpret it from the way you're explaining it is that it's more from your characteristics and you didn't have formal development or teachings to do what you're doing now. It comes from you as an individual.

X: I guess. So, I have had, as mentioned, some coaching support and I have had some formal support around taking on the kind of legal responsibilities associated with being a director and a managing director that was a long time ago. About 20 years ago… long ago

A: And would you say that contributed to the way you are now today with building social capital?

X: Possibly, but I think, I do like to try and create links and connection with individuals as a function of the type of individual I am. Have I made a conscious effort in some areas? Yes. I guess I have made a conscious effort with certain teams. I guess if I reflect on that in the context of voices… I'm not sure if colleagues have mentioned the five voices that we use as a background to understanding individuals' behavior.

A: I heard it briefly, but could you summarise it shortly?

X: It's based on a more simplified version of Myers Briggs service connectors, where people who connect, pioneers…

A: And angels, guardians…

X: Very similar, yes. Yeah, there's pioneers, connectors, nurturers, guardians, and creatives are the five voices. My loudest voices are connected and creative. My quietest focus is guardian. So, guardian are individuals who are typically analytical, very detailed, focused, you know, everything is in a plan. I don't identify with that always terribly well. So, we have teams that are very guardian in their makeup because that's the type of skills that we want, the people who are very analytical and working and driving massive spreadsheets and as a consequence, they tend to analyse perhaps overanalyse everything. Well, I really struggled with that mindset. I have made more of an effort to engage with those people during the last year because the kind of things that happened and the questions that they've asked, I've really struggled with. Wow. Okay, you think about things totally differently to me, and you do not appreciate things in the same way as I appreciate them. So I'd probably need to spend more time talking to folks and getting to know exactly how you think. I haven't done that in a formal context, but I have

outreached to particular individuals and their team lead in particular to make sure that I understand and are constantly, picking up the vibe of what their sentiment is.

A: Okay, great. Thank you for that perspective. Do you have anything else you'd like to add any further details from what we've discussed?

X: No. Only, I am really grateful that we do have people, like [x] and [x] in the team who have been very supportive through this process and link to the wider network, we've got other people like [x] and [x], there's a whole team of people that are linked into what we're doing, and we have some really great kind of resources that they have provided to colleagues. I think had we gone into this period five years ago, I don't think we would have been anywhere near prepared or able to manage as effectively as we have done through this. You know, so I just think about, the way in which we had seen manage very basic things like payroll with people going into furlough. We would have been just incapable of doing that. So, yeah, it was total serendipity that it happened when it did because if it happened five years ago, I think my wellbeing would not be what it is today. I think we would have a very battered, bruised, and in a pretty sorry state. We're pretty fortunate.

A: Thank you for mentioning that.

Interview 1.2

X: I started to…I don't know if this was strictly part of the interventions, but ==I started to take a daily walk during the day just to break up the day and particularly during the wintertime, make sure I got some natural light.== This is something that doesn't affect me medically, but I have friends that have seasonal affective disorder and I've always seen how they very carefully managed their sunlight in the day and how it affects their mood. I thought that is something that could potentially on a lesser scale happen if you don't take the time to do that. That's been the main thing, I guess the other thing is sort of trying to be healthily, which is more of a lifestyle choice, cut down on caffeine, that sort of thing. Drink a bit less…

A: How would you describe this change?

X: The lifestyle thing is in terms of diets and exercise is probably not that you couldn't, you couldn't say that's particularly related to a habit in work. That's more of a lifestyle decision. The going for a walk in the day and sort of looking to split my day up a bit. I mean, that's something I've always tried to do, but I've kind of probably had that compromised slightly, actually probably more so in the difference being when I was working in an office, I'd always leave the office to go to lunch. So I always took a break and a lot of people don't do that, even if it was like 20 minutes, just leave my desk. And that got broken a lot in lockdown because you just go to your kitchen, you tend to do exactly the thing that people would have been doing in the office. You go make something, you come back to your desk and you eat it. ==And so that I've had to reinforce, but I would also say that in choosing to go for a walk in the day, I've extended the time that I'm away from my IT and so on.== So that's kind of probably been quite beneficial. Would that habit stay? It would probably look a bit different to how it is now. And to be honest, a lot of this really depends on what new cultural norms emerge. So, at the moment that the talk is that most people, we did a survey to ask what are people's preferred working schedule now, like how would they prefer to work? And this was after the sort of first wave

from people were returned into the office and overwhelmingly people said that they would want to be in the office. I think about 80% said they wanted to be in the office two or three days a week and I was one of those people. So that isn't really an option that would have previously. I think I would have been working at least four days a week in the office probably often five days a week. And if that changes, and people are even starting to work say like four days working from home. Then I think some of those wellbeing behaviours will become more embedded if we all go back to just going back into the office. I think a lot of them will get lost because we'll just return to your previous behaviours and you're in a new social dynamic and things will start to change again, I think it remains to be seen.

A: Okay, great. So this is a question I didn't ask you in the first round of interviews, it's about this theory of Guest and Conway, about six elements within a work environment that contribute to positive atmosphere. And this includes personal control over a job, manageable workload, organisational supports, positive work relations, a clear role, and a sense of involvement with organisational change. When you reflect upon these six elements, would you say your intervention, taking these daily walks somehow influenced them?

X: Okay. Let's go through them one by one.

A: So management workload for instance

X: Okay. Well, that's a tricky one to answer. I was talking to a friend about this the other day, cause we effectively have the same role in different organisations. And we had both won lots of work for our teams before Christmas. And I think both of us kind of struggled a bit when we came back in January, because we'd had that break and then suddenly all that momentum that was gathered in the sort of period of working from home and finding a new way of working and starting to enjoy that a bit more. And then all of that was put on hold during the Christmas period. And then when we came back in January, I had quite, being sort of honest, I had some

difficulty in motivating myself because I had got enough work in for the team for like months. I kind of felt like I had, well, I've done a lot of the hard work here. I started to then move on to things that, I felt like needed to be done sort of more strategic things, which are less kind of time insensitive and pressurised. I think sort of during that periods in the first month or so as the year, it took quite a while to get back into the flow of working. And it took a while for like the signals to start to come up that you needed to move back into like day-to-day work and that also kicks back off the rhythm of working again. That was a period of flux and change and we've been fortunate in that we've had lots of work to go for. And so therefore, that period of that first couple of months was not massively stressful for me, not much, I had a sort of feeling of kind of being in control, but also feeling of like not having the same motivation and drive, that started to come back in February, March kind of time. I don't know how you draw a commentary on that, but I think that the problem is with where you go through peaks and troughs in terms of intensity, like, at the moment we're at the peak, and then maybe in April, we'll see that dip off, there'll be a lot of holidays and it's difficult to assess where you are when you have that kind of movement in workload.

A: Okay. And for instance your work relations or organisational support?

X: Yes. Occasionally we haven't really because of the lockdown situation here, that moved a lot of people just into hibernation. In a week we're allowed to meet again, it's like a rule of six, so you can meet six people. So I think when that happens, that will start to bring people together. And I mean, I go for a walks with my fiancé, occasionally see a friend, but yeah, nothing professionally. I haven't seen colleagues for several months now, so I'd say that would be fairly consistent across the UK business.

A: And how would you describe your overall wellbeing now since adopting the walking behaviour?

X: Yeah, I feel fairly positive about work and feel fairly positive about the next few months and so on. I find the walking is more of a discipline. It helps you to have a break in your day, have some time away, it's more good behaviours that help you to be productive, but also help you to feel calmer in your workplace. So I couldn't say, that there's been a significant change. What it has done is allowed me to avoid some of the pitfalls of lockdown, rather than kind of promoting like, you know, amazing wellbeing because obviously a lot of the things that promote that are social interaction working in teams and that's for me anyway about being connected to people and you just cannot have that. So it's more about keeping stress levels low and making sure that by the time we are able to go back to the office, you've sort of made useful use of that time where you've been able to focus independently.

A: Okay. And could you perhaps rate your wellbeing from a scale of one to ten?

X: I would say eight. I mean, it's difficult to, as I say, like this next couple of weeks is quite full on and the last week was quite full on, but at the moment it's in the right place, because the deadlines there, which is keeping you focused and engaged and it's not quite yet turned into like, Oh no, the deadline is really there and I'm starting to get worried about it. I would say in that good, I don't know how to describe it, but the good sort of stress position where your stress levels are right to allow you to be focused, to allow you to enjoy your work.

A: That definitely makes sense. I get that, healthy stress. So from the interventions I sent to you, what were you thoughts on them?

X: Oh, I'd have to go back to them. Sorry…

A: Should I just remind you of what they were?

X: Yes.

A: The first one was a SLT resource group, where essentially you meet up once a week with other SLT members and then just discuss how you're doing, your wellbeing, what is working well for you and sharing tips and tricks. And the second one was more of a learning and development, one, something about building habits. So similar kind of to what you did. But it was also about working productivity, like learning how to bring in deep work or deep sessions into your routine, or getting more exercise in, more sleep, if that's something that's missing. And then the last one was setting a realistic ending time of the day. So trying to create that stop to the Workday.

X: I have been able to do that. That's been one of the things that's improved actually in that period, I've been able to be much more disciplined about when I finished my working day, or I've taken a substantial break and then returned to finish my working day in the evening. So either way, I'm kind of comfortable doing that. There has been coming together to my knowledge of the SLT to share. There might be some one-to-ones happening, but I'm not involved in those. I would say looking out at others. I'm not sure. I mean, if I look at someone like [name] obviously a member of the GLT, I mean, [name]'s sending me emails and correspondence at all times of the day. So I would say they are the person I probably spend the most time talking to in respect of SLT/GLT. Like my colleague who's my [position] is definitely not doing that. So I would say a lot of those habits probably have got worse, but you would have to talk to other members of the SLT to see whether that's kind of been true for them. I've been able to be sort of quite disciplined about that. So that's probably another thing that's been positive during that period. But as I say, this is all peaks and troughs. Like I might say that now, but in a month I might be like, I'm really struggling to condense my hours into something. And I just think it just sort of comes with the job a little bit, unfortunately.

A: Yeah, no, definitely. So how did you come up with creating more discipline now and the recent times?

X: Yeah, the period leading up to Christmas was really intense and a lot of the team were working very long hours often working on the weekend and when that kind of finished, I felt pretty frazzled. So I just knew I can't, there is no reason to do that now because we have much more control over our deadlines and our client's engagement. So we just need to manage those to make sure we don't agree to anything like this in the coming months. And yeah, and also now I can be much more disciplined about it because we've managed that. So, I think that that was quite a significant shift pre- and post-Christmas.

A: Good to hear. And going back to the interventions, if you were given the opportunity to create a solution for yourself to address your wellbeing, what would you want it to include?

X: I think the biggest thing actually in managing, so being productive and managing your wellbeing is particularly in the current climate and the way that we're working is being really disciplined by how you use your time, when it's your time and what meetings you go to. So I can often work two days in a row where I have meetings all day and then I'm behind on emails and then I have to catch up on emails and then I've also got the work that I need to do. So I think organisationally, we can be our own worst enemies because we have meetings where too many people are in the meeting. You know, it's not necessary for everybody to be in the room just for like the sort of five minutes intervention. Culturally we're probably too quick to call meetings. And I'll have members of my team come to me and say, do we really need to have meetings for this? I think that's definitely something for us as an SLT that we should challenge a lot more because if you're just constantly in meetings, it becomes very difficult to be productive in your role. And therefore the time then leaches into your evenings and weekends. And I think people are too readily accepting of that without challenging it and saying, well, actually my contribution to this meeting only needs to be five minutes. It's a two-hour meeting. If I could get the other hour and 55 minutes back, it means I don't have to work on Saturday morning. So I think there's a lot of that, which needs some cultural challenge. And I think is

true of many organisations. We're not the only one I've worked in where it's been like this, but I think that would be the big change… from a personal discipline perspective, I would want to keep following that through and keep challenging the idea of when to, we need to meet, how often do we need to meet, why do we need to meet? You know, is it essential? How many people do you need in the meeting? But I think there's a more cultural thing that needs to be challenged, which is, from the sort of top of the business kind of questioning the needs to be in meetings. And I think there's a disconnect where people maybe in this GLT, think that there's no necessity for people at the junior level to be having meetings, but they get called into meetings all the time and that's just takes away their productivity. That would be the main change that I think would benefit productivity and wellbeing.

