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## Master's Degree in Management

Accounting & Finance

### **SMART WORKING ENCYCLOPEDIA**

*Theoretical and practical suggestions to embrace these new  
working modalities with the support of a real case study.*

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# ABSTRACT

The objective of the thesis is to provide theoretical and practical insights to be able to implement an effective Smart Working project. In the first chapters an in-depth analysis of the main drivers of Smart Working (Behaviors, Bytes and Bricks) will be presented, which will subsequently be enriched and enhanced by the qualitative analysis of the Amadori real case. The reader will therefore be able to draw inspiration both from the theoretical ideas addressed by the literature and from the practical considerations that emerged from the analysis of the real case. Finally, it will be presented a practical and theoretical roadmap that can serve as a guide to implement these new working dynamics, so that anyone interested can have a schematic and summary model to start a Smart Working project.

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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Let's dispel a myth. Smart Working isn't the work that you do at home.

Or better, working at home is one of the modalities through which you can work according to "Smart Working" criteria. However, it is not the only one.

Smart Working is a wider concept that gathers a lot of principles and features which are independent of space and time.

It is a revolution in the concept of work, which take distances from the command & control logic, typical of the traditional work.

Many people tried to give a definition of Smart Working, namely several definitions are available. However, the most used and accepted one which can be coherent for our purposes comes from the Milan Polytechnic and says:

"Smart Working is a managerial philosophy based on granting autonomy and flexibility to the worker in choosing the place, working hours and tools to use, in the face of greater responsibility for results"

In other words, Smart Working has the aim to overcome the traditional set up of work which physically links the worker to his/her office. Undoubtedly the office will remain, however it will not be the only place where people can work. Even, the temporal dimension is revolutionized. Smart working, indeed, make work possible in every place and every time, so also the normal daily timetable will become flexible according to organizational needs. However, the concept is much wider. In addition to these aspects, the biggest change that Smart Working brings to the organizations, is the change in mentality, primarily at managerial level. Managers, namely, won't have to control anymore in a strictly way his/her employees. They will grant greater freedom in the execution of the activities and they will encourage the realization of the outcome. Control so, will be transformed from the strict supervision of each project steps to the assessment of the final output considering criteria of efficacy and efficiency. Surely, also during the execution of the task, managers can intervene for advises and to correct any possible deviation from the ideal path, however more trust is given to the employees and the orientation is primarily focus in reaching the purposes.

The purpose of this thesis is to give a theoretical and practical document which can be useful for each company willing to implement Smart Working logics. This thesis so, will be helpful for each one that have heard Smart Working concept, but don't have a clear and complete overview of what it really is.

I will talk at first of its advantages and disadvantages, then I will draw up a model which can be a didactic and practical paper for each company eager to get closer to these new dynamics. I will embrace the analysis of the model by considering the three main drivers of Smart Working, which are the 3Bs: behaviours, bytes and bricks.

Then, I will report a practical case study of Amadori, to give a real example of how firms are reacting to this new way of working. The deepening will be a qualitative analysis where Amadori's employees and managers were asked to answer to an interview. It will be even useful to understand how a real company overcomes and faces challenges posed by this revolution, how they will implement such changes and understanding the reactions of people.

Then, it will be proposed a roadmap which will assist organizations to embrace this revolution. This roadmap will be composed of topics covered in the first 3 chapters, and some findings which have emerged from the interviews.

The last chapter is dedicated to a quick summary of the research and a brief personal reflection.

## CHAPTER 2 - PROS and CONS

In order to elicit immediate interest about Smart Working, we quote the analysis of Grant, Wallace, Spurgeon (2013) who ran a study of the potential advantages and the possible drawbacks that these new ways of working can bring to the organizations. Their analysis, however, is limited and focused only on employees' dimension. Therefore, I proposed a wider structure which gather pros and cons both regarding employees' dimension and company's one.

Let's start from employees' point of view. We identify benefits and drawbacks by breaking down in four distinction areas: job effectiveness, work-life balance, well-being and overarching areas.

**BENEFIT - *Worker side*** (Grant, Wallace, Spurgeon, 2013)

### **Job effectiveness**

- **Productivity increased:** working quietly without interruption, ensuring work was completed on time, concentration on writing large documents, avoidance of social processes in the office and the problems associated with working in an open plan office such as noise and lack of privacy
- **Allows decision making to take place at different times of days:** people can take decision in moments when they feel more productive.
- **Increased of autonomy:** people are free to decide the time and place to work and are free to decide how to carry on their tasks. Flexibility increases motivation and satisfaction.

### **Work-life balance**

- **Work and non-working lives can be integrated:** people feel more able to switch more easily between private life and work. They are more reactive to tackle any urgency in both dimensions.
- **Home relationships can improve by increased contact:** the relationship with children as well as relative's one can be intensified.

- **Remote working and flexible hours can provide the means to interact across different time zones:** If you have a urgent family-commitment in the morning, you could carry out it, and then concentrate on your work. The same is true for the opposite situation.

### Well-being

- **Fewer days lost through absenteeism:** people have less necessity to request any work permits and part time schedule.
- **Working from home can relieve stress from travel:** people can be more relaxed since they do not have to take any travel to get to the job and they avoid so any stressful situations deriving from commuting (queues, crashes, unexpected events. Monetary and time saving is relevant as well.
- **Working from home can relieve stress from child care issues:** people have more time for their children or they can bring to school their children without relying on grandparents or baby-sitting. Any activities that once in a past, you delegate to some others, now you have the chance to choose.

### Overarching areas

- **Being ones “own boss” increases a sense of confidence and ability:** greater flexibility conveys people to feel more responsible and responsibility can increase own perception of confidence and ability.
- **Technology provides a means to deliver work and liaise with colleagues and customers remotely:** Colleagues can have real time answer and they are virtually closed even though they are physically distant.
- **Greater involvements in company mission:** people generate that sense of commitment which links individual’s aim with company’s one.

**DOWNSIDE - *Worker side*** (Grant, Wallace, Spurgeon, 2013)

### Job effectiveness

- **Relationship building can be difficult:** Being distant can cause some problem on coordination and collaboration.
- **Monitoring from a distance requires good communication:** technology tools can make communications faster and almost real time. However it requires good practises to avoid misunderstandings.
- **Restricted by the technology available:** Achievement of good results is strictly connected to technology availability. If employees do not have adequate devices or software any additional effort will be frustrated.

### Work-life balance

- **Boundaries between work and nonwork may blur:** People can manifest some problems in recognising boundaries between work and family. These two dimensions can overlap and in the long run it can generate frustrations, poorer performance in work and more conflict in family context.
- **Temptation to stay working for longer due to ease of access to work:** Since work is theoretically possible in each place, people tend to stay connected even after the normal working hours.

### Well-being

- **Social interaction may be limited to family and local friends:** people which remain distant from colleagues will build fragile relationships and they could suffer from isolation and disorientation.
- **Sitting behaviours may increase:** People that are used to work at home, could develop a sedentary lifestyle, which can bring health problems.

### Overarching areas

- **Face-to-face contact is easier for building relationships:** Managing a dialogue virtually can be more difficult to build strong relationship. Physical presence,



indeed, help to develop that sense of empathy which is fundamental to create an emotional connection that boost and support communication and comprehension.

- **Those who are highly motivated may over-work and become “addicted” to stay switched on; Those who are not motivated may under-work:** Smart working could amplify some tendency typical of the traditional office. So, people which tend to over work to finish their duties, are likely to remain connected for even more hours (burn out). In the opposite case, if motivation is low, people tend to procrastinate tasks, reducing so efficacy.
- **Late e-mails and working culture that promotes “non-stop” working can be exasperated by remote working:** Organizations should structure smart working by setting time-limit and planning daily/weekly activities. Otherwise, employees will be stressed by the condition to be “always on” and burnout phenomena will be more frequent.

Let’s turn on company’s point of view. This analysis came up, principally, from my Smart Working’s knowledges that I gained during the research and study of the topic. Some points, however, are the results of the rearrangements of some notions read in some scientific papers.

#### **BENEFIT - *Company side***

- **Greater efficacy/efficiency in reaching objectives:** since people will be more productive and involved, they are more able to satisfy in time company’s purposes.
- **Less absenteeism rate:** company can benefit smart working since people tend to decrease work permits demands, therefore they devote more time for company’s tasks.