A: Okay. Can you explain a little bit more about how you think the productivity is linked to well-being?

X: Well, I mean, there's lots of ways you could look at this. There's time of day and energy and focus. So there will be points in the day, points in the week, points in the month that you will be able to be more focused and more productive, and those should be the times that you have available to yourself to focus on the work that you need to do, because that's when you're most productive. And if that is compromised by meeting time, taking that away, that is a problem for productivity. The other thing with that is if you can use that time to be productive, you then don't feel the need to take the time outside of your core working hours to do that stuff, where you're probably less productive because we've had a long day and, it takes you longer to get into the flow of your work, which means you take longer to do the work. I think there is a relationship between the two. And the other thing is that having wellbeing, when talking about stress is kind of linked to having a sense of completing things. So if you can have more focus time to complete things in a week, you get a greater sense of satisfaction come the end of your week that you've contributed and got through your main actions for that week. So I think those

two things are very closely linked and aligned. And the more you can focus on being productive, I think the more your wellbeing benefits.

A: Okay. Thanks for that explanation. And then my last question is why did you choose the walking as an intervention instead of the proposed ones?

X: Well, I think it's because, a lot of what you set out to involved… Well this came up in SLT meeting where there was a general concern about staff wellbeing and the proposal from certain members of the SLT was okay, let's have a two-hour session every week around wellbeing. And I was saying, no, that's the worst thing you can do, because what you're basically doing is you're telling someone who's incredibly busy, Oh, let's have two hours out of your day to focus on your wellbeing. So I think in much the same respect, people are just, and maybe this isn't the right answer, but people just trying to do things independently. So they're like, how can I manage my wellbeing independently? Well, the best thing to do is probably go for a run or go for a walk or take a break, those are things that you can do independent of drawing time from other people. Whereas I think a prescribed kind of meeting with SLT members, you're potentially falling back into that trap that I was saying before about, you're taking time to do those things now. Whether that's right or wrong, that's and I'm sure there's lots of theory around this, but that's how I feel about it. Now, if we were in the office that might look very different because I might say, yeah, every Thursday let's go for lunch and just chat about, how you're going on and so on. But yeah, working from home, I just wouldn't do that. And that might be wrong because there's no…I could easily, once a week, while I go for a walk, I could say to one of my peers, do you fancy just both go for a walk, have a 30-minute chat about... Maybe we should be doing that, but I haven't been approached to do that. And I haven't approached other people. And I guess that's probably because people are looking at this independently and probably because people are thinking, but I don't actually want to give up any more of my time

from initiatives because my main thing is managing my own wellbeing and managing my hours and sense that's probably where it comes from.

A: I think it's definitely a good to know, because when I created them, I realised how much time they take from your day. So I think it's really good that you also found something for yourself that works. I think that's really important to hear. Do you have any questions for me?

X: No. I mean, obviously I'd be interested to hear the results. Are you coming back for another SLT meeting?

A: Yes, I will… So why did you not choose the proposed intervention?

X: I think the common solution to this is, well let's try and make some time to do that thing, but when you have 20 other things where everybody else is trying to make some time to do their initiative, then it just becomes pressurised and not particularly useful. I do think there's space for that and we should be making space for those wellbeing considerations, but it's just a very tricky balance with people's time and getting them to give that time up and seeing the benefits of it.

A: I mean, it's definitely what I noticed it's very clear on paper, in theory, it's clear, but then actually getting it to work in practice. There's so many other external factors. I mean, you guys are going through so much right now as well, where I think the timing of it isn't fair or ideal, but the timing will probably never be ideal.

X: The biggest problem with all of this stuff is just getting off the hamster wheel, you know, that's the truth. I would hope that once we get back into a more sort of social environment, that some of these things will start to happen more naturally, there'll be more organic creation of kind of time for people to meet and hang out and do things outside of work. And that will start to solve some of the challenges that we've got. I hope that was helpful.

Interview 2.2

X: We are reaching a limit, in terms of wanting social interaction and wanting to speed things up, but then, Hey, we're fortunate, I guess, to have more vaccinated and not vaccinated. It's all swings and roundabouts, isn't it? How are you?

A: I'm doing well, I'm in Luxembourg. It's sunny, spring is coming out. I'm fortunate that I get to go into the office, so I'm not in the remote work situation right now, so that's very nice. I'm really enjoying it. This interview won't be too long, hopefully 15 to 20 minutes. And the goal is to find out if the intervention has helped you and your wellbeing. I was told by [X], you did the employee resource group,

X: We did. We met the first two times and then yeah I think life to COVID slightly. And so the next two, but yeah, we did, and it was useful just to have that half an hour just to chat about other things. Whatever [x] said, I guess I'd echo, it's perhaps nice to just to make the time to do something completely different. We did it twice and I'd say it's probably two or four zoom teams like teams calls actually that have actually done in a year that were not focused on work. We've got our team are doing like a couple of hours this afternoon, just doing an Easter social thing virtually, it's important to make the time for this kind of stuff, even when we don't feel like it necessarily.

A: I get that. And how would you describe your remote work experience since doing these ERG meetings?

X: I'd say the same, to be honest. I'd say broadly the same as it was only 30 minutes. It probably hasn't impacted much maybe if it was out of the office and doing something else, it might've helped, but yeah, I'd probably say it's the same, although, the context by which the restrictions place on you can be a big thing. So as of next week, the UK allows up to six people to meet outside. Yeah. So clearly, if my overall state of wellbeing is better because I've got family

around in our garden and we're having a barbecue and there's a follow-on state of mind, but means that plus taking half an hour out every Wednesday at lunchtime might add up to something bigger than just you're in a virtual work situation, you're working from home. And then every Wednesday you have half an hour with two colleagues that probably isn't enough. I would say it's not enough to change the dial on its own.

A: And when you think of the six elements of a positive work environment, how has the intervention influenced these?

X: Less, less so on the workload and what you have to do right now, but it probably has benefit across the organisation [support] because I'm hearing what [name] and [name] are doing or any issues they might have with people or staff. So I think from an organisational context that it clearly helps as a framing point say, okay I'm doing these things, or I've learned from them that they're doing something else I'm not doing.

A: And so these learnings, were you able to then implement them into your Workday?

X: No, honestly, probably not. And some of it was stuff I was going to do anyway, like this team easter event this afternoon, and making sure it was deliberately done in work hours and not like five till seven at night. So no, not really. No.

A: Okay. And how would you describe your overall wellbeing then?

X: Probably the same as last time. Maybe slightly, slightly lower. I guess just because this is dragging on for so long now, you know, ironically the big year milestone for people in the UK who've been working from home, was a mixed point, anniversaries and dates, they might, you kind of look back and go bloody hell, that was terrible and we're still in it. But I kind of take the opposite view. I kind of say well I've got to look forwards and I'm at point no point of

looking back at that. But yeah, I think it's just that constant attrition, a constant grind of, I mean I'm in the office today, but that's a rare thing, probably the same or slightly lower.

A: And so what were your thoughts on the employee resource group?

X: Just, just chatting about random, like exercise and just checking in on people, we don't do that enough. I don't think, you know, so just being able to, yeah, just have an open chat about open things and I think it was good. Yeah. A bit more support and encouragement that you get them, those kind of meetings.

A: And what kind of improvements would you propose then for the employee resource group?

X: I think just more frequency to them. So maybe if we're in a real situation, like we've been in before doing those every other day, perhaps the 15 minutes or something, something that people can manage and not impact their day too much, but give people a bit of a boost during the week.

A: Yeah. And what about the other interventions that I proposed with, for instance, setting a realistic time, like an ending day or the learning and development of habits, did you do them?

X: I didn't do the first one. Yeah, to be honest. I think I've probably be focused in, on this employee resource group. And I think the rest just as it was before I think Ariane, to be fair and maybe that's because I haven't managed to set those kind of boundaries yet.

A: Was there a particular reason you didn't want to do them?

X: I guess just workload and there's always something that you're behind on, you know, when it's particularly a busy time, like it is at the moment and we don't necessarily have enough resource to maybe deal with things, if you think, well, I could finish now or I could just do another half an hour and I've been caught up with stuff from a couple of days ago. So again,

it's just the way it is. I mean, my wife even commented the other day she went, but you never take a lunch break and it's true. I never did. Often, rarely, you just start eight, half eight, just keep going until like six. Whereas now in the office I've just been out for lunch. I've had a stroll around and had a bit of stepped back, inspiration while we were walking around. It probably makes a big difference. So we're just at a particularly busy time. And that's kind of where we find ourselves.

A: And do you, outside of what I propose, do you do anything that you feel like you're helping your wellbeing?

X: Oh yeah. I still like to get out running from time to time, Wednesday I managed to get out at lunchtime do an hour. I also kicked myself and making the time to do those kinds of things.

A: And in what way did the employer resource group influence your wellbeing?

X: I guess to know others making time to do these things makes you feel like you should make time to do those things. It's a bit of peer pressure, if you see others doing it, you do it as well.

A: Okay. And my last question for you is, do you think you would do it again in the future?

X: Yeah, I would actually. Yeah. I think it's like one of those things where it's easy to fall out of, people go I'm too busy, I can't make it. And then I go: good, I don't want to make it either. So I think like that [name] has been good. She's always been ready to go on and it's been me and another colleague who've been like, ah, I can't really make it you know, once I was interviewing a candidate for a job. I think it's getting out of that habit of thinking that's half an hour, I could do something else with. We've kept them in as a recurring direct event, so yeah, hopefully next week we'll do it and we'll let you know if we did it.

A: And you just mentioned something about, you know, like it's easy to then put something on top of that meeting. How do you think you could prevent that happening for yourself?

X: Yeah, it's hard, isn't it? Yeah. I guess just the discipline of saying I can't do I can't 12 till 12:30 that day, you know, treating it like a client meeting in a way. Yeah. People seeing it in your diary as a private thing locked out, that means they don't go and jam something in it.

A: Well thank you, that was actually all my questions. Do you have any questions for me?

Interview 3.2

X: It's almost like I started a resource group with [name] and [name]. And I also attempted to take a three-day weekend, but that didn't work for me. That was a disaster… not entirely to do with work, actually just a very, very stressful weekend. Shall we start with the resource group?

A: Yes, that would be great. So how would you describe your remote work experience after using this intervention of the resource group?

X: Interesting question. As in, did it change how remote I felt?

A: Did it change your experience?

X: It didn't change my experience because I spent a lot of time on calls to people and I'm quite chatty and I get on with most people I work with. So it didn't change how I felt about being remote working. But what I suppose it did do was to create an opportunity that was specifically to talk about wellbeing. And there aren't many of those, and there were not at senior management level. So yes, I suppose in a way that had a benefit because we parked all other conversation. The first meeting we had was actually the day that [company] announced that it had its new investor. And we specifically didn't talk about that because that would be work, which was quite surprising. It's like the big elephant in the room that you don't talk about it, but we were just focused on, we were talking about [name] and I are both quite outdoorsy. We quite enjoy doing exercise. [Name] was talking about spending time with his family and so on. We didn't talk about work. So actually that was quite a nice kind of heart. Let's just have a coffee and breathe so much so that actually, when you asked us to set them up for two weeks, I think we set up for four and then we've just extended them for another two weeks… actually let yesterday's didn't happen. They both cancelled on me. But for very good reasons, but we must've thought there was some benefits because we've continued to protect that half hour for a coffee and a chat that isn't about work.

A: That's great to hear and also really nice that you're extending it. What were like the clear benefits?