- **Business continuity is ensured:** without the spatial constraint, company will not interrupt anymore its business processes in case of any dramatic events which will make the physical presence impossible.
- **Restructuring business layout:** company can exploit the opportunity to revisit their offices layout, by reducing desks, by creating open space offices and co-working areas. This could imply monetary savings and greater productivity.
- **Reputational improvement:** smart working is much appreciated from employees. This will have a positive effect on retaining best employees and attracting best talents from work demands. Reputational improvements derive even from sustainability point of view. Namely, reducing travel and movements among people, will have a positive impact on nature and climate as well.

#### **DOWNSIDE - *Company side***

- **Distribution of technological devices:** If company verifies that most of employees don't have their own devices to work outside office, it must lend them. Distribution of devices will not be enough. Indeed, likely, employees are not able to use them in an effective way, therefore a training for their usage will be necessary.
- **Change resistant:** Smart working mentality is far from the traditional logic. Namely, managers and employees as well could be resistant to this disruptive change, since they don't comprehend the real potential of this new workstyle. This would imply that people won't try to make enough efforts to embrace these new dynamics, resulting in a waste of time and money, and so a general failure.
- **New complexities to tackle:** Smart Working will bring to the organization many benefits but drawbacks as well. Therefore, managers have a new real challenge which imply new issues and new complexities to face. It is important to underline that, even if some best practises exist, no one could be considered as a "panacea". Therefore, manager should be proactive and flexible to cope with any unforeseen problems arising.

- **Employee isolation:** People working far from office, could express some feelings of alienation and isolation from the organization. They could feel as lost and they don't perceive anymore company's mission. Organization would become fragmented and "employees cluster" with divergent objectives could arise.
- **Greater costs due to ineffective planning:** Smart Working requires a clear definition of practises and objectives. If a complete planning miss, company could incur in greater costs both in time and in monetary terms.

## CHAPTER 3 - THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL MODEL

One of the purposes of this thesis is to give a theoretical and practical model useful for companies that want to implement a Smart Working philosophy. This model contains both theoretical and practical suggestions which will be the answers to many questions that organizations have posed.

As before anticipated, the model will articulate in the analysis of the three main drivers of Smart Working, the so-called 3Bs: Behaviours, Bytes and Bricks. This classification was theorized by Guy Clapperton and Philip Vanhoutte, authors of the book *The Smart Working: Manifesto*. However, in addition to these three drivers, I sustain it will be more useful and interesting breaking down the first driver Behaviour into Top-Down Behaviours and Bottom-Up Behaviours. This additional level of detail will be essential to appreciate differences between new managerial behavioural styles from those of the workers.

Let's begin to give definitions to these classification elements.

**Behaviours:** that is the new behavioural style requested.

Smart Working philosophy is strongly disconnected from the traditional logic which foresees workers working for normally 8 hours, always sitting at their desks. The main purpose of the Smart Working orientation is the realization of the company projects, regardless how much time people took on it or from where they have worked. Therefore, the "smart workers" must be educated to manage efficiently their time and managers need to rely more on their abilities and competencies. The key element is the trust which must progressively replace the strict traditional control.

We approach this dimension by considering both Top-Down and Bottom Up point of views.

- **Top-Down:** that is the new behavioural style requested by managers to manage efficiently employees according to a Smart Working logic.
- **Bottom-Up:** that is the new behavioural style requested by employees to manage efficiently their tasks and relationship with colleagues according to a Smart Working logic.

**Bytes:** that is the technology.

As Smart Working encourages work from potentially every place, as long as it will be perceived as productive place, this will be only feasible thanks to technologies. Nowadays, companies could rely on many technological tools which allow people to execute daily work, to have a conversation with colleagues and to maintain and build relationships. We are living in an era where technology is becoming so relevant that we can no longer do without it. Therefore, it become essential to exploit and use its power even at work.

**Bricks:** that is the physical spaces in general, the office layout and every other location where people can feel productive.

According to Smart Working, people will be less present in the office since they could work at home or in any other places. So, we are witnessing a “depopulation” of the firms and so, it become necessary to rethink of company layout. Furthermore, another aim of Smart Working is making our work location the best productive one. So, in the company there will be more open space which facilitates collaboration but even quiet rooms which are stimulating for our concentration. We will talk even of the out-of-the-office places where it is possible work, by deepening the issue with benefits and risks.

## **3.1 BEHAVIOURS - TOP DOWN**

### **3.1.1 MANAGERIAL BEHAVIORAL STYLES**

Firstly, we need to identify what are the possible managerial behavioural styles outlined by literature. This initial distinction is relevant since managers could identify themselves in these behavioural figures to choose the best one to manage and control their employees. The most studied managerial behavioural style are the transformational leadership and the transactional leadership (Syed Sultan Mohiuddin, 2015). This author suggests us that transactional leadership is based primarily on processes and their relative control. Transformational leadership, instead, has the aim to inspire and encourage people to behave according to organizational needs. This style requires good communication, cooperation and collaboration.

In other words, managers behaving according to transactional style are expected just to control people's job in order to reach a certain goal. Employees are incentivised just to do what have contractually agreed and therefore they are not encouraged to do more than that. The usage of awards and punishment will be the tools to motivate and stimulate people. The managerial approach is generally reactive: only if employees are deviating from the ideal path to achieve a certain result, managers will intervene to correct people's behaviours.

For what concerns instead the transformational style, it happens when managers try to convey people the sense of being in the organization, sharing both values and aims. This approach looks for dissuading people from any opportunistic behaviours, trying to align people's interests with the company ones. In contrast of the transactional one, this leadership is more proactive since managers will attempt to inspire people to behave in the ideal way. This approach could be really effective only if managers are strongly enthusiastic and charismatic. The focus is more oriented towards the general vision and less towards a specific goal.

After this brief definition, it is important to say that it doesn't exist the best leadership style. Each one must adapt to the context and actual circumstances.

However, literature comes to our help again, and in several papers, there are many indications useful to understand whether a style could be more fit in a context rather than other ones.

The next analysis seeks to deepen the virtual dimension, that is the one enabled by Smart Working, in order to understand whether in this context it is preferable a transformational approach rather than the transactional one.

### **Managerial behavioural styles: analysis**

At first, some authors, Balthazard, Waldamn, Warren (2009), highlight that, in a virtual context, adopting a transformational style could be more effective using a communication tool with a high level of media richness.

Media richness theory provides a framework for describing a communication medium's ability to reproduce the information sent over it without loss or distortion. For example, a phone call will not be able to reproduce visual social cues such as gestures. This makes it less rich (as a communication medium) than video conferencing, which allow to show even gestures, but richer than email. Specifically, media richness theory states that the more ambiguous and uncertain a task is, the richer format of media suits it. (Daft, R.L. & Lengel, R.H., 1986). Although this theory talks about the media, we can easily state that the richest conversation that someone could have is the one made personally, so the face-to-face approach.

So, as anticipated before, if managers want to behave according to transformational leadership, the most fit medias are the ones with a high level of media richness, since personal visualization helps speakers to build intimacy which is essential to generate trust and motivation. In fact, transformational leadership aims to establish a collective feeling among people in, order to discourage them from free-riding behaviours. (Ra'Ed Masa'deh, Bader Obeidat, Ali Tarhini, 2016)

Therefore, in case of difficulties or impossibilities to have a face-to-face conversation, the most suggested tool is the videoconference which facilitates the transmission of visual, listening and social clues to create even the *social presence* feeling. Social

presence is defined as the sense that another person is “real” and “there” when using a communication medium (Short et al., 1976). Studies have shown that social presence is associated with a variety of positive communication outcomes, such as persuasion and attraction (e.g., Fogg and Tseng, 1999; Lee et al., 2006a). For example, Hassanein and Head (2007) found that social presence was positively associated with trust, enjoyment, and perceived usefulness of an online shopping website, which led to greater purchase intentions. I admit so, that the stronger is the social presence perceived, the more successful chances have managers to inspire people.