X: Yeah, I think it was the ==everybody's in the same boat moment==. The realisation that actually as senior managers, we tend to not pretend. we have to put up a sort of we're coping face I suppose, to everybody else. And what was ==quite nice was to be able to talk quite openly about things, but actually also to hear what worked and didn't work for other people==. So [name] and I talk quite often, anyway, we've met up during the periods in lockdown when we've been allowed to, because we both live locally and we both like, you know, hop on a bike or go for a walk or whatever [name]'s in Manchester and has a very different perspective on things. So it's been quite interesting to talk to him about what he did and what worked for him and so on. So yes, and that was quite interesting. Okay,

A: Great. Do you recall the Guest and Conway theory with these six elements in a work environment?

X: I don't remember.

A: Okay, essentially, it's about management workload, having a clear role and control over your job. Organisational supports, positive work relations, and then a sense of involvement with change. So when you reflect on these six elements, has the intervention influence any of these?

X: Honestly not, no but probably because as a senior leader, I'm very connected to a lot of those things. Anyway, and as somebody who's nosy and likes to be involved in things and who chats to people, I probably would say I had as much visibility at the start of this process as I had at the end. I don't think it changed anything.

A: Do you think it's more your own habits?

X: I am very extrovert. But I also lead a very large team. So I'm disproportionate compared with the rest of the UK team. I've got nearly 50% of the UK, the total UK population works in my team. So I have to be across a lot of stuff because I've got a lot of diversity in that team. We've got digital, we've got chemistry, we've got supply, it's a hugely diverse group of people with different interests and they all report to different people in projects and so on. So by the nature of that role I have to connect myself into the long-term vision of the business and, you know, be connected to people on a sort of personal level. So I would say that actually this intervention didn't change any of those things specifically. Partly because of my role, partly because I'm an extrovert and partly because I represent 54, 56 people, I've got to be all over everything anyway.

A: Okay, great. Thank you for that clarification. With regards to your wellbeing, how would you describe it since adopting the SLT resource group?

X: I mean, I think it was pretty good to start with, well, it was good. I can't remember what I scored it last time, but I don't think its surpassed it, it certainly isn't any worse.

A: Okay. And could you reflect on things that maybe changed in your wellbeing since adopting this?

X: I mean, the main thing I suppose, is that half hour breather a week to have a coffee and a chat that's not, work-related. I do have those with other colleagues, but often they get cancelled. So there's a girl group that we have, which is a bunch of us who've worked together for 15 years. And we have a plan to get together and do the same thing, but they're all part-time, they've all got young families, so they've been home-schooling and so on. So over the last couple of weeks, that probably hasn't happened, but that's a kind of in work kickback, like the coffee mornings that, you know, are organised, I will say never make. So in a way, having to be accountable to you for this made it happen. And so yes, I suppose that was nice to be able

to say, Oh, I can just look forward to just not thinking for half an hour. And I suppose you come back a little bit refreshed at the end of that. You sort of start the next task, maybe with a different mindset is especially if you've had a bad morning. It's quite a good reset, I suppose. But overall, would I say it's changed my wellbeing? Not really. I think there are other interventions that as senior managers, we've probably developed ourselves over time that are more impactful than what I did in this case.

A: And could you maybe mention some interventions you've done?

X: So the things that work for me are exercise running. But these are, these are habits that I already had, so I didn't adopt for a new habit because I already had them music, loud music preferably while running, reading and actually in lockdown, I took up something called mindful colouring, which is really not very me. But it's incredibly intricate. Very, I don't know if you've seen these books. It was a bit of a joke because I can't sit still, but actually I have found that quite useful. So I would say my experience of wellbeing is that over the course of 25 years, I've worked out different tactics that work for me. And the one that I adopted under this program was probably less effective than the things that I was doing anyway. But interestingly, of course, those things isolated. I do those things on my own, so I don't do them in connection or conjunction with somebody else. So that's why I adopted the resource group just because I thought it'd be interesting to see what it was like to try and find a wellbeing activity with colleagues. But yeah, overall I would say those other four things probably were far more impactful overall in the whole lockdown period.

A: Okay, great. Thank you. And what were your thoughts on the interventions from the solution design that I sent?

X: Oh, well, so I liked the idea of the Three-Day weekend. I thought that was a great idea. So I thought I'd try that. I had a Friday booked off anyway, because you know, the time of year it

is time that I needed to use up. That's very stressful, really. I mean, it was, I completely killed that car in the same day, so that was quite stressful. So yeah, not the best example, but I actually found by Saturday I was climbing the walls and I needed to log back on, there were text messages coming in on my personal phone. I could see stuff coming in on email that, you know, my teams was racking up. I think by the end of Friday, having not looked at my emails and things and something like 15 instant messages on teams and about 85 emails and two or three people had pinged me messages directly or my work or my personal phone. And that was just immensely stressful. So I've got two and a half days coming up now, so I'm supposed to be off this afternoon. I'm now working until three today. And actually I'm going to look back on for an hour and a half of that in the afternoon as well. But what I've discovered I suppose from that process is maybe to do it incognito. So to do it without telling people, look, I am available. And I'm going to have another go. So I've got Thursday, Friday off this week and I actually am thinking one of those two days will completely protect, which is off the back of, you know, thinking about what you've suggested for wellbeing. So yes, I think there's something in trying to work out your ratio of work to holiday, but I haven't cracked that yet. And I think the big issue is it's lockdown. I can do this, if I was away on holiday, I would have a couple of days when I don't look, or I would say, I am only going to check this at 8:00 PM or whatever when I finished my day of activities, but because we're here and there's nothing else going on, it's actually more stressful to know that, that stuff's all piling up and on Monday, you're going to have to log on at six in the morning to solve it than it is to just keep taking over. So yeah, I'm not giving up on that idea cause I think there's something in it, but I think there's a huge behavioural problem with us as leaders, which is creating the values internally that tell people it's okay to contact us and it is to do with lockdown because they, everyone knows we're not going anywhere. So that's perhaps something that might change hopefully as we start to come out of lockdown. The others didn't really work for me. So the adopt a new hobby… I have quite

a lot of stuff that I already do that I know works. And so it didn't go for that one. What was the fourth one?

A: You had the reasonable ending time.

X: Oh yeah. Oh, well I didn't intentionally do that, but it did have a couple of days where things were cancelled. I had two days in the last couple of weeks actually, where I did finish at five one Friday when I went for Oh yes. I had a three-hour meeting cancelled at short notice. So at five o'clock on a Friday, I did actually stop and go for a walk. And that actually was very good. And I had the one other day, I think it might have been a Monday when a similar thing happened. Somebody pulled something out in my diary at short notice and I just decided, well, I'm going to pack up and go for a run. So they weren't planned, but actually maybe having the sort of knowledge that this would be a good idea, which I probably wouldn't have thought of before some of this stuff I'd have just plowed on with stuff to finish. Yeah, that did work actually. It's quite nice.

A: You've mentioned that you feel like you were able to create these individual habits and tricks that work for you and your wellbeing. Reflecting on this, How would you alter them that you think it would be more useful and productive for leaders?

X: Well, I'll tell you how I learned the four things that work for me that I have as adopted habits, this sort of, you know, running music reading, and maybe the colouring. I did a program that was on our EAP, you know, the employee assistance program that we all have access to. A while ago because the team was very stressed about two or three years ago and myself and another colleague said, well, look, we'll trial that the stress program on the EAP. And if we think it's good, if it looks like it'll work, we'll recommend it to the rest of the team. See if we can get them to reduce their stress levels. One of the things they asked you to do was to take a month. And for the first week of that month, you trial four things that might work for you to

reduce your stress or balance your wellbeing. And at the end of that first week, cross off anything that either you didn't do, or you intentionally decided you weren't going to do or didn't work for you. And then you took anything that did work into the next week and you put more things in. So you always had a rolling program of four things. The idea was that by the end of the month, so four weeks into this program, you would have tried maybe a maximum of 16 different interventions of which you might end up with up to four that work for you. And then for the second month, you're supposed to practice those four on a regular basis. So in my case, it was things like right running definitely works. So I'm going to take that forward and I'm going to run three times a week during the week that works for me. Another was reading on the train instead of reading emails and so on. When I was commuting up to the office, read on the train that really worked for me, brilliantly, listening to music on the walk home completely changed my life. Well my mood, my husband's life more than mine because when I came home, I ditched that sort of bad grumpy mood feeling from, you know, bad workday or being stuck on a train. So those three were the three things that I took forward from that program. And I've been doing that in different ways, but obviously since I've been in lockdown. And so for me, it's about in your program, there was not really that much flexibility for us to bring in what we already… to tell you works that we were already doing. I think what you did probably would be actually better for middle management than for us, because we're, well-established in our behaviours and our patterns. And I'm speaking for myself. It might not be the case for other senior managers, but my view I've had 25 years of learning what works and doesn't work and I've been through other programs and so on that have helped me to refine that. And so the lack of flexibility in the model that you gave us perhaps meant I didn't get the benefit or didn't tell you the benefit of what I was already doing and how I'd learned it. So that would be my one sort of major piece of feedback, I guess. And it's to do with your habits. If you had said, make sure you do your habits and report if you do those, reports on the wellbeing benefits of doing those, I probably would have given you a slightly different answer.

A: Okay. Interesting. Yeah. I think I noticed that when creating it, because initially it was choose your own habits and then I was worried it was too open, that's good to hear.

X: It's interesting though, because you were trying to tie it to research. And so I think that's, what's interesting is to see is the research right or wrong on these issues. And if you'd given us complete free reign, you wouldn't do have that capability if you don't have the research. But yeah, I mean, I thought for people maybe who I don't know, five, six, seven years into their career maybe, and haven't yet learned what works for them or haven't been through a program like I described of that sort of four-week period or whatever. I think your approach would be really, really useful because it's helping to give them the ideas about what might work for them. But for people who've been working for 25 years, I mean, we work all over the world, you know, we work in different time zones, we've got different experiences. We've had to learn tactics for working with it. And you didn't get the benefit in your study of seeing how those played into this period of time that we'd been working with you.

A: Definitely. I think that's where I noticed as well. I don't have the experience that you have, so it's like writing something for someone, but it really trying to step in those shoes. It's good. You mentioned this. And for instance, I spoke to [name] yesterday and he did something completely different because he was like, this works and I was like, well please do it. You know, don't use something that doesn't work.

X: Well it's useful then you know, what I've really appreciated is I like the fact that I know I've got to report back to you on these things and therefore it keeps them front of mind if it's just me, Oh, I should do this. Oh, well it doesn't really matter. I'm less likely to do it. So actually what has been useful in this is kind of thinking like to report back on this so that makes sure I try it.

A: Okay. Fair enough. So for instance, if you were just given the option to do the employee resource group, what would your approach have been?

X: Good question. I think I would have done it, but I think, well, it be interesting. I suspect we won't keep it going. I think what will happen is we will put it in, and we will say, Oh, I'm really sorry. I'm busy this week and Oh, well let's put one more weekend here. Let's do that. And then it will kind of tail off. I think I'd be interested to see let's try it and see what happens, but I think it wouldn't. The chaps wouldn't have set it up. I don't think [name] didn't even realise that until three weeks in that that's why we were doing it. He didn't know he was part of a resource group. So I think it tells you more about my personality probably than anything else, but it'd be interesting to see if [name] might take it on, you know, he might champion it cause he's quite sociable.

A:I see. Okay. Well, great. Those are actually all my questions. Do you have any questions?