In addition, Sedrine, Bouderbala, Nasraoui (2018) tell us that both transformational leadership and transactional one has a positive impact on operational cohesion. This mediator, which is normally associated with a greater group performance, is defined as the dimension which gather the orientation of the different members of the team toward the achievement of collective objectives (Burton et al., 2006). Operational cohesion is the most linked cohesion dimension to team performance and to members' satisfaction within a virtual context (Huang et al., 2010).

However, concerning transformational style, this positive impact on operational cohesion will disappear in case of the frequent usage of lean communication tools.

In other words, it is pretty ineffective transmitting enthusiasm and motivation through a media without video camera. As already said before, inspiration can only occur through a richer media. Therefore, if a team is used to have their conversations through leaner media or there are some technological constraints, a transactional style would be preferable.

Anyway, it is relevant underlying that, even if their traits are rather different, each behavioural style will be essential to direct people to reach a certain personal or group aim. What they stand out for, is essentially the different method and way to achieve a certain result. Namely, regards to transformational leadership, motivation, inspiration, group values, enthusiasm and charism increase the operational cohesion, and so the likelihood of successful behaviours. From the other side, awards and punishment will encourage workers to behave according to organizational interest. This justify the adoption of a behavioural mix which considers all the aspects mentioned.



In addition, it is appropriate adding that, Hambley, Neill, Kline (2007) demonstrated how the face-to-face conversation remain the more effective in terms of clarity and completeness of presentation. Therefore, although the multitude of electronic devices that permit the communication at distance, the physical conversation remains the most effective vehicle to promote the constructive dialog which foster creativity, cooperation, sharing of information, trust and mutual respect. The face-to-face conversation could be even considered as the most fit communication approach for both behavioural styles.

Furthermore, Sedrine, Bouderbala, Nasraoui (2018) found that in a virtual context, transformational leadership will be the best approach since it was verified a positive correlation between the variable idealized influence and trust. The variable idealized influence is one dimension of transformational behaviours and it highlights the collective sense between members and encourages to act according to the group values (Bass and Avolio, 1993). In this way, it is more likely that an emotional bond between managers and their workers will be established, which is fundamental to converge all individual efforts towards a unique direction. The relevance of this style assumes greater attention by reason of the fact that, in the Smart Working context due to greater geographic dispersion, emotional bonds among people are naturally more fragile.

In conclusion, adopting a transactional style, so motivating people by delivering awards and applying punishment, could result immediately effective to build a goal-oriented fiduciary relationship, however it doesn't solidify that empathetic bonds which make more spontaneous and effective collaboration, cooperation and resolution of potential conflicts. Indeed, awards is instrumental and conditioned to a certain goal. The constraints among people is formally agreed and are untied from any logics which aim to create group and organizational identification. In the long run, a similar approach could generate dissatisfaction and feeling of isolation, since the relationship between leader and people become more fragile.

By the way, some aspects of the transactional style such as the orientation towards the goal, could remain a good feature for our ideal managerial behavioural style. As anticipated before, the ideal figure is the one who is able to unify this practical inclination with the ones "more social" of the transformational style. In the virtual context, it is fundamental to remain virtually connected with people to avoid the

perception of isolation and disorientation, but at the same time, it become necessary to encourage and promote the realization of the outcome in an efficient and effective way. This is, indeed, one of the main purposes of Smart Working.

### **Shared leadership**

Another kind of leadership style which could adapt in Smart Working context, where managers' control has a lower intensity, is the shared leadership.

Shared leadership is a leadership style that broadly distributes leadership responsibility, such that people within a team and organization lead each other. Managers won't be the only which guides and inspire others, but it will be a collective effort where even the employees are expected to participate actively in the making decision process and propose improvements and work path to address. Obviously, managers will remain a relevant reference with the main purpose to align all workers' expectations and visions, but his/her role loses progressively unicity and he will be flanked by the opinions and others' point of view.

Hoegl, Muethel (2016) suggest us that in a virtual context, traditional leadership style (which is normally associated with a strict supervision) will become obsolete and no more fit to the flexible environment which is creating.

Particularly, projects where the virtual collaboration among colleagues is essential to reach a certain output, geographical dispersion will reduce inevitably the direct influence of leader onto employees' action. While sitting next to their chairs, leaders could affect their behaviours, instead in a digital world people could perceive managers' influence such less pressuring. However, digital and communication tools can help to mitigate the perception of distance among people, but recognising that traditional managerial behaviours are outdated, is the first step towards a winning leadership attitude.

But what are the reasons that usually lead managers not to see the potential of shared leadership? Hoegl, Muethel (2016) give us the answers.

1. The traditional leadership idea: traditionally, leadership is interpreted like a one-way control which cannot be shared with some others.
2. Manager over-confidence: usually, managers perceive himself/herself more able to supervise and guide people to reach certain goals. So, he/she denies the idea that someone could replace him/her role.
3. Fear to become expendable: Leaders may fear that a shared leadership can make their role useless. However, it is important underlying that coordination and expectative alignment functions will remain in charge of them.

So, how to encourage managers to embrace this new philosophy? Hoegl, Muethel (2016) continue saying:

1. Accept the new rules of the game: according to Smart working, physical proximity will be not necessary. We are going to work in potentially every place, so leaders' influence will become less intense. Relying more on employees' knowledges and competences, it will help to approach this new leadership style.
2. Respect team members' attitudes: The classical distinction between team members and the team leader implies that team members possess technical skills, but not necessarily leadership skills. However, many of the highly qualified members of virtual teams tend to possess both the cognitive ability and the motivation to consider the larger project objectives (rather than just their work packages) and help lead the team toward accomplishing them.
3. Encourage leadership behaviours: research has shown that there are crucial behaviours that successful leaders apply, such as anticipating team members' information needs, considering task interdependencies, and initiating decision-making and implementation processes. Even further, these behaviours should be shared by the team members.
4. Becoming a true team member: leaders should support actively work group promoting the culture of shared leadership, by granting spaces and attention to proposals and opinions of the workers. This will help to solidify trust and collaboration, and a greater trust will result in a better communication process and a more spontaneous knowledge sharing across distance.

## **Final considerations**

We have analysed how transformational and transactional leadership style have different impact in managing a work team. However, what the analysis tries to clarify, is how these two styles and the shared leadership can fit or not with the virtual context, made possible by Smart Working.

What are so the main considerations that we can extract from our analysis?

We have seen that both transformational and transactional have a positive impact on group performance, however each one with different shades.

Concerning with transformational leadership, a good efficacy is made possible by communication tools with a high level of media richness, while the transactional one doesn't require a specific communication tool since it is more flexible to technological contingencies.

A transformational leadership will greatly adapt in a context where people can physically meet each other, or in the impossibility of, through videoconference which can reproduce visual clues, body language, voice tone ecc, which result essential to build a solid relationship based on empathy and trust (Sedrine, Bouderbala, Nasraoui, 2018). Thanks to a transformational leadership, it is easier to strengthen that emotional and affective bonds among employees and leaders which are becoming more ephemeral in Smart Working context. In this way, once build a group identity, people will turn out to be more motivated to navigate towards a common direction, fostering so the group performance.

Let's pay attention that, even if videoconference is more effective than a messaging software, face-to-face approach remain the most preferable (Hambley, Neill, Kline, 2007). So, alternating between virtual communication to physical discussion is undoubtedly the winning strategy to stimulate and inspire people.

A transactional style, instead, could fit well when leaders' attitudes is focused primarily on reaching the objectives, regardless from the execution method.

A transactional style, perhaps, could be considered as the most comprehensible and intuitive, since once formally or informally defined rewarding or punishing conditions, it

can result immediately effective. Trust will become instrumental on such rewards which could be conditioned to the achievement of specific goals.

This approach, however, it is not suitable for creating group identity: motivation is mainly delimited to this achievement, and if awards conditions have calculated on individual bases, discontents and conflicts could occur, damaging so the already precarious relational stability (Burton et al., 2006).

However, as anticipated before, the ideal managerial behavioural style is the one who gleans traits from both. One of the key pillars of Smart Working is the measurement of the performance based on the outcome. Therefore, the transactional logics could be aligned with this purpose. But we can declare that in a virtual context, the focus towards the goal should not be encouraged by prizes anymore, but by the inspiration to act in the ideal way.

To conclude, the ideal managerial behavioural style in a flexible environment, is the one who persecutes and follows the aims agreed where the main source of inspiration is the good example of the leader.

Then, we have noticed that in addition to these two leadership styles, another one is become quite widespread. I'm referring to shared leadership.

Literature suggests us that shared leadership could result equally effective in a virtual context. In fact, since people are no longer daily in contact with their manager, they can feel his/her influence in a more tenuous way and perceive a greater detachment.

However, it is not the only reason to take into consideration this approach. In fact, often employees, in addition to technical skills, can enjoy those cognitive abilities that positively influence their colleagues. An authoritative person who is positively evaluated by their team can sometimes be more influential than the manager himself. Therefore, once the potential has been recognized, hiring and encouraging people to behave according to shared leadership principles could be the winning solution to increase collective performance.

This strategy is however less considered. This is due to a simple and comprehensible reason, that is the traditional leadership concept is identified uniquely towards one

person, not towards multitudes one. Then, this new innovate idea seems to completely distort the meaning of leadership itself.

Nevertheless, it should be added that the definition of leadership needs to be reconsidered in contexts of geographical dispersion. People no longer share the same room and are no longer strictly controlled and directed by their manager.

By reason of this premise and having carefully evaluated the cognitive and technical abilities of their collaborators, the manager can detach himself from his/her observation pedestal and gradually merge with his/her subordinates. The leader, in any case, must ensure the alignment of opinions and ideas, thus preventing any attempt to deviate from achieving the goals.

### 3.1.2 TRUST

One of the main complexities of Smart Working, where physical proximity is being lost, is the transmission of trust among people.

Trust in a virtual context is fundamental: both the faith that the manager must have in his collaborators and the trust between team colleagues, where mutual trust is necessary for the purpose of a good collaboration.

Top-down trust is more complex to consolidate.

In fact, managers are traditionally used to having visual control over people. Even in the absence of a complete trust, managers, traditionally, feel free to interact with any subordinates to correct behavioural deviations. In this case, trust is replaced by a punctual control.

From a Smart Working perspective, direct control is weakening, therefore greater trust is essential to break free from those conservative dynamics that would otherwise prevent the success of a "smart" project. People are dispersed geographically, so those logics of direct and meticulous supervision are no longer possible and decontextualized.

Trust isn't only relevant, but it is such a necessary condition to coordinate a project with people no more physically closed to.

Handy (1995) explained the six rules to build trust:

1. Trust is not blind: It may be unwise to trust people you rarely see or have never met. Therefore, a good advice is to avoid excessively large project teams over which the perception of control would be lacking. Trusting fewer people will be easier but also more effective.
2. Trust need boundaries: Unlimited trust is, in practice, unrealistic. By trust, organizations really mean confidence, a confidence in someone's competence and in his or her commitment to a goal. Define that goal, and the individual or the team can leave to get on with it. Control is then after the event, when the results are assessed. It is not a matter of granting permission before the event, but it's a matter of granting freedom to act and decide within a specific perimeter.

3. Trust demands learning: An organization made up of small and independent teams gradually takes the form of a federal structure. A necessary condition of constancy, however, is an ability to change: If one set of people cannot be exchanged for another set when circumstances alter, then the first set must adapt or die. They must also keep themselves abreast of change, forever exploring new options and new technologies. They must create a real learning culture. The choice of people for these groups is therefore crucial.
4. Trust needs bonding: Self-contained units responsible for delivering specified results are the necessary building blocks of an organization based on trust, but long-lasting groups of trustees can create their own problems, those of organizations within the organization. For the whole to work, the goals of the smaller units have to gel with the goals of the whole. The blossoming of vision and mission statements is one attempt to deal with integration, as are campaigns for total quality or excellence.
5. Trust needs touch: An organization of which technology is an integral part must be counterbalanced by moments of personal relationship. Paradoxically, the more the organization is "virtual" the more people need to meet physically. However, the meetings are different. They are more focused on processes rather than tasks. People tend to approach meetings with a greater desire to know than to transmit knowledge. Videoconferences are more task-focused but are managed more effectively if people already know each other personally. The meeting in the office therefore remains essential because it becomes an opportunity to intensify personal relationships and to strengthen the sharing of common goals.
6. Trust requires leaders: At their best, the units in good trust-based organizations hardly have to be managed, but they do need a multiplicity of leaders. Leader should be the person that best fit to manage and coordinate a certain circumstance. One metaphor got by literature, make us clearer the meaning of this definition. "We should compare our organizational team to a rowing crew on the river, that is eight men going backward as fast as they can without talking to each other, steered by the one person who can't row. Who is the leader here? It depends on the context. For example, when we are racing, it is the little chap



who is steering, because he is the only one who can see where we are going. But there is also the stroke, who sets the standard for all of us. He is a leader, too, in a way. But off the river, it's the captain of the crew, who selects us, bonds us together, builds our commitment to our goal and our dedication. Lastly, in training, there is our coach, who is undoubtedly the main influencer on our work”.

### **The importance of trust in a team**

If trust between managers and their subordinates is fundamental in order to align behaviours and expectations for the achievement of a common goal, trust between colleagues within a team is equally fundamental.

The "trust" variable, in fact, is widely taken up in the virtual team literature.

According to Flavian, Guinaliu and Jordan (2019), trust is important because it fosters social relationships and stimulates those behavioural styles that create cohesion and a sense of responsibility within a team. Trust turns out to be a good predictor of an increment in the OCB (Organizational Citizenship Behavior) variable, that is, the variable which measures person's voluntary commitment within an organization or company that is not part of his or her contractual tasks. In other words, organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) are individual, discretionary actions by employees that are outside their formal job description (Pickford and Joy, 2016).

Then, Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) sustain that people who build a good level of trust are better able to cope with complexities, uncertainty and expectations.

Brahm and Kunze (2012), highlights, instead, that in a team with a climate of trust, people feel more confident about investing in social relationships, so the gain in cohesion predict greater group effectiveness. In teams, on the other hand, in which mutual trust is less or even absent, that unity of identity which foster group performance will not develop.

In addition, Peters and Karren (2009) explain that greater trust between colleagues become synonymous with an increase in the perception of success. The perception of

success then influences the contribution and individual commitment of each member, and consequently the increase in performance.

### **Implications for practice**

One of the many action strategies to build trust is to promote empathy between managers and their subordinates. In this Smart Working context, technology becomes an excellent alternative for maintaining relationships even at a distance.

According to Flavian, Guinaliu and Jordan (2019), when managers discuss with employees through a technological device, must be able to listen and understand any problems, and perceive any tensions that may arise during work. Furthermore, they must be loyal and actively involve their subordinates in generating new ideas. They have to be available and reactive in approaching new complexities that may arise and frequently update their employees through feedback and sharing of opinions. Furthermore, visual signals within a virtual context are essential to grasp the implicit information, behind which problems and frustrations can be hidden.

Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) says instead that another course of action to generate trust is clarity. In fact, providing guidelines on the methods and frequency of communications reduces uncertainty and increases the effectiveness of coordination. Guidelines that encourage punctuality and respect for virtual appointments will be essential to raise awareness of the fragility of this new context.

Another key point turns out to be conflict management. A proactive strategy is trying to alleviate any frustrations and tensions as they arise. Any negative feelings that remain unheard or not understood, break the barrier of trust and compromise individual performance. Furthermore, in dealing with a specific problem it is appropriate to manage it directly with the interested party without involving third ones. A face-to-face conversation will be ideal, as it will make it easier to gather as many fundamental signals as possible so as not to create misunderstandings.

Lionel, Alan and Yu-Ting (2009) help us to understand the formation of trust over different time horizons. In a newly created team of people, the trust generated is called

a *swift trust*, that is, that fragile trust that is based on prejudice and on the consideration of a few objective elements available to people. In this initial phase, managers must encourage the identification in the group, as people do not objectively have someone to rely on. On the other hand, in a well-established team, where people have already established a certain level of confidentiality, the formation of trust is influenced by previous behaviours and experiences. At this stage, trust is referred to as *knowledge-based trust*, as people develop a feeling of trust that is based on others' knowledge. Trust, in this phase, is possibly strengthened if a certain person proves to be remarkably competent and strong in certain areas, and if he/she demonstrates a particular commitment and involvement in the project (Lionel, Alan and Yu-Ting, 2009).