X: So I'm interested to see what you find from all of this and I'm really interested to see what we can take from it that might help us as individuals, but also as a group. And also with the next management level down, those people who are maybe coming into senior management instead of senior leadership teams and who maybe have, I don't know, 10 or 11 years of experience, be interesting to see if there are things that come out of your final report where you think actually these guys, as the emerging leaders, but with less experienced than us, whether they might benefit from some of this. And I quite interested to think what it's made me think about again is the diversity of different things that we recommend for wellbeing. So just before this call, I was on a call with [name] who leads our internal stuff on this. And we were reflecting on the fact that as [company], we're quite outdoorsy as a group of people noticed that. And so a lot of our sort of corporate wellbeing activities are channelled around mileage walked or mileage cycled, or just mileage, you know, we're doing this thing at the moment, get to cop 26

where we're adding up people's mileage. And we don't maybe value, I don't know the mindfulness activities or the static things like yoga or pilates, which are known to be really good for this sort of wellbeing rebalancing. And we were reflecting on whether there is a way in which we can get other people to champion things. So [name]'s talking at the moment about setting up on [company] huddles. I think he's calling them for people who want to talk about music or creating an [company] band, actually for people who want to play music together. There's another group that he's looking at helping to stimulate, which is around people who enjoy fishing. So we've got a lot of people actually who enjoy going out and fishing at weekends and would like to share their experiences, you know, nice places to go where you can sort of sit on a Lake and chill out basically where you're fishing and pictures of the fish. I'm sure. And those sorts of things I think, are not things that we've prioritised as [company] before. In fact, I was kind of surprised to discover that we had people who were fishermen. It just didn't correlate. You know, I think of [company members] as being on the road doing bike races and, you know, marathon runners and, and to find, we actually have quite people who quite like to sit still and, and catch fish was a bit of a like, Oh yeah, we should do something for their wellbeing. So what I think is interesting is to see how we can take what you're learning, how we can take these other sorts of things about different people's preferences that are really diverse and build all of that into something that's less about. Let's go out and run a marathon and more about let's have a portfolio of things that helps everybody because we recognise everybody's different. So yeah, I think you've come to this at a really timely period. So everything you help us to think about, I think has been really, really useful whether or not we end up adopting exactly what you've suggested or just building that into something else. I think it's incredibly valuable to have your insight.

A: Well, thank you. And I'll be presenting at another SLT meeting, hopefully. So I'll have some shared findings and like you said, it might not be exactly what I propose, but something building off of it or inspiring.

X: One thing I should say, I loved your presentation of the menu. The way it looked, was really calming. So you'd put things in what looked like stones and grass or water. I'm just reading what you had and the way you presented it actually made me feel a little bit like I was reading something for a spa, I felt kind of ahh this looks nice. So I'm just going to feed that back to you because actually that was half the mindset. Often when you talk to people like us at what, maybe not [company employees], but you talk to senior managers, the default answer is always going to be, no, I don't want to do this program. I'm too busy. Oh God, do I have to kind of attitude. And I thought that had you had that experience with us, if we'd looked at that menu, we'd have gone, Oh, actually this feels nice. It feels like something I do want to say yes to. So yes. I just thought that was, I don't know if that's a useful insight, but I thought it was quite an interesting way of kind of overcoming any negative barriers that might've been you know, experienced by people.

A: Great. Thank you, [name].

Interview 4.2

A: Could you start off and explain what your experience was like with the employee resource group?

X: Yeah, I mean, I don't want to over egg it, but yeah, we used your program as an opportunity for us to carve out an amount of time each week, really, for us as peers who were involved in similar sorts of challenges to be able to force ourselves just to reflect a little bit, which was really helpful. Practically, we did it sort of late morning, which was quite nice because you sort of, you felt like you've got, some things you needed to achieve early on. I have actually always

tried to do it outside, going for a walk with the dog which was which was quite helpful too. So yeah, we took it as I suppose a reflective hour with individuals who have, what I felt have the same or very similar pressures. And therefore it's a little bit like talking to a mirror, you don't have to sort of explain so much of the context which actually can be burdensome sometimes.

A: Okay. And how would you describe your remote work experience then, since the last time we spoke?

X: Not, not massively. I think if anything, by me actually being away from the screen, made [name] and [name] reflect hang on a second, I could be doing this too, I don't need to be stuck on my screen because then actually it's less than helpful. And I think from a remote working point of view and I don't know what the impact is to the other person on the on the screen, but I do now often do one of two things. I have a number of meetings now, which I always do while walking, you know, so I had a catch up with one of my team members and it's at a certain time. And I find that very valuable, I can think a lot better. And I also request sometimes when I'm doing a one-on-one, whether start in the video, engage like engaging now. And then really explained that actually I'm just going to turn my video off now and I'm just going to like, not walk outside, I'm going to just walk around this, you know, allows me to think of it more and it's maybe better for them as well, because, you know, they don't want to just see my mug all the time and actually I think some of the reasoning behind it is sometimes can allow to have conversations with some that are a little bit intimidating, you know, sort of constantly looking at someone face to face and actually I had some feedback about an individual who was quite, it's a good difference, a bit nervous because they were new to [organisation] that they haven't met anyone properly only on the screen and actually engaging in the screen face-to-face one that they found with them quite nerve wracking. So I think from a practical point of view, that was quite helpful. And then allowing you to have some space to reflect a little bit was also quite helpful.

A: Okay, good. And with regards to the six elements of a positive work environment, for instance, organisational support and manageable workload, as well as a clear role and responsibilities, do you think the intervention had influenced any of these?

X: I think the positive relation is one, which it's just being able to have an engagement with a group of individuals that I'm engaged with all the time, but in a different context. So then a vulnerability can come in much more. We're just sort of talking about, well, things are going so well, or I'm a little bit challenged on this because there is a set time to do that. You don't feel like you're wasting someone's time, you know? If we had a complication now and you said, well, actually I just want to tell you how I'm feelings that you go, well, actually [name] has got 15 minutes and say, we're going to do 15 minutes of interview. We're sort of wasting time, but we have that reflective time it's in there, it's in the diary, that's the whole intention. So I feel more open to be able to say I've really struggled with last week. And I found this really hard. What do you think? Because that's the whole objective of the session.

A: And how would you then describe overall quality of wellbeing then, since the last time we spoke?

X: I think it's almost impossible to try and, well, I don't even remember how I was feeling then. I don't know the extent to which that intervention helped. I think that the aid is probably knowing what is helpful and therefore making an effort to apply that whether your discipline to product or not is a different thing. So like knowing it's good to be healthy, but if you don't do your exercise every day…

A: Okay. And could you perhaps give a range or score from a range of zero to 10?

X: No, I don't want to give it because I don't want to give you false… I don't feel like there's been a huge change from when we last spoke. It doesn't I can't say… I reflected quiet heavily

on that question before this call, but I'm still here. It's about the same, we're all learning how to be better remote working. So I suppose that's also probably more the mainstay, some more successful than others. I think I'm always getting better and more successful that knowing how to understand where I'm getting into a bit of a pit, or if I'm just not working properly or, what I know really helps and then using that. So, and that's something that, you and I in the first week of COVID like, well, great, well, Hey, how's this going to work? I don't know. And so we're just a bit better at it. I just don't want for your research. I don't want you to relate that intervention to that change because I don't know for the cause of linkage.

A: I mean, that's also valuable to understand. Reflecting on the intervention itself, how did you feel about it?

X: Yeah, it was good to have that space. We probably wouldn't have done if we hadn't been spurred on to do it by a new program and then therefore giving it a chance to understand the benefits. We're not doing it so frequently, but we're of doing about once a month, which is just helpful. So yeah, so it was a positive outcome.

A: And would you suggest any improvements to it, to perhaps have a more meaningful or impactful influence on your wellbeing?

X: The only thing I can think of is that where you have to be engaged for it to be successful. And I probably am minded to, for the next session, to the table that if [name] or [name] were not in the right head space to have the conversation, to not feel like obliged to go through with it, so if they just had said I just really want to get something done, I'm feeling under pressure about something and therefore I can't really reflect. And I just feel that this is not helpful in the moment. It's just putting a burden on them than for them to explicitly say that, which I don't think we do enough actually. And that then allows, and that brings into a different point, which is a different intervention and so I'm really not being helpful in trying to keep your research

focused, but this idea that, we're not robots and sometimes some days are harder than others. If you say, well, actually we were going to do this thing, it was in the diary for ages, but I just don't feel… like I've had a whole day on zoom, can we do it in a different way or, you know, feeling just the ground down by the obligation of doing something. And so people to feel more open to be able to say, look, I know that you're going to show me something on a slide deck for half an hour, 10 minutes before I'd say, look, we can either reschedule or I'm going to go out for a walk. Can you talk to me about it instead? And why don't you go for a walk as well. I'll be lying to think that I can then focus on the screen for another half an hour, presenting because I've done it for the last 14 hours a day. So that's, that's something which I think I'd like to instill more within my team and with a wider group.

A: Well, I think it's nice you mentioned that because it has been brought up a little bit about the idea that there needs to be more flexibility and saying, okay, well, you know, let's become spontaneous again by still doing what we need to do in a different way. Those were actually all my questions. I just wanted to thank you again and ask if you had any questions or anything you wanted to bring up.

X: No, that's fine. And I think, if we could, what would be really helpful is to just all the sort of softer insights you've gathered from speaking to the group obviously would be great to just to just to collect those and pass them back because, you know, I would like some of my insights to be heard across the wider group. And I would also like to hear of those, you know that I haven't thought about and others haven't that others have, because I think that'd be really valuable.

Interview 5.2

X: I did the work life balance and the way that I had been doing this has been sorted to block out chunks of my diary. Now, some of that is sort of baked in, like I got to feed my kids, or I'll pick up my kid, or I've got to walk the dog and things like that, but I'm putting the lumps in my diary and sorts of really trying to stick to them. And that's involved maybe stopping a task and then with a view to pick it up later on the other side, the work balance and things like that. So that's what I've been trying to do. Sort of vaguely worked. It sometimes causes more anxiety and I get to the end you realise you've got to do it, and people have no respect for the purple blobs in your diary. But that's sort of broadly speaking what I've been trying to do.

A: Okay. And you said it was relatively successful, so in what way was it successful for you?

X: Well, I'd be able to make it happen. I've also been doing no work on the weekends as well. In a way that's happened, right. I've been able to not work on the weekends. Obviously sometimes we want to do late nights because of like the thing with the States, but I've been good at stopping, making sure that I do the school run an equal number of times with my wife and things like that and that's been able to happen most of the time.

A: Okay, great. And how would you describe your remote work experience then after using this intervention?

X: I think it's been better. You get more of the other stuff, I'm spending more time my kids my family and it means you don't necessarily get things drifting on where you're not always productive. You know, if you just sit there at the laptop, open more kind of, stuff's going to come out, there's diminishing returns. I suppose it's for that point been pretty good. I've been feeling kind of a bit more at peace with everything the last couple of months, then I was kind

of maybe six months ago with lockdown. That's just acceptance, this is our life now could be related to that.

A: Great. I mentioned this last time, this theory from guests and Conway about six elements in the work environment. These include manageable workload, personal control of your job, organisational support, positive work relations, a clear role, and then a sense of control of involvement in organisational changes. Reflecting upon these six characteristics, would your intervention have influenced them in any way?

X: So I think one of them was workload, wasn't it? You know, I think it sort of helps manage the workload. It makes you prioritise a bit better and can't leave stuff that isn't it makes you kind of more present with some of the areas. As you are implementing challenges and changes and things like that, you know, immediately not thinking about your last meeting and whatever. I think that's good. I think, probably wouldn't impact things like control of the role, but it's a slightly different thing.

A: And how did it help you prioritise more better?

X: Well, it's just, if you know that you can't go beyond that time with your sorts of tasks today then it makes you think about really what you've actually got to get done today and what sorts of a nice to have, or it's just the top and I've started making lists.

A: And how would you describe your overall wellbeing?

X: Yeah. Good I think, getting there. Yeah. I think it's all right. I think working at home kind of improved my physical health anyway, because you know, you don't have the commute the pubs are closed, so, you know, that kind of thing, which probably helps. So it's hard to kind of unpack all of these things, but, I feel better about working from home if you can draw some lines.

A: Okay. And by drawing lines, what do you mean with this?

X: As in I'm just saying, right. Okay. This is the time where I'm not working. I'm not going to look at my phone. And you know, I'm not going to other the weekend and things like that.

A: And could you perhaps rate your wellbeing from a scale of one to 10?

X: Seven, yeah.

A: Okay, great. Yeah. What were your thoughts on the intervention itself?