Therefore, managers should emphasize and make people's skills, goodwill and competences visible, so that the dissemination of knowledge get rapid, and thus accelerates the process of building trust.

However, the literature puts a specific point to our attention. That is, those prejudices or a few objective elements that generated the swift trust at the beginning of the process, turn out to be conditioning for trust based on knowledge (Berthold, 2015). In other words, those people who distrust someone in the initial moments are more prone to distrust him/her even at a later time. Therefore, managers should promote the creation of trust in the early stages by encouraging communication and interaction between people, so that any negative feelings are avoided.

Finally, the use of technology is gaining more and more importance as a means of transmitting knowledge and therefore of trust. Managers should therefore prepare common rules to optimize and make more effective communications both within and away from the office. Team-building activities are also effective, i.e. those meetings in which people can interact and discuss on various fields, as they help to strengthen trust based on knowledge.

### **3.1.3 COMMUNICATION**

Another complexity that managers must pay attention to from a Smart Working perspective is communication. In fact, communication is not necessarily carried out physically, but given the geographical distance it can be done virtually as well.

In a virtual context, people can feel disoriented and mentally distant from what the organizational logics are. Therefore, a good manager should be aware of the various ways to communicate, and the related risks and benefits.

Good communication results in building trust and therefore good collaboration. If it were lacking, or if it were inadequate, people would find difficult to perceive the business needs, and therefore they would be not aligned with the objectives set.

It is not enough to know all the communication possibilities. What it distinguishes a good communication from a poor one, is knowing how to use all of them in a structured and proper way, and so defining frequency and modalities of interaction.

It should be noted that even the personal communication remains a fundamental pillar of Smart Working. In fact, it is advisable to highlight differences of a face-to-face communication with a virtual one and therefore underlying the relative implications.

#### **Communication modalities**

At first, Workman, Kahnweiler, Bommer (2003) suggest us that rich technologies (i.e. videoconference), that is those communication devices that allow immediate feedback, a reactive dialogue and visual and oral clues, fit better than lean technologies (i.e. chat and messages) in a teleworking context. Rich technology increase the involvement of people and therefore increase their commitment.

However, this correlation cannot be considered absolute. It has been shown that rich technology increases the effectiveness of conversations concerning complex tasks with a high degree of uncertainty, but which, on the contrary, do not bring particular benefits where communication needs to be fast and punctual (Workman, Kahnweiler, Bommer, 2003).

For complex tasks, having a communication media that allows a spontaneous and immediate comparison is essential to avoid misunderstandings and keep the attention threshold at a high level. In this case, videoconferencing, or even better a personal discussion, are suitable for this objective.

Even Gilkson, Woolley, Gupta (2019) shows us how videoconferencing, or any other communication vehicle that allows physical visualization, are the ideal means, in case it is perceived that one's collaborators are listless, or little involved in their responsibilities. In fact, it is demonstrated how their commitment and their contribution to work increase, essentially thanks to a more effective comparison with their colleagues. Visualization therefore seems to cause the reduction of social loafing, that is the condition of "social laziness" whereby people tend to decrease their commitment when working in groups than when working individually (Riley Hoffman, 2020).

The same is not true, however, for those already motivated and emotionally involved. Communication via videoconferencing does not therefore increase its engagement. (Gilkson, Woolley, Gupta, 2019).

### **The role of face-to-face conversation**

Another important dimension that has to be analysed is the face-to-face interaction.

From a smart working perspective, it is a dimension that, although less frequent, remains a very important and decisive part of it.

According to Kirkman, Rosen, Tesluk and Gibson (2009) personal conversation increases group cohesion, consensus, promote a better exchange of views and opinions, increases the clarity of the manager and therefore encourages the individual contribution towards the goal.

Then, it is added that face-to-face meetings encourage the development of cohesion, consensus, and mutual accountability that enhance efforts to improve processes

regardless of the level of empowerment<sup>1</sup>. In other words, if empowerment has been positively linked to managerial performance, innovation, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, it becomes less relevant when people meet each other frequently (Kirkman, Rosen, Tesluk and Gibson, 2009). This is to say that meeting each other can often turn out to be so effective and exhaustive that it can compensate for any lack of empowerment.

Therefore, in a virtual context, it will become necessary that managers will schedule a meticulous and structured planning of face-to-face meetings. However, it can become even more critical if there are a limited use of delegation and people perceive they do not have enough responsibility over their choices.

Finally, personal conversation can be preferred when managers need a more direct and transparent approach (Kirkman, Rosen, Tesluk and Gibson, 2009). In fact, if the leader had to communicate critical information or give both negative and positive feedback, a personal discussion would be the best solution. Indeed, the critical information would be understood more effectively, and feedbacks would be accepted, if positive with greater enthusiasm, and if negative with greater tolerance.

### **Combination of media**

Once we have ascertained what digital tools are available to virtually communicate, it becomes appropriate to deduce implications useful for practise.

First of all, managers should be aware that communication media are multiple and each one fulfils a different need. Once a particular message has been identified, it becomes, therefore, essential to choose the most appropriate vehicle to use (i.e. videoconference, call, messages, chat, mail etc. or a combination of them)

Belanger and Watson-Manheim (2006) give us a useful classification to delineate the various modalities and therefore the relative functions.

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<sup>1</sup> Employee empowerment is defined as the ways in which organizations provide their employees with a certain degree of autonomy and control in their day-to-day activities. This can include having a voice in process improvement, helping to create and manage new systems and tactics, and running smaller departments with less oversight from higher-level management.

They propose, so, a macro-distinction between "sequential combination" and "concurrent combination".

- **Sequential combination** refers to a combination of media used sequentially, therefore first one and then the other. Then, this category is sub-classified into *serial*, which indicates that a combination of media is used to send the same message, but the choice is made over time as the sender decides that a particular medium has not obtained the expected response (i.e. first telephone, then mail to not forget) and *complementary*, when two or more media are used for a collaborative activity and each medium is used for a different goal within that activity (i.e. post-meeting mail which summarizes what it is just discussed)
- **Concurrent combination** refers, instead, to a combination of media used concurrently, at the same time. Among these, the subdivision is characterized by *redundant*, when the sender simultaneously chooses several media to send the same message to an intended receiver although the actual act of sending occurs simultaneously (i.e. to organize a meeting, a person sends the invitation both by email and by text message), by *independent*, when two or more media are used simultaneously for different functions (i.e. a person is talking on the phone and needs quick information via chat from a third person) and *complementary*, that happens when multiple media are used simultaneously by the same person for the same activity (i.e. during a video conference, a person views the material just received by email).

### **Implications for practice**

Once has been listed the various possibilities to communicate and transmit messages, it is therefore essential to identify the moment for which a particular method is more suitable than the others.

The list below, extracted from Belanger and Watson-Manheim (2006), illustrates each combination of medias with their own use cases.

**Sequential:**

- **Serial:** Suitable for confirming a communication and when such communication is urgent. Also suitable for reinforcing mutual understanding when the media are inadequate during the communication.
- **Complementary:** Suitable for reinforcing mutual understanding and when any collaborative activity requires the use of different communication methods to transmit information.

**Concurrent:**

- **Redundant:** Suitable for confirming a communication and when the message is critical and urgent.
- **Independent:** Suitable for interaction on multiple communication levels and with different people.
- **Complementary:** Suitable for strengthening mutual understanding, and when any collaborative activity requires interaction and comparison on multiple simultaneous communication levels.

Therefore, what emerges from this analysis is that the use of a single communication media may not be enough. Managers must be aware that to ensure effective communication without any spaces of ambiguity, they can use a combination of media that fits well for a specific circumstance.

At this point it becomes crucial for managers to disseminate and promote these practices, making sure that their collaborators know how to use in the proper way the various methods. Therefore, given the increasing complexity, and given the multitude of different means of communication, it is good that managers provide communication protocols that guide and inspire conversation development.



### **3.1.4 KNOWLEDGE SHARING**

#### **The context**

Another complexity that managers must deal with from a Smart Working perspective is the sharing and distribution of knowledge.

If people are traditionally used to interface in the office to clarify and unravel any doubts, where physical proximity is lacking, the receipt of information may no longer be so immediate. Often in fact, in the office or in the company rooms, we can have the opportunity to meet the right person for a small clarification about certain topics.