X: Yeah, I mean, it was something that I should have probably been doing anyway, so it was just a prompt to get my act together, I suppose it makes me think maybe I should look at examples of the other two, whether I need to be, to be doing all of that as well. You know, I think there was one in here about the sort of the realistic finished time kind of thing, and that's probably about what, what I was mainly focusing on really. And that's also being realistic about what you can get done in a day. I quite often use my calendar as sorts of the things that I've got to do. So I just put like an empty meeting in there. It's like, you got to do this, that and the other. And like, there's like five things that I never get to. I just wonder, is that less of a help if I just sort of manage my tasks and I just accept the other stuff's going to have to be done at another time.

A: And what made you choose this intervention instead of the employee resource group or the learning and development habits?

X: In all honesty, it was something that I'd been meaning to do for a while. So it gave me an excuse to do it, which possibly isn't helpful for your study.

A: No, I think it's important that you choose something that works for you. I mean, there's no point of you then choosing something that goes against your wellbeing. So if you feel that it

helped you then, then my study has been achieved, you're helping yourself that's, what's most important.

X: Super. Okay. Because one of them was sort of developing a new habit. I suppose you could, you could argue some of it is around, that kind of thing, isn't it? And yeah, I suppose kind of resource group, fellow SLT members. I'm never very good at participating in those things. I've never been one for joining book clubs or whatever.

A: Fair enough. Okay. And what improvements would you propose then to the interventions?

X: I don't know. I often, I'm of the school of thought of sometimes when you think wellbeing and balance, businesses need to do less rather than more so, it's a cliche thing is like I don't want my business to appoint a yoga class for me. I want them to let me go on, live my life a bit, a bit better. I think things like resource group, which I mentioned facetiously book clubs, but things like, Oh, wait, we're going to have a club around kind of gardening our club around running this sort of inherently a little bit exclusive people that don't fit a certain type. Sometimes you don't want to discuss that kind of thing with people at work. You want to keep that separate. I'm more drawn to the ones that let you kind of manage your interactions. You have to get yourself and kind of keep your life separate than the other ones, but other people feel differently, you know? I think the fact that you in a position to choose, I think it's helpful.

A: And so you mentioned you want to be given that opportunity to choose your own things and how could the organisation best facilitate that for you?

X: I see that's a great question. I think all of it is sort of self-discipline, to be honest with you. We're not Goldman Sachs given the news this week, someone's screaming down the phone at you at seven o'clock on Sunday night, you know, we're not that kind of environment. I think there is the implicit permission there to kind of genuinely work flexibly. There are peaks and

troughs and workload because it's just life is how it is. But I suppose it's kind of ==seeing other people lead by example and making it feel like it's okay.== You know, it's all very well saying you can do this. I think within our kind of junior staff, there's still a bit of a culture of presenteeism thinking like other people in the leadership business say you don't need to be here, but actually you do. And that sort of changed in lockdown last year to be like a digital presenteeism. So you got the little green icon next to your face all the time to show you online. And you know, you log on at 20:00, it's sort of like a company just do something and you'll see a bunch of green lights there and begins to people that it's like, why are you here? What you doing? And it's like, they don't really believe us when we say it and I didn't know why that is. And if it's a trust thing, if it's a whatever. So I suppose the best that you can do is lead by example. And I suppose we need to see that from all levels of the business to let people know it's okay. And you know, if we give people 45 hours' worth of work to do a week, we can't then have a go at them for not working a 37-and-a-half-hour week. So we've got to think about workload and resources inside too.

A: And how would you want to best lead by example?

X: I think ==it's about honesty==, I'd say I'm not going to be online this time because I'm doing something else. That's okay. People are sometimes like apologetic when they got an appointment, or they got to go and do something and they shouldn't.

A: And do you believe that you will continue this intervention that you've started now?

X: I hope so. I'm certainly going to try? Some of it you've got to do, it's about being more present on that. And so quite often I'd be taking a call as I was heading down to the school, which means you sort of turn up and work mode and it's stopping that sort of thing, you know, having a bit of a buffer I think is helpful. So that kind of thing I've had to try and sort of keep up.

A: Okay, well, that's good to hear. Those are actually all my questions.

X: I hope it was useful.

A: It was, no, it definitely is. I've been hearing a lot of different things, but I think what I've heard the most is giving that flexibility, especially because you, as leaders, you've had a lot of experience already working, so you know what works for you and what doesn't. So for instance, you didn't choose the habit one because it just, wasn't something you felt you needed. Getting good responses.

X: Okay. I mean, to be honest with you, somebody else who knows, might say, no, you need to do that one. So you, this is, it'd be quite interesting to sort of see people who work together a lot, what they think the other person should do. I don't know if that would cause more friction than, it would certainly be interesting. I'd be interested to know, like know I work a lot with [name], you may be talking to about this. I'd be interesting to know what, like she thought I should be doing, whether that lined up with what I thought I should be doing. Interesting.

A: Hmm. Okay. Do you have any questions for me?

X: No. I think that has been really useful. What were the next step from here?

A: Essentially, I'm just going to be collecting all the data now this week and then mid-April. I want to present at one of the SLT meetings again, just to share the findings and hopefully I will also have more conclusive outcomes from how well the intervention worked. So not just the raw data. And end of May I hand in my thesis.

Interview 6.2

A: Which intervention did you choose to address your wellbeing?

X: It was a hybrid, which is unhelpful for your study, of two things, one trying to do a better job of having a firm switch off time. And then the second element was trying to do a better job of not visiting my email on the weekend. I did very badly at both. That's a bit of a lie. So on, on the latter one I've done better at not working at the weekend, but it's because of my background in doing mergers and acquisitions, I've had 25 years of knowing I need to check my email at the weekend because the nature of that type of work is if the clients work the weekends and they will ask you a question about something and they expect you to answer it over the weekend. So, and seriously grumpy if you don't respond until Monday, so I can't unlearn that in due course. And in fairness, we get asked to do that a lot less because our clients or a different type of evil, private equity people than they used to be. We used to work for the really big players, the Goldman Sachs in the Blackstones of this world, who'd be working on huge auction deals, with a five-week period do their due diligence. And the weekends were everything. Whereas we tend to work smaller product parties. It might be exclusive on deals and therefore they're more likely to take the weekend, so there's less of a call for it, but I can't help him do it. I still looked at my email, but I have been better at not pitching in and actually sort of playing catch up over the weekend. If I'm particularly honest again, I would say that's because there's been less demand this sort of Christmas pressure wise to do so. And if we ramped up, I'm sure probably I would do, so it's just nature of the game. The finishing on time has again been better, but I think it's a pressure thing. It's the pressure has been slightly reduced. And therefore, I have been better at saying, right it's six, I'm stopping that's still 10 hours after I started. I've been better at it and then try not to look at my email in the evening. I don't want to preempt your next questions. I feel like this is a therapy session… the fundamental remains are you can put interventions in place, but we are interested in this world of we're a growth

business where we are the people at the top of a growth business and under the nicest possible way. We're also quite a few of us, our shareholders we're seriously invested in the business. And there is a tradeoff you take in exchange for an element of your wellbeing. Now that's a dreadful thing to say, but it's the truth. It's the truth. You know, at the end of the day, it's my children having university paid for them. And add the deposit on their flats is the trade-off for, you know, surrendering part of your evening, it's a tough one. We would have to, as a group, get really, really solid on certain subjects. And I would actually say it's things like and it would have to be absolutely from the top. That there is for instance, a, no one sends an email in the evening rule. No one sends an email in the weekend rule with obvious caveats, that if it is blatantly urgent, you can do something, but no generic responses, et cetera, et cetera. People have got to feel that know that people will feel that there's no expectation, that they're going to find someone else's emails. And I think that's the sort of thing we have to do is just culturally decide that certain things are out of balance. And that we need to start with [CEO] and members of the SLT team. [Name], my boss, all of us. You can write the email, but you send it in the morning.

A: That's interesting to hear. And you've mentioned this a little bit already about the other side of Christmas, the way the work has been, how would you describe the remote work experience then since we last spoke?

X: Just less pressured is the answer it's not we've had less to do per se. It might be that it's just being different in nature. And we've got more streamlined in doing some of it to the it has just felt like there is less requirements, less of a spillover to work into the evenings and into the weekends. But the numbers would suggest that we are no less busy but it's just nice to feel like that. From that perspective, the general experience has been the same. It's just been, we've been, I think, less of what we use the phrase, as we always say is the coalface than before.

A: And I mentioned this last time in the interviews, these six elements of a positive work environment. If you reflect upon these elements, do you think the interventions you've implemented changed them in any way?

X: I think this is a chicken and an egg moment, because I would say that because I don't think the interventions… yes, they have, because the interventions have allowed, taken the pressure off a little have definitely helped, but the interventions have been possible because of the decline in pressure. They are positive, but I don't think that, that you can't look to them as being, the key source. They have been possible because we have been less busy or however, I want to put that. But they have been like, without that, they'd been positive.

A: And how would you then describe your overall wellbeing now since we last spoke?

X: I think I just kind of describe myself as the most aerobically fit, alcoholic, last time. Slightly less alcoholic and slightly less aerobically fit because both of my bikes have been sent to the shop to be repaired. But I think the overall experience I think is probably a little bit more positive this side of Christmas, et cetera.

A: And how come is it more positive?

X: Well, there's two answers. One is just that you're there, it feels less pressured. And secondly, because a few things have changed, I think you'll probably know we've taken an investment from a private equity house. Now that that is settled, and we are not being tentative around certain things. We've pressed the button on a lot of recruitment. So that means that when things are busying up and it's getting busier and more stressful, but you know that you have additional bandwidth coming that lightens the load, improves morale, et cetera, et cetera. I think that's, you know, one of the main positives that, so now just to say it differently. Okay.

A: Okay. And could you rate your wellbeing on a scale of one to 10?

X: The answer is more positive than I think I was before. What did I say last time because the answer is more positive than last time?

A: Let me quickly check. The first time you said around a seven..

X: I don't know. Am I allowed to half mark?

A: Whatever you feel is wright.

X: Yeah. Oh, it's a seven and a half. It's an eight, you know, it's an improvement, dealing with metrics I'm always conscious that if I suddenly just came out with seven again, now you'll be sitting again, but he said everything's positive.

A: I get that, don't worry. Do you believe the intervention helped your wellbeing?

X: Yes.

A: Okay. And in what ways?

X: By simply allowing me to cut off both so directly, everything from reduced to time at the screen and, protecting my eyes, less chance of deep vein thrombosis from sitting in a chair for too long through to, just calmness of not working for a long period of time. It doesn't stop me, you know, thinking about work, et cetera, et cetera. And I have a nasty habit of thinking about work when I rather not. Because that's thinking time, but it's just simply additional time away from work. Focus is positive.

A: And how would you then evaluate the intervention?

X: Yeah. It is clearly effective from the perspective that it's providing… it's forcing you to stop in the simplest fashion. It's a discussion that makes you think you have to stop. And I think that's very positive. I don't think there are any drawbacks per se. I mean the danger, you could

say the drawbacks are, well, I didn't manage to do X, Y and Z from a work perspective, but I don't know if that's the case. Perhaps, there's initial elements of anxiety about, if I'm not present what's happening without me. I don't think there are any drawbacks. I think the issues are still just the effectiveness of all of these thing's needs group commitment. Whereas it goes back to this if you're going to shut off at six, you need to know others are, and there's going to be some flex in that because I start early. And so if I finish at six, I still probably do a 10 hour shift. Others may not start till nine. And you know, I will come back to my email, well, this morning when I turn my email on, there's people who haven't done stuff. You'll have your plethora of people who are the night owls, who now, I know they've gone off, they've done some other stuff. And at 10, 10 30, they hit their email for the last half hour. You don't want to mess with people's patterns, but what you don't what is that you're going to come back and discovered that there is a bloody great big, excuse, my English, a huge email chain of people discussing something which needed your interventions. You always get some of that because we're a global business and there will always be conversations I wake up to where, well, less so in this organisation, but in other organisations where we've been properly global, where it was quiet when you switched off and the whole of the US has managed to have its say and then Asia PAC had it say and even a couple of Europeans are sneaked in early doors and by the time you arrive, a lot has been accomplished in terms of decisions to be made, or even if a decision hasn't been made, there is a consensus that you might disagree with. So you can't get around that, but it would be far better in the domestic UK case way, we all just went, look, you park it. You know, please no emails late or arranged to go at seven in the morning. So people wake up to them. But yeah, as that, as globalisation in a people business, you can't get away from that.