Communication between people, even in a context that is no longer centralized, is certainly possible anyway. However, it may happen that people, for fleeting clarifications, may be less encouraged to virtually contact their colleagues

Even for more complex clarifications and comparisons, digital communication may not be the best approach. In fact, as previously discussed, a face-to-face interaction can also be more effective from the knowledge sharing point of view.

#### **A deepening of the knowledge**

At first, it is essential to define what kind of knowledge we are talking about.

Taskin and Bridoux (2010) tell us that according to knowledge-based view the transfer object is task-related knowledge such as best practices (Szulanski,1996) or intellectual capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). We propose to rename this task-related knowledge as 'technical knowledge'. It includes the abilities and knowledge needed to perform specific tasks. They are practical, and often relate to mechanical, information technology, mathematical, or scientific tasks.

Knowledge in turn can be divided into explicit and tacit. The first is objective, rational and easily sharable and can be expressed as data, scientific formulas or specific actions, while the tacit one, such as intuitions and personal experience, is subjective, experimental and complex to formalize. The crucial distinction between the two types

is their transmissibility. We can therefore affirm that tacit knowledge is complex to transmit both in a physical environment and in a virtual one. Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, can encounter greater difficulties in the digital context. Furthermore, from a strategic point of view, tacit knowledge is more likely to be a source of sustainable competitive advantage than explicit knowledge because tacit knowledge is less mobile and more difficult to imitate for competitors (Reed and DeFillippi 1990; Kogut and Zander 1992; Grant 1996b).

In addition, literature adds that the transmission of both explicit and tacit knowledge can be encouraged and stimulated by the existence of organizational-social knowledge (Taskin and Bridoux, 2010). Organizational-social knowledge refers to the existence of shared mental schemes, language and narratives. Mental schemes provide assumptions about reality, allow identification of the relevant issues, and help people interpret these issues and take actions accordingly (Daft and Weick 1984). Then having a common language improves the recipient's access to the source of technical knowledge because language is the means by which people discuss and exchange information (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998). In brief, shared mental schemes, language, and narratives contribute to mutual understanding.

Another discriminating factor is the quality of the relationship between the "mentor" and the recipient of the information. In fact, where mutual trust was lacking, the former would be not so spontaneous and natural in the explaining, while the latter could distrust or question the information just received.

Then, Kauppila, Rajala and Jyrama (2017) say that another reason that can stimulate the dissemination of knowledge is the degree of visibility that a particular advice, suggestion or solution has actually brought a benefit. In other words, when people perceive that sharing information can be decisive in resolving a complexity, and therefore the benefit is observable, people are more incentivized to help and support their colleagues.

Finally, another approach to simplify and make more effective the dissemination of knowledge is the development of a TMS (transactive memory system), that is a particular subdivision of the work that allows to decode, transcribe and recover information and knowledge. Basically, it is configured in a repository where, through the

help of metadata, people's knowledge and skills, information on roles, past experiences and any feedback are stored. On a theoretical level, however, it is not necessary a digital repository, but essentially in the ideal condition in which everyone knows who to refer to in case of need.

Prasert and Youngjin (2007) suggest us that a structured TMS can be associated with greater traceability of past knowledge, greater mutual trust and an increase in coordination effectiveness. If, for example, Pluto, in the progress of his project, were to interrupt due to a lack of information, the awareness in having clear who to ask for receiving an answer with the possibility to log into a repository to find that specific information, would be fundamental to improve both individual and group performance.

### **The difficulties of the virtual context**

As stated initially, the characteristics of the virtual world can also have a negative impact on knowledge sharing. Taskin and Bridoux (2010) help us to formalize the three dimensions that can have a negative effect in the dissemination of good practices and intellectual capital: the frequency of teleworking (therefore the frequency of work away from the office), the teleworking location and the perception about Smart Working project.

- Remote work frequency captures the times a person manages their work away from the office. Remote work, as shown by numerous studies, can increase the feeling of isolation and lack of identification in the organization. Therefore, it seems to be significant to hypothesize that people who frequently carry out their activities out-of-the-office find more difficulties to interface with people to gain knowledge. In the office, in fact, personal communication occurs more spontaneously and the transmission of information (through mental schemes, common language and narratives) is facilitated and encouraged (Taskin and Bridoux, 2010). Digital communication is less effective and lacks those emotional and expressive signals that facilitate tacit knowledge sharing. Furthermore, the more a person remains out of the office, the less he/she participates in those informal conversations that are held in the dining room, corridors or common

rooms that generate organizational identification and, maybe, dissemination of salient information. Finally, another relevant aspect to consider is the relational dimension. In fact, people who often work remotely, have more rarely the possibility to take part into those relaxing and private conversation with colleagues which generate trust and confidentiality.

- As regards the remote location, it is highlighted that the negative impact can be different between work done at home, in a co-working or collaboration room, or carried out during commuting ... In fact, it seems convincing that this negative relationship between knowledge sharing and work done at home or during commuting is more accentuated due to physical distance conditions. As the co-working rooms is concerning, the negative relationship seems to be less intense due to the possibility of being able to physically interface with colleagues (Taskin and Bridoux, 2010). In fact, this also attenuates the perception of isolation from the organizational culture and promotes the sharing of objectives and values. So, under these conditions, knowledge transfer will be more effective in co-working room rather than at home or while commuting.
- The perception of a Smart working project, and so the possibility of working remotely, could have an impact on the dissemination of knowledge. In fact, if this new possibility is positively evaluated by people, therefore perceived as a potential improvement in the existing work situation, they will be more inclined to promote those behavioural styles that boost knowledge sharing (Taskin and Bridoux, 2010). Furthermore, another determining factor is the formalization of an adequate smart working project. In fact, if people perceive that the smart working project is thought and scheduled in a structured and rational way, people will perceive more the benefits deriving from the new dynamics. They will more easily identify with the new organizational logics and will be overwhelmed by those feelings of enthusiasm and trust that will stimulate the dissemination of knowledge.

## **Implications for practice**

Once identified the main complexities deriving from a greater use of remote work that negatively impact knowledge sharing, it is equally necessary to identify the best managerial approaches to boost it.

At first, Taskin and Bridoux (2010) will help us again by proposing three different strategies.

- **Frequency of teleworking:** given that people which frequently work remotely have greater difficulties in identifying themselves with organizational values, and given that they express less spontaneity and confidentiality in approaching their colleagues, managers should take note that, in order to encourage the dissemination of knowledge, a totally virtual context would be deleterious. Therefore, scheduling the workdays alternating remote work and in-presence work, is the ideal compromise to encourage mutual discussion and collaboration.
- **Corporate communication:** We have analysed how a method to increase the smart working perception is to formally communicate the reasons and the new structure of these new dynamics. Therefore, managers, or those on their behalf, must commit to effectively communicating the new company policies and the rules underlying this project. People must not feel lost and disoriented and must be able to understand, maybe after discussed with their boss, the ideal frequency of remote work, and the occasions when it is preferable to be in the office.
- **Manage relationships:** We have highlighted how even the social detachment of people can be a reason for the fragility of human and social relationships, and therefore less incentive to have a confrontation with others. Therefore, managers should sensitize towards the reinforcement of human relationship, by promoting interdependent projects which facilitates comparisons, by promoting common best practices, by promoting collective training sessions, by encouraging conversations and increasing moments of digital meets but above all, by incentivising the exchange of views and opinions.

Finally, we can conclude that the development of a specific tool that can help people finding the necessary information when work remotely, may be an optimal strategy in order to avoid the dispersion of knowledge.

The problem does not arise only from the need to find a specific information, but also from the fact that often people do not even know who to ask for. Indeed, frequently happens that if someone doesn't know a specific answer, he/she will bounce the answer responsibility on someone else, creating in this way a bouncing process which generate frustration and dissatisfaction.

Therefore, simple tools containing information about colleagues' roles, skills and responsibilities, as well as both theoretical and practical knowledge material, could prevent feelings of disorientation and therefore improve performance.

In this repository, it can be gathered all information regarding past tasks and projects achieved with relative feedback, so that people have concrete references with respect to what really happened. Furthermore, a dynamic and flexible system, which is able to automatically link a particular competence and knowledge with a given task would be even more effective. The goal is that if a person who is working on a project, suppose about data analytics, needs suggestions for its realization, he/she can have immediate awareness of who to contact.

### **3.1.5 INTERPERSONAL RELATIOSHIP**

Another complexity that managers must manage in a smart working project is to strengthen and foster personal relationships. In fact, we have ascertained that people, according to smart working, are no longer bound to preside in the office. Social relations, in this flexible context, are becoming more fragile and less intense. A good manager, therefore, should promote and support these relationships in order to create cohesion and trust, fundamental drivers for creating group identity and improving collective performance. Walther and Burgoon (1972) found that people who have solid relational ties experience an increase in group creativity, an increase in motivation and morale and an improvement in decisions' quality and mutual understanding. Furthermore, it is demonstrated that a high level of group cohesion can make communication interactions more effective and encourage the sharing of knowledge.

Besides, another fundamental aspect to consider which will have a positive impact in relationship building is the right management of personal conflicts. Conflicts between people damage and compromise their mutual trust and therefore their performance. So, a good manager must be aware of any discontent and friction between colleagues that could arise. Adopting a proactive attitude, or rather anticipating its onset, remains the ideal strategy to pursue. However, even a reactive attitude if taken promptly, can be equally effective in quelling any discontent.

In summary, both encouraging discussion and communication between people, as well as anticipating or reacting promptly to any conflicts, are two complementary approaches to stimulate and consolidate human relationships between workers.

#### **Virtual relationship**

Thanks to technology, our relationships are increasingly more "virtual". The physical traditional approach remains fundamental, however no longer the only one. The technology enables remote communication and therefore, from a Smart Working perspective, it takes place through videoconferencing rather than calling. Therefore, the need to find the ideal strategy to intensify this new type of relationship becomes paramount. According to Pauleen (2003), developing virtual relationships arises from

the need to understand the personality, experiences, motivations, skills, cultural differences, workers' personal situations, in order to consolidate both social and professional relationships for the long term.

The approach proposed in the paper (Pauleen, 2003) has the aim to develop virtual relationships and consists of 3 steps:

- 1. Assessing condition**
- 2. Targeting level of relationship**
- 3. Creating strategies**

1. Assessing condition: here, the dimensions of analysis proposed are: «team issues, boundary crossing, organizational policies and technology». With regard to "team issues", it is essential for the manager to analyse the characteristics of the undertaken project, therefore the methodology, the objective and the deadlines and also to evaluate the experiences of the members and their opportunities for growth and training. As regards boundary crossing, it is necessary to analyse any cultural and personal divergences or convergences. On the other hand, concerning "organizational policies", the manager must also take into consideration the company rules that could incentivize or hinder the virtual relationship. Finally, in the "technology" dimension, there is the need to understand the availability of technological equipment, evaluate their usability, but also the skills of people to use them. This first analysis step is essential to gather as much information as possible so that he/she can proceed rationally to the next two.
2. Targeting level of relationship: The desired relationship objective means the relationship level most appropriate for the analysed context. The desired relationship level is configured through three degrees of importance: low, medium and high. As far as a "low" relationship is concerned, we mean that intensity of relationship, which is enough to carry out a certain project, so it will be essential to know the name of the people, their roles, knowledge and skills. By "medium" relationship, on the other hand, we mean the relational intensity necessary for both mutual understanding and the mutual sharing of ideas and



orientations. In this relationship dimension, communication is necessary as it allows the effective knowledge of one's colleagues. The "high" relationship is configured, however, when there is an adequate level of confidence to carry out more complex projects. This relational level is not easy to achieve for teams that often work virtually, however the only one necessary to effectively carry out critical projects. On this relational dimension, people elicit empathy, there is an immediate mutual understanding, there are no misunderstandings and ambiguities, and the transmission of implicit information occurs in a more natural and spontaneous way.

3. Creating strategies: In this last step, the manager must think about the most coherent strategy to reach the desired relationship level, through the choice of the most coherent communication channel and the relative methods. For example, face-to-face communication is suitable for communicating about complex projects that require clarity. Personal contact is also the best way to stimulate empathy between people and to overcome any cultural and personal divergences.

The use of the telephone can instead be consistent where people are in other places, and the manager wants to perceive any emotional states from the tone of the voice. In this case, where a person hides problems, the tone of his voice could reveal their existence.

The use of email or text messages can be suitable for quick alignments or for non-complex communications. Their function is certainly useful for coordination purposes, however less suitable for intensifying personal relationships. Without an initial cognitive meeting, the e-mail will not be able to stimulate mutual knowledge.

The use of videoconferencing is instead the best alternative to a face-to-face meeting. Through videoconferencing, people can see each other and hear other's tone of voice. For managers, this communication vehicle can be useful for promoting cohesion between people and stimulating the sharing of knowledge (Workman, Kahnweiler, Bommer, 2003). In fact, through the sharing of the screen, people can broadcast the view of their monitor to increase display clarity. Indeed, the more the media is rich, the more mutual trust is stimulated.

Videoconferencing can therefore become the most suitable communication tool to replace personal reunion, and therefore coherent to be used to solidify virtual relationships and coherent in the case of complex projects.

However, there is no single rule to establish the most suitable communication method. It is therefore up to the manager, once the context has been outlined, to adapt the ideal tool that best suits the contingencies. Obviously, even the combination of several simultaneous vehicles can favour the development of relationships. Finally, do not forget that the most solid virtual relationship is the one that arises primarily in the office, from personal confrontation. Therefore, organizing physical meetings on site with due frequency remains the best solution to encourage mutual empathy.

Furthermore, for managers, the importance of feedback should not be underestimated. Feedback is useful for aligning people's goals and expectations and for making judgments about work in progress. Furthermore, supporting one's collaborators with positive feedback increases their gratification and therefore their involvement in the project activity. If transmitted with a certain constancy, it also becomes a reason for the intensification of trust and personal relationships. In addition, in order to encourage the intensification of personal relationships between colleagues, the manager should encourage people to engage in continuous mutual exchange. In this way, collaboration and coordination increases and consequently the cohesion of the team.

## **Conflicts**

Another dimension to be analysed in the interpersonal relationship's panorama is the management of conflicts.

Primarily, according to Maruping and Agarwal (2004), conflicts can be grouped mainly into two types. Relational or socio-emotional conflicts, i.e. those conflict situations in which people reject each other emotionally and struggle to find points of contact to quell any tensions and conflicts related to the task, that is those conflict situations that emerge during a given work and people disagree on how to do it.

These two types of conflict are both related to a decrease in performance, but the effects are different. In fact, relational conflicts and the perception of tension between people diminish mutual satisfaction, arouse antipathy, compromise trust and decrease both emotional and professional bond with the team group. The conflict linked to a specific task, on the other hand, if faced in a positive way by people, can on the contrary be positively correlated to performance, as it stimulates comparison and sharing between different ideas (Maruping and Agarwal, 2004). However, even this type of conflict, if not managed in a conscious way, can be detrimental to performance, as people could attribute constant conflict to personality incompatibilities.

As regards conflict in a virtual world, Wakefield, Leidner and Garrison (2008) suggest that people, in the long term, are inclined to adapt technological use in the way they deem appropriate to carry out projects and intensify relationships. So, even if, initially, the virtual relationship between colleagues can be fragile and aseptic, once they have become familiar with technology tools, a possible conflictual relationship is more likely to be avoided. Furthermore, in this virtual context, the frequency of conflicts appears to be lower since people tend to be more concentrated towards own work and less towards interpersonal issues and frictions. In fact, Smart Working encourages the achievement of the goal, so the personal attitude is mainly oriented towards the achievement of the outcome.

### **Conflict management**

The best approach to manage conflicts is preventing the creation of them. In fact, although a conflictual situation can also be constructive where people are confronted with positivity, often behind every conflict resolution there remains friction which, in the long run, can generate frustration and discontent.

Therefore, to prevent a possible conflict situation, a good planning of activities followed by constant communication that aligns people's expectations and goals, is certainly the ideal path.