A: That makes sense. And what kind of improvements would you propose for the interventions you've done?

X: Well, some will just come from, so ignoring if I went to the board and said in the UK board and said, right, no one sends an email off to six. ==Some things will just come from over time==. I will get better at looking at my email even less. And for instance, in the weekend and in the evening. And I think that's more about just getting personally, getting comfortable. A lot of this is that your own psychosis of anything else. If you're the sole person who can just go and switch off, that's great. If you for whatever reason you, can't, that's a tougher one, but ==I think over time I will just get better at going it's not important==. And then also as we build as a business and we have a greater number of people working in certain areas, the reasons for me to be coalface as much will decline. If it comes to it, the emails I'm worried about really and truly are client emails. All of the internal emails that I miss, I'm better at some sort of game. I find that can wait, but it's client emails, frankly, as we get a bit bigger, the reason for me to be the client content will decline. And that stress, the nice young people can take on not as the case may be because there is a cultural difference we find between my generation and gen Z, is less likely to accept working at the weekend. And that works both for the client and internal internally. So to an extent you can expect it to become less you less tolerant and less prevalent as a consequence. So I think it would just get better anyway, at the time.

A: That's good to hear. And then my final question is, to what extent do you think you'll be able to really continue with the intervention, turning it more into a routine?

X: There's two answers to this, there's always two answers with me. I think there's every reason why I can continue to make it stronger, a more routine element of what I do, particularly if we get the recruitment going. The negative is that the ESG element, which is what I do. And I lead on for the business is possibly the biggest boom area of the entire business. And therefore we under probably the most pressure. And so to an extent there, if I don't, it will be just because I'm leading the boom piece and that's what goes with it. We will see.

A: Well, I wish you the best of luck and I hope you can continue it. And yeah, those were my questions. Thank you for your time.

X: You're welcome.

Interview 7.2

A: To start off, I just want you to reflect on your wellbeing and your experience in the remote environment from the last time we spoke. How would you describe your remote work experience since we last spoke?

X: We have been through an incredibly busy time and whilst it was busy when we first spoke, I think the last few weeks have been really intense and intense because a lot of it fell within my remits of communications and getting the message out. So I think that the wellbeing during this time has an ability to take second place to work when it all gets very intense, purely because you kind of just got to get the work done and therefore you need as many hours in the day and therefore your working long hours and the weekends, and therefore the break between work and non-work gets very much muddied. Whilst I know that, I've mentioned in the past that I got my bike and I cycle a lot. And that's a good wellbeing for me. I ended up not doing that on a couple of a couple of four- or five-day periods because I was using that time to do work rather than cycle. I was starting early rather than using the early time to do the cycling. And I think when I look back at that type of activity, it gives me more time to get on with the work, but it doesn't give me the positive results from the cycling, you know, the endomorphins and thinking time and all that type of stuff. So it's easy to go spiralling down into not doing the wellbeing, but actually think the wellbeing is going to help you in the bigger picture stuff.

A: And now you said you had a gap of five days, have you been able to close again and start the cycling again?

X: I went on this morning to try and even just for like a 20 minutes just to get into a good zone. And I think that gives me a… once I can do that, then it also tells me that I'm in a better place, than the way I have been, you know, it almost tells me that I've closed the door on what that period was. It was very, quite stressful. And my head is going, okay, let's get back on the bike. That's a place. And therefore it's like a trigger, a trigger that I've decided to do it, which shows I'm thinking and got brain space to take something else then and also that I recognise that what I was doing, wasn't the right approach. And just to make that change.

A: Well, it's good to hear that you were able to check yourself in that sense and also get back to rhythm. Did you actually, with the intense workload, was this expected or did it come rather unexpectedly?

X: It was expected as we got closer to the deal being signed. But you can't fully plan for it because you don't know exactly what's going to happen or the timing. So as the date moved on, it starts to clash with things that we weren't expecting. In the UK, the UK chancellor announced some budgets, you know, we weren't expecting to have to clash against that. It was international women's day. We weren't expecting to clash with that. And so you can plan enough, but that last part is you can't plan with it because you just don't know what it's going to land and when it's going to hit against something else.

A: Okay. Fair enough. And do you remember the Guests and Conway theory? I introduced last time with these six elements that you have in a work environment.

X: Could you repeat it for me.

A: Yes, so you had manageable workload, personal control over a job, organisational support, positive work relations, your clear role and a sense of control of involvement in organisational

change. So reflecting upon these six components, would you say they've changed in the period since we last spoke?

X: Some, maybe some not. I think there's lots of other positive work relations when you're going through a high stress period. There's certain people who are going through it with you. And if you can connect with them frequently and do that journey, so you're not on your own is a helpful way of getting through a period like this. So there was a group of us that this, related to, and that we would frequently have just even just small calls, just to be able to say, okay, almost like to deep breath, and to sigh a little bit, because you could then… they would say to, you know, you're doing right and I would do vice versa to them and actually get through things together. So sometimes periods of high stress can support the growth of relationships. As you've got that team approach to things. I think when you've got like the work life balance and my home life, my husband was very conscious that things they needed to allow me to go through this adding extra stress in their family life doesn't help the whole bigger picture. They needed to say, if I needed to work late or weekends, then that was just going to be fine, because this was only for a short period of time. It wasn't going to be our life forever. So you have to, I think the good thing is to be able to have people around you who can empathise and maybe take a bigger piece of the puzzle that they usually do as a way of supporting you.

A: Yeah. That's good to hear. And if you were able to rate your wellbeing from one to 10 thinking of now in this period, could you give it a number or a range?

X: Because I'm only just coming out a bit, I would say it was probably less than where I was before. I think I was probably at like an eight-last time. And I would probably say about a six maybe. Yeah. But I feel as though I can see an eight on the horizon, I just need to get back on the bike, you know, suns out, get the dog out and remember that all this is important.

A: Good. Great. And then my last question for you is if you've looked at the solutions, which one would you have picked and why?

X: Yeah, so I was just looking at before I feel like the ==first one which was about the SLT resource group==, because ==I do see the benefit of doing things with other people and it keeps you true to that activity as well==. If you've got that reliance on other people to make it happen. I also really liked the people that I work with. And so ==having a regular time to catch up with them would be something that's a benefit for them. And I benefit their opinions as well==. So that would really where I would go on the first instance.

A: Okay, great. Do you have any questions for me?

X: Not, really on this, but it's about the organisation and ==people have got a way to be able to talk, vent, share, cry, laugh, whatever it is that they need to do==.

A: You mentioned in your last interview, actually that form of talking to people, it's a form of therapy in order to feel better. So you really inspired me for that first one as well. I also see people doing it and I got an email on the first day, like, yes, we're going to do it. We've got it in our calendars. It's scheduled. So, yeah.

X: Fantastic. Fantastic. Why wasn't I invited? ==Maybe that's a good representation of us as a business that actually, you know, we want to talk with each other and that we see other people being supportive of us.== So I think that's a sudden influence to take away and realise that we're in a fortunate situation where we've got colleagues that we like to hang out with.

A: Exactly. No, definitely. That's something to be very happy about.

X: Excellent. Well, sorry. I didn't do my homework, but I hope this helped.

A: It definitely did. Thank you so much, [name].

X: Thank you.

Interview 8.2

A: We had the first one, which was employee resource group. And this was just having a 30-minute call once per week to talk with each other, how you're doing and your wellbeing, really just focusing on that. And then the second one was learning and development, trying to build a new habit that could contribute to your wellbeing.

X: Yeah, I haven't done it.

A: No worries, I have some questions for you. Essentially the goal is just to see if your wellbeing has changed in any way and perhaps finding out why it did, and then just comparing you as a control group with the people who did the intervention to see if the intervention even had an effectiveness.

X: Yeah. That's good. I feel quite good, and I do think, what we were talking about before I suppose, an intervention that I did take, maybe not directly as a result, but just sort of general conversations was vitamin D. I started to take vitamin D recognising that spending huge amount of time inside these bones. My wife closes the blinds, normally much brighter. But realising that, that actually you get very few hours outside daylight in a direct daylight and the role that plays in terms of your sort of physical and mental wellbeing or lack of, and when it starts to get sunny and starts to feel like spring going outside, I like to cycle, right. So doing things like exposing more skin, so taking, taking your leg warmers off or just getting skin or sun on the face. I remember a few weeks ago going out for the first time and just that, that feeling of the sun on your skin was just amazing. And it felt really good. And then realising actually probably very vitamin D deficient and so starts to take supplements. Now that combined with it getting much lighter, I think contributes to a sense of definitely wellbeing

consciously trying to go out and do a run or some form of out outdoor exercise, more so over the last six weeks. And then also I think the work that I'm doing is really stimulating as well. And that sense of flow where you are absorbed in an activity that you're not really aware of costing you time. You're just sort of there, some of the work that I've been doing is quite similar to that. So researching and trying to understand is very absorbing and so very stimulating and so very good for your wellbeing. So I think there's two factors is sort of the physical factors of outside and spring coming through, and then the sort of mental stimulation of engaging with the new subject matter, I think has contributed to a sense. Yeah, I feel much better than say early January for the variety of reasons.

A: Well, that's really good to hear. And how would you describe your remote work experience since we last spoke?

X: Yeah. So that's another thing, actually. I've been stuck in the room upstairs in the loft since March last year which is fine. It's a great working environment, but it's the same space. It felt like being in prison right for a time. And now that the children have gone back to school, so I've got more range of the house. And so I'm down in the front room, it's like being on holiday and I don't need to go for the mountains or the Mediterranean, you just go to your front room somewhere different. It's fantastic. So that's improved, it's definitely improved as a result of having more flexibility of spaces to go to and work in. So variability, again, changing things up is rejuvenating.

A: And with regards, for instance your workload has there been any changes between January and now, that had an impact on your wellbeing?

X: Yeah, so, like I said, we were getting involved in the strategy work for the business. And I love that stuff, right. I love thinking forward. I love, thinking how things could be different. I love trying to figure out puzzles that don't quite seem to fit. I love that planning, that long

term… I find that really, really stimulating. And we've been doing quite a lot of that over the last few months which is a joy and also frustrating at times as well, but that, it's like when you're doing research, particularly when you start out doing this stuff, right. Where none of this makes any sense anymore, but you are in that early-stage discovery and trying to figure it all out, that's kind of where we've been which is a really, really good place to be, I think for mentally. And I guess that combination, as I said, of the exercise, the sunlight's spring plus mental kind of stimulation yeah, it's pretty good.

A: And what has motivated you more to do exercise outside compared to, for instance, in January?

X: I mean, January in the UK, right. It's not that it's particularly cold. It's not that, you know, it's just rubbish. So is it easier to get the turbo machine out and go on a sort of a Swift app, just bash that. You get the endorphins, and you get that sort of benefit from doing that inside. You get nothing of the stimulation that you get when you hear the birds sing or you get the views out across the landscape. And so it's a combination of the fact that the weather has been better and going out and experiencing that spring kind of feeling that spring lift is a drawer. Thinking about some plans for this year and wanting to build up to… I've got a couple of big rides that I want to do this year. And so making sure that I'm in enough physical shape to do that is also big stimulation as well.

A: And you already mentioned you feel that your wellbeing has improved. In what ways has it improved for you?

X: I think that's a feeling of being more productive and actually contributing being part of a team. Whereas previously, I was quite isolated, trying to push an agenda that was connected to a broader piece, but didn't have more people involved. And so being involved with a group of

people is very good for the wellbeing. How that's manifested, I'd say just the generally more positive mood, things like sleeping more easily at night. Yeah. Those sorts of things.

A: And would you be able to perhaps rate it?

X: Well, in terms of where my wellbeing is right now. Yeah, I'd say eight or nine.

A: Nice. And then from the interventions if you were to do one, which one would you choose that would best contribute to your wellbeing?

X: Hmm. I mean, I think any of them could work. I think that setting the realistic time is not… I'd put that least as my concern. Yeah. I feel fairly able to control that. Against the SLT members, doesn't have to be SLT. Right. It's always easiest to do that outside of the SLT because the dynamics within management teams and whether it's too much to yeah, I dunno. I'd have a question. I can't quite put my finger on why that would, was not necessarily being the only way forward. Why you can have really sort of meaningful conversations with anyone really. So the kind of buddy system that was put up some time ago, which is probably still running, but hasn't had much of a promotion and I haven't used it for some time. I thought it was really good because it just encouraged people to talk to share, I guess it's the ability to listen and empathise, but also share to someone else's listening and empathising is good. It's kind of a talking therapy. Right. So, yeah.

A: And for instance, the habits, like building something up into your routine that will help benefit your well-being. What would your thoughts be on that?

X: I mean, I think I'm doing quite a bit of that. There's one thing I wish I could do more is meditation. That would be a really good thing. I keep coming back to it, but then keep on losing the habit. So doing that more would be really good.

A: Which habits do you do then currently that you think best contribute to your wellbeing?

X: ==Regular exercise, indoors, outdoors, spending some time with family, children, pets those sorts of things really good.== What else, the thing is missing right now, is social interaction with friends. So that is one thing that absolutely, I think we all need, I certainly need to build that into the routine and it's something that I suspect we'll have lost a bit of skill in doing, and certainly the friendship ties have weakened through this period. This is maybe a generalisation, but I think men find it easier to do things, when you're doing stuff with other guys, sharing that without the necessarily the awkwardness of directly talking about stuff. And the inability to do that through lockdown has meant that normally the groups of guys that I went out with to do various things just hasn't happened. And so those ties have sort of weakened and so reforming those bonds and it would've changed absolutely through this time. So that sort of social interaction I think is really important for wellbeing. And that's something that we need to, I need to get back in.

A: Good. Well those were all my questions I had for you. Do you have any questions for me?

X: No, I don't think so. Other than what's next.

Interview 9.2

A: So, which one did you choose?

X: I went exercise which is a bit of a cop-out in reality, but it's the one that fits best with my lifestyle and my interests. And I guess also with my age and recognising what I should be doing in terms of doing the right thing, given my age profile.

A: How was your experience?

X: I love getting out and about and outdoors, so I thoroughly enjoyed it. And I had to admit the last week I have been, so I got vaccinated.

A: Okay. All right. That's good.

X: And so I had a couple of days of kind of vaccine hangover but I've been fitting it in. Like this morning what I've been doing is get my daughters out the door to school. And as soon as they're out the door, before I go and switch my computer on, I follow them outdoor and go out and go for a run and then I get back and then make sure that I've had breakfast then switch on my laptop.

A: Great. Okay. And how often have you been doing this in the week?

X: It's quite a lot though. I guess last week was it was a light week, so I got out three times last week. It hasn't been so great either, today's the first time this week because I had early calls, but I think the rest of this week I should be good. I'm trying to do that and also taking advantage of other circumstances. So, you know, working from home, it's easy to do this. Although when we were working in the office, I'd used to do things like I rode a bike to work every day. So ride my bike. What I would do was get the Metro in, to work and then run home all the other way round. But running home is easier because you can scrunch your clothes in a ball, stuff

them in your backpack, and it doesn't really matter. Whereas if you're running to work, then your crumpled clothes….

A: Of course. Fair enough. And do you ever realistically see yourself continuing this in the future?

X: I'm suddenly a bit of an exercise addict. So yes, I do. I guess, hence it's a bit of a cop-out in that, I do realise that it's one of those things I have to do from a physical and a mental wellbeing perspective. If I get injured, I'm just the grumpiest person to be around because that kind of thing. So yes, I will be continuing for sure. I think the challenge I face now is just making sure what's the right balance between enough and too much and injury and all those kinds of things. I just have to be conscious of when I'm jumping my mileage too quickly and then that then triggers injuries and yeah, that then pushes me back. Okay.

A: Of course. Okay. And how would you say this influenced your remote work experience since adopting the regular running?

X: Yeah. so definitely an improvement. I mean, you know, I guess the flip of that is there have been a few days, so last Thursday I don't think I left the house. I don't think I barely left this room, there've been some days whereas a consequence of pre-existing commitments plus things that drop through the course of the day, I have been constrained to my workstation. And so there have been a few days where that's been pretty intense. But I would say, getting out and having it, at least if I have gone for a run, then I kind of relax into the work day because I think, well, at least I've been out for exercise, you know, so I'm not then pressurising myself to think, Oh, I've got to fill it in at some point in the day, you know, I've just got a fun, whereas you can relax into the day, relaxing to the day, but you know what I mean, it's more or less thing to think about when am I going to fit that in?

A: Okay. For Guest and Conway's six elements of a positive work environment. So this includes management workload control over your job and a clear role positive work relations, organisational support, and involvement in change. Do you think the intervention somehow changed these six elements in your work environment?

X: I think it gives a bit more structure, so I do this with a bit of risk. I still got my post-it notes, you know, littering around like I'm not one of those people that is phenomenally well structured. Someone like [name], you know, so you've been talking to [name], [name] is amazing. I just take my hat off to, she's just so ordered and really, really structured. I know that I'm never going to be able to achieve the kind of levels of discipline that [name] has, but this has given me a bit more structure and giving me a bit more… so when I go to bed at night, I get my running gear out ready. So I know, I'm good to go straight after the kids are out the door. I can go. So that gives me a little bit more kind of struggles to my day. And I guess that has given me then a little bit more capacity in terms of making sure that I can fit all the other things and workload at the moment is, I was going to say it's really high and we're in a great position in that we're seeing real market interest and, you know, workload is phenomenally high. So it hasn't been able to be to just get a bit more control around that. The other thing I do use it for is so while I'm out running, I'm thinking about the day ahead on speech tomorrow at 10:30. I'll come presentation at 11. Yeah. That's okay. That's all done. I just need to make sure we, I just need to read the notes just so I just turned over my diary in my head and just make sure that when I come back, I know exactly what I've got to do and the priorities that I need to do before I get stuck into the next important task or assignment that I've got on the on the to-do list.

A: Great. And how would you then describe your overall wellbeing since adopting the running?

X: Yeah, it's pretty good. I mean, yeah. I've had yeah, vaccine aside and reactions to all that. Yeah. Good. Creating the space and the time it has been an improvement. I'm sure that you will hear from other colleagues, we are under quite a bit of pressure at the moment with everything that's going on. So grabbing a slice of the day to just to have some me-time has been good. It is good.

A: Could you rate this on a scale of one to 10? Do you want me to give you your past scores?

X: Yes please do.

A: You initially said between a seven and an eight. Okay.

X: Okay. Yeah, I would say that I'm a solid eight. Yeah, and I think there was external factors at the moment that, you know, we are in the process of trying to manage the overall workload of everybody's bust at the moment in terms of capacity. So yeah, we are trying to work really hard to try and get things equitable across the company. And you know, that is a constant, you know, it's always a constant, but at the moment it's extreme constantly trying to either pull that out across [company], not just here as well as just exchanging messages with colleagues in North America overnight. And yeah, they've got exact same challenges.

A: Okay. So what made you choose the running?

X: What made me choose running? I guess because, that's that really appeals to me. I'm close to and have been through a bit trying to do a bit more sleep as well. So I guess it's one that appeals to me, it's one that fits into my lifestyle. It's one that fits in with my other interests and it supports my ability to do other stuff. That's one that I kind of naturally turned to most. Whilst I haven't prepared a gratitude journal. I've had a few kind of conversations, both with friends and family where you just realise, Hmm, I've got nothing to really complain about. And, you know, I met up with a friend stroke former colleague, somebody who we co-chair a professional

group together. And he was telling me about, you know, some of the challenges and the losses that his family has had, his wife's family have had over the last year. I've really got nothing to complain about and I am super grateful for everything that I have. So I haven't documented it, but I have had a couple of occasions where I thought, yeah, I'm good. You know, everything around me is good. My family is good, you know, we're well, I've got a vaccine running around me. I've got a lot to be thankful for.

A: That's good to hear. And were you able to go through the full step of the learning and development? Like for instance learning how to build habits or did you just go straight into taking on the habit?

X: I just very typically, I'm very typically jumped in with both feet. I'm quite an impetuous individual, so I tend to go from zero to a hundred mile an hour, so I just dived straight and, but I do think it's kind of sticking, I think it will stick. It has stuck for a long time and I think it will continue to stick.

A: Definitely. Okay. And with regards to the other interventions, why did you not choose those for instance?

X: So it's a good question. So I would say that I'm feeling a bit asleep, so I think I'm kind of, am I doing seven? I'd need to check my tracker, but I think I might be hitting a bit of that. Meditation, I've not really got meditation. I think that's probably my immaturity coming through as a middle-aged person. I need to get a grip on that and understand more about it. Prioritisation. I think this is one of those things that, leopards and spots, you know, leopard don't change their spots. I've tried various things, to be honest, Ariane, I even brought myself a writing pad, you know, I don't know. I just, it's not me. It's not me. So I'm kind of with the post-it notes. I think that's me. Planning the workday, I tend to, I tend to do a bit of that, but it tends to be, again, a bit of the last-minute time kind of thing. It's like the night before and just

making sure have I done. Yeah. So I don't, I suppose Sunday evening, I sit down, look at the week ahead and just make sure I know what's happening. So this Sunday just gone. I looked at my work week and I went, okay, so I've got two things that I really need to do this week. So I think I am going to go for one of them now, do it now. Cause I know that that's going to give me a chunk of time back in the workweek. So I sat down and Sunday evening and just wrote a presentation. Because I knew that that was going to be way less stressful and kind of easy to do. So I just went and did it. Yeah.

A: Okay. And what about for instance, the employee resource group or setting realistic finish times?

X: Yeah. So that finished times is wavy again. So I think Monday finished early on Tuesday. To be honest that's because I wanted to take some time out in the middle of the evening to be with my daughters. I want to see those guys, I want to have the chat and they're going through things like their exam choices. So I wanted to have time to talk to them and I thought, well, okay, you know, if I do that, then I need the stuff I need to finish off. So you know I'm going to have to commit sometime later on the evening to finish that. So that went from late on Monday nights, early on Tuesday morning, but that's okay. I'm kind of okay with that, so other days then it will, so tonight I'm intending to wrap things at fairly early because we want to try and get some stuff done this evening. So I do try and flex it. I try not to overextend the day. I try to get everything done by seven, eight o'clock in the evening. I try to keep weekends fairly work free. So if that means I sacrifice a bit of time in the week, that's kind of the way I operate.

A: And how would you improve for instance, the interventions? Like if you were to create some form of interventions to help adjust your well-being, what would be important aspects that you need in that?

X: So I think for me, if I need to stick to something, if I am doing it with somebody or I am letting somebody down, if I don't do something then I do it, you know? So if I arranged to go for a run with somebody, I will go because if I don't, I'm letting the person down. Yeah. So I think that kind of mutual reinforcement I think is something that I respond well to. So I am quite, so I guess in a way that's quite deadline and commitment driven, isn't it? You know, so if I have a commitment to make, whether that's to a friend, I will typically make that commitment.

A: And any other improvements or changes you would want to see or that you think will really help adjust your wellbeing.

X: I probably do need to find a way of… so the meditation thing is something that I tried the Headspace app for a while and that was a recommendation from colleagues, and I just couldn't really, I didn't really get it, but that is something I think I probably need to just kind of give a go. I do again, as a consequence being bullied into it by my wife I do a bit of yoga every now and then, but I do yoga for cyclists and runners and that kind of stuff. So meditation feels as though it's like the, the next kind of step on from that, which I should be really thinking about.

A: So from what I understood is you prefer activities or interventions that are more individualistic that you can do in your own time and you don't need to do it with others or depend on others.

X: Yeah. Or if I do with others, then, you know, that's a real kind of like enforcing kind of commitment, that we'll do that. You know? So for instance, here running one of the things at the moment that I'm focused on is one of my friends has asked me to help him with a learning challenge. So two 66 miles, I can't remember how many thousand feet of a running challenge. And I said, I will help you with that. I'm not going to do it all. I will run a quarter. So that's a really big incentive at the moment to make sure that I do go out every day and my miles,

because if I don't, then I'm not going to be able to help my friend in three months' time. You know? So those kinds of things are quite helpful for me in terms of reinforcing the habit and keeping the habit.

A: Okay, great. Those were all my questions. Do you have anything that you want to ask you?

X: So one thing, so hopefully you've, you've got what you need out of is Ariane.

A: I really have. Thank you. And also thank you for taking the time to do this. I mean, I know it's quite a lot to ask, especially you guys are going through so much as well.

X: Well, it's quite useful in that it's, it's getting us to actually think about what we're doing. And I've spoken to other colleagues who've got themselves into big groups and started experiment in doing things. So thank you for challenging us to think and do things a little bit differently, especially the current circumstances, which are far from normal.

A: Of course. Yeah. So hopefully I can then present once again at an SLT meeting just share findings. So I'll see with [name], what works best.

X: Great stuff. And when, when do you actually have to get your assignment?

A: 31st of May is my deadline now. Yeah. So I'm just busy writing it. So I think realistically, I could get you guys, I don't know, because I'm thinking like my whole report is quite lengthy, so I don't think that's realistic, but I perhaps have some kind of summary or something that I could create for you in the end.

Appendix 12. Research and Client Deliverable Evaluations

Research Commissioner: Solution Blueprint for Leader wellbeing (Professional Product / Deliverable)

Evaluation Form Company Project/Research

(EVALUATION FORM OF ALL CLIENTS AND ON ALL DELIVERABLES IS COMPULSORY, FORMAT IS NOT)

HOTELSCHOOL THE HAGUE
Hospitality Business School

Name of student:	Ariane Albert	Student number:	671043
Name of company:	Anthesis	Department:	People Services
Name of company tutor:	Nina Cairns	Position of company tutor:	People Services Manager
Project/Deliverable: (please specify)	Solution Blueprint: Leader Wellbeing Intervention Plan		

During the first evaluation the proposal for the project and end deliverable is discussed. For this final evaluation the project is evaluated. This is taken into consideration for the final assessment of the student.

CATEGORY 1: EXPERTISE/KNOWLEDGE OF THE FIELD

Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	
Excellent	In-depth use of relevant literature and knowledge of the field. The deliverable shows excellent thinking capacity of the student (taking into account all significant factors and looking from all different perspectives).	Use of relevant literature and knowledge of the field. The deliverable shows mostly intellectual depth (taking into account significant factors and looking from different perspectives).	No or incorrect use of literature and knowledge of the field. The deliverable lacks intellectual depth.	Ariane presented a well thought out plan, supported by research and at every step was open to feedback and suggestions to help improve the plan. It was clear to see she had spent a great deal of time researching the options before presenting them to us.

CATEGORY 2: KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION/SOLVING PROBLEMS

Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
Excellent	The theories and models are skillfully applied and the student can translate this in a unique solution action. The student can relate situations to concepts that results into a solution that adds great value to the company's overall strategy. The creative solution is/can be implemented and evaluated and is solving the problem.	The student uses theory and models and shows understanding of the issues at hand. The solution is realistic and implementable for the company. The solution is/can be implemented and evaluated.	Mentioning theory and models, but not using them in the correct way. The student cannot convince of the possibilities to implement and evaluate. It is not solving the problem.	The solution action plan was presented to our Senior Leadership team who not only agreed to take part in the implementation of the plan they were happy to provide honest feedback and encouraged some of their team to give the plan a try.

CATEGORY 3: INFORMED JUDGEMENTS

Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
Excellent	The research process is done and explained in an excellent way. All statements, conclusions and recommendations are underpinned with the data collected by the students and/or referencing. The analysis is very substantial.	The research process is done and explained well. Most statements, conclusions and recommendations are underpinned with the data collected by the student and/or referencing. The analysis is substantial.	Weak problem analysis, research question not clear enough. Data collection and/or methodology is insufficient. Weak analysis, use of data from one dimension and not backed up.	Its hard to add more to the definition of Excellent, seems like this statement was written with Ariane in mind.

CATEGORY 4: COMMUNICATION AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
Excellent	Excellent ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to all stakeholders involved. The deliverable adds great value to the main stakeholders. Initial and creative channels have been actively used to share outputs and knowledge.	Good ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to stakeholders. The deliverable adds value to the company. Existing channels have been used to share knowledge	The deliverable could have been better delivered to the stakeholders. The deliverable could have added more value, if better delivered. No active communication of outputs and knowledge.	At no point was Ariane worried about presenting to the Leadership team if she was she did not show, she talked about her plan with confidence and the feedback I have had from the team since the trial ended is a number of the leaders are still using some of her ideas.

CATEGORY 5: INTERCULTURAL HOSPITALITY LEADERSHIP

Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
Excellent	Student is able to lead the project by themselves. Student is self-critical towards improvement and takes feedback to heart. Student deals with a diversity of stakeholders in an intercultural competent way. Hospitality mindset is seen in project or work in a very distinct way.	Student is able to lead the project with little help. Student is critical towards improvement and listens to feedback. Student deals with different stakeholders. Hospitality mindset can be seen.	Tasks performed are described and not critically analyzed. Student is not too critical towards own learning and can listen better to feedback. Student does not know how to deal with differences in stakeholders. Hospitality can be improved.	Ariane definitely had a clear plan and was always open to listening to ideas from other and gracious enough to include a number of these comments in her final plan. This was her project and she owned it, we were just there to help with information and action her suggestions. It was a plan well executed.

OVERALL COMMENTS:

The amount of research and commitment Ariane showed thoughtout this project was incredible. She was always professional and driven. She had clear timelines in place and even when she was up against through no fault of her own she still maintained a cool, calm air about her. She remained focused and never let the ball drop. I feel strongly that Ariane deserves every Excellent mark given.

STUDENTS' COMMENTS:

Comments on evaluation:	It has been a pleasure to work alongside the SLT team to gather feedback and their insites to improve the product. Further, Nina's guidance and support has been invaluable

DATE & STUDENT'S SIGNATURE:		COMPANY TUTOR'S SIGNATURE:
Ariane Albert 29 April 2021		Nina Cairns

THE COMPLETED FORMS (ON ALL DELIVERABLES AND PERFORMANCE) NEED TO BE EMAILED TO THE LYCAR COACH AND PUT IN THE APPENDICES OF THE CAREER PORTFOLIO

Research Commissioner: Company Project (Leader Wellbeing Research)

Evaluation Form Company Project/Research

(EVALUATION FORM OF ALL CLIENTS AND ON ALL DELIVERABLES IS COMPULSORY, FORMAT IS NOT)

HOTELSCHOOL THE HAGUE
Hospitality Business School

Name of student:	Ariane Albert	Student number:	671043
Name of company:	Anthesis	Department:	People Services
Name of company tutor:	Nina Cairns	Position of company tutor:	People Services Manager
Project/Deliverable: (please specify)	Company Report (Research)		

During the first evaluation the proposal for the project and end deliverable is discussed. For this final evaluation the project is evaluated. This is taken into consideration for the final assessment of the student.

CATEGORY 1: EXPERTISE/KNOWLEDGE OF THE FIELD

Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
5	In-depth use of relevant literature and knowledge of the field. The deliverable shows excellent thinking capacity of the student (taking into account all significant factors and looking from all different perspectives).	Use of relevant literature and knowledge of the field. The deliverable shows mostly intellectual depth (taking into account significant factors and looking from different perspectives).	No or incorrect use of literature and knowledge of the field. The deliverable lacks intellectual depth.	Excellent - Ariane has clearly put a lot of time and effort into researching her topic and has managed to include her research into her paper while ensuring she did not lose her focus or message.

CATEGORY 2: KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION/SOLVING PROBLEMS

Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
5	The theories and models are skilfully applied and the student can translate this in a unique solution action. The student can relate situations to concepts that results into a solution that adds great value to the company's overall strategy. The creative solution is/can be implemented and evaluated and is solving the problem.	The student uses theory and models and shows understanding of the issues at hand. The solution is realistic and implementable for the company. The solution is/can be implemented and evaluated.	Mentioning theory and models, but not using them in the correct way. The student cannot convince of the possibilities to implement and evaluate. It is not solving the problem.	Excellent – Following the study done by Ariane a number of the SLT are still using her suggestions and others have adapted some of her suggestions to best fit with their ways. I feel this shows she has provided a unique solution while giving 'permission' to the leaders to adopt her solutions and not to give up on them if they not 100% right.

CATEGORY 3: INFORMED JUDGEMENTS

Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
5	The research process is done and explained in an excellent way. All statements, conclusions and recommendations are underpinned with the data collected by the students and/or referencing. The analysis is very substantial.	The research process is done and explained well. Most statements, conclusions and recommendations are underpinned with the data collected by the student and/or referencing. The analysis is substantial.	Weak problem analysis, research question not clear enough. Data collection and/or methodology is insufficient. Weak analysis, use of data from one dimension and not backed up.	Excellent – All research process is done and explained in an excellent way. All statements, conclusions and recommendations are underpinned with the data collected by the students and/or referencing. The analysis is very substantial.

CATEGORY 4: COMMUNICATION AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
5	Excellent ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to all stakeholders involved. The deliverable adds great value to the main stakeholders. Initial and creative channels have been actively used to share outputs and knowledge.	Good ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to stakeholders. The deliverable adds value to the company. Existing channels have been used to share knowledge.	The deliverable could have been better delivered to the stakeholders. The deliverable could have added more value, if better delivered. No active communication of outputs and knowledge.	It is really difficult for me to expand on these definition as they all seem to be written with Ariane in mind. Excellent ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to all stakeholders involved. The deliverable adds great value to the main stakeholders. Initial and creative channels have been actively used to share outputs and knowledge.

CATEGORY 5: INTERCULTURAL HOSPITALITY LEADERSHIP

Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
5	Student is able to lead the project by themselves. Student is self-critical towards improvement and takes feedback to heart. Student deals with a diversity of stakeholders in an intercultural competent way. Hospitality mindset is seen in project or work in a very distinct way.	Student is able to lead the project with little help. Student is critical towards improvement and listens to feedback. Student deals with different stakeholders. Hospitality mindset can be seen.	Tasks performed are described and not critically analyzed. Student is not too critical towards own learning and can listen better to feedback. Student does not know how to deal with differences in stakeholders. Hospitality can be improved.	Ariane is clearly a planner and researcher by nature which was demonstrated by her behaviour in how she tackled this. She was always keen to work within my timeframes and started to project early to accommodate both her work experience and my busy diary. She has respect for others time and views.

OVERALL COMMENTS:

I am really impressed by Ariane's commitment and dedication to getting this right. She did not just want to roll out something that was ok she wanted to make sure it was something we could use. She considered every aspect of the process, even something as small as the format / presentation template she used. When she represented to the SLT she made sure she spoke clearly, concisely and demonstrated her confidence and excellent communication skills. Everyone left the meeting with a clear understanding of what was expected and what the next steps were. I think Ariane would be a wonderful HR professional and I will follow her career closely.

STUDENTS' COMMENTS:

Comments on evaluation	This whole research journey has been very positive, Nina was very dedicated in guiding my process and connecting me with the SLT. I really could not have done it without her! I look forward to explaining sustainable HRM from a more practical perspective now!

DATE & STUDENT'S SIGNATURE:		COMPANY TUTOR'S SIGNATURE:
[signature] 19 May 2021		Nina Cairns

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Appendix 13. Approved Proposal

PROOF OF WORD COUNT