However, whenever a conflict arise, conflict resolution is necessary.<sup>2</sup>

Rahim (2002) and Thomas et al. (2008) suggest us five leadership style to resolve a conflict. Lawless and Trif (2016), then, proposed the following courses of action:

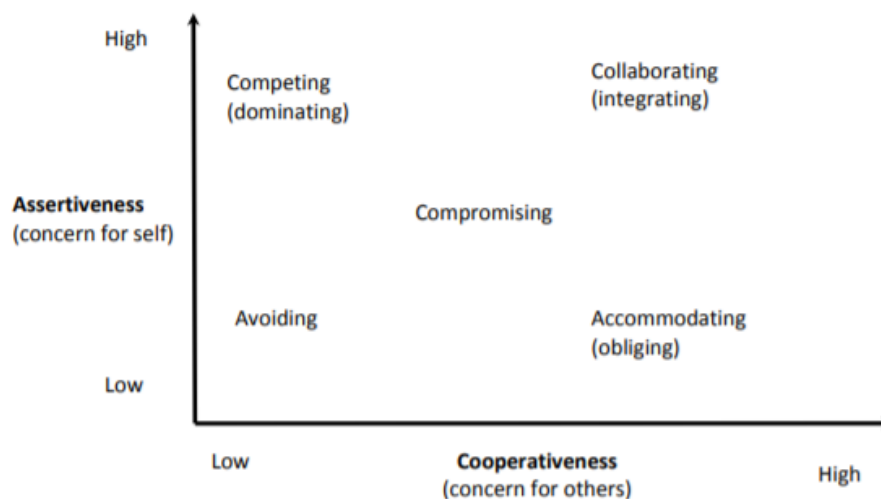
1. Collaborating mode involves cooperation between the parties to reach a win–win solution that satisfies both parties. It is very similar to the integrative and problem-solving types, as all seek to find a long-term solution considering the interests of both parties (Holt and DeVore, 2005). It is considered useful when there is a complex issue, when commitment is needed from the other party for successful implementation and time is available for problem-solving. In contrast, it is considered inappropriate when an issue is simple, requires an immediate solution or the parties do not have problem-solving skills (Rahim, 2002: 219). This mode is suitable for dealing with strategic, long-term issues (Chung-Yan and Moeller, 2010).
2. Accommodating mode ignores one’s own needs and is associated with attempting to play down the differences and emphasising similarities. It is suitable if a party believes that he or she may be wrong or the issue is far more important for the other party and preserving the relationship is important (Rahim, 2002). There is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode, with the expectation of getting some future benefit from the other party when needed. This can be efficient in solving interpersonal relationship conflicts due to its long-term orientation (i.e. to develop trust), but not task conflicts (Chung-Yan and Moeller, 2010).
3. Competing mode has been identified with a win–lose orientation. Competing may mean standing up for one’s rights and/or defending a position that the person believes to be correct (Rahim, Magner and Shapiro, 2000). It is more suitable if a speedy decision is needed, if subordinates lack the expertise to make a decision, or if it is necessary to overcome assertive subordinates; it is inappropriate if there is a complex issue, both parties are equally powerful or subordinates have high degree of competence on the issue (Rahim, 2002: 219).

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<sup>2</sup> [https://isl.uga.edu/uploads/docs/4-Conflict\\_Resolution\\_Activity.pdf](https://isl.uga.edu/uploads/docs/4-Conflict_Resolution_Activity.pdf) This pdf gives a practical tool to assess managers’ attitudes in conflicts resolution.

Canary (2003) found that competing was generally ineffective in resolving disagreements.

4. Avoiding mode is used to prevent conflict, to ignore the situation and postpone the conflict situation (Rahim, 2002). This mode could be useful only when the issue is minor and the potential dysfunctional effect of confronting the other party outweighs benefits of resolution. It is often used out of fear of confrontation due to lack of confidence in conflict management skills (Rahim, 2002). A person avoiding situations does not satisfy his/her own concerns or the concerns of the other party involved (Rahim, Magner and Shapiro, 2000). Canary (2003) found that avoidance is generally ineffective at resolving disagreements.
5. Compromising mode is associated with give-and-take and attempts to satisfy each party's concern (Thomas et al., 2008). It is suitable when the goals of the parties are mutually exclusive, while it is inappropriate if the problem is complex and requires a long-term solution based on a problem-solving approach (Rahim, 2002: 219). Rahim (2002) found that compromising is the most successful mode at resolving interpersonal conflicts



Source: Adapted from Rahim (2002) and Thomas et al. (2008)

The conflict resolution issue raises many questions about which style is best suited in a specific circumstance, however there are no univocal answers. Every conflict is, indeed, different, meaning there is no one right way to manage them all. A lot of factors play into which method is best for resolving conflict. Consider them all before deciding on

which one to use. Choosing the right conflict management style can be the difference between resolution and uncertainty. However, it has to be said that the three conflict-handling modes that involve cooperation (accommodating, compromising and collaboration) are considered to be more effective for finding long-term solutions to conflicts, whilst the two modes characterised by low levels of cooperation are useful for dealing with short-term tactical issues (Rahim, 2002).

Finally, it should be noted that conflict management in the virtual world requires time and understanding. Although often the causes of conflict are not so relevant and therefore easily resolvable via digital tools, often the issues become more crucial and complex, and require a high level of media richness for the best communication. Therefore, to avoid ambiguities and misunderstandings, and to increase mutual empathy, it is preferable to choose the face-to-face approach. In this way, people feel more recognized, can deal more naturally and are more inclined to accept compromises.

### **3.1.6 TRAINING**

Smart working is the working way of the future. As we have already analysed, the benefits that lie behind this word are innumerable. However, a good manager should not underestimate the risks that inadequate business planning and inadequate training of people could bring out.

According to Rosen, Furst and Blackburn (2006), the main causes of virtual teams failure are: (1) coordinating the logistics of team work across time and space, (2) establishing effective working relationships between team leaders and members and among team members in the absence of frequent face-to-face communication, and (3) identifying and successfully using technologies appropriate for specific team tasks.

Lack of coordination occurs mainly when people are unable to coordinate temporally with respect to the execution of a given project, when the roles and responsibilities of colleagues are not clear, and when there is uncertainty about the technological tools to be used. The lack of adequate communication could further aggravate the problem, as the digital vehicle can generate misunderstandings.

The difficulty in consolidating personal relationships occurs mainly due to infrequent personal communication. In fact, in the digital world, people lack human relationships and struggle to establish trust-based relationship.

The inappropriate use of technology, on the other hand, represents one of the main complexities, as people are traditionally used to working in the office and are not sufficiently familiar with using the new communication and work tools available. The new communication media cannot be considered fungible, each, as we have seen, satisfies a different need. Therefore, training and educating people to learn how to correctly use the technologies available to them, and to choose the right tool for a specific need is necessary.

#### **The different training content area**

Rosen, Furst and Blackburn (2006) continue providing us main training content area that people perceive as valuable.

Training to become a "good leader" is perceived positively by people. Specifically, training to effectively conduct a virtual meeting, training to monitor team progress and related corrective actions, training to establish solid and lasting relationship with people, and training to evaluate and reward workers, are the training content areas most requested and recognized by people (Rosen, Furst and Blackburn, 2006). In fact, people particularly appreciate when their manager performs these functions effectively and consciously.

Furthermore, another positively perceived training is the one inherent the appropriate use of technology. Often, due to inexperience, people are unable to carry out virtual activities with confidence and practicality. In fact, an improper and ineffective use of communication tools could generate frustration and dissatisfaction (Rosen, Furst and Blackburn, 2006). The good manager, therefore, must organize and plan courses or webinar that stimulate and teach how to correctly use new technologies, as well as giving tips about the suit communication tool to use according to specific needs.

Furthermore, in a Smart Working context, where people tend to work from home too, it is also advisable to plan sessions that make people aware of the possible risks deriving from off-site work. These risks stand among the general negative sides of smart working and arise mainly from the blurred boundary between work and private life. The outlines of the two dimensions are becoming increasingly blurred and could cause discomfort and disorientation among people. So, if at first, remote working is associated with greater productivity, often this positive impact could be jeopardised due to family distractions.

Furthermore, organizing training sessions in the company can also be effective and well-seen from the relational point of view. Training is perceived as a reason for personal confrontation which encourages collaboration and mutual trust (Rosen, Furst and Blackburn, 2006). Finally, the manager-employee relationship is also intensified, as the interest in improving people's skills and competences is positively recognized.

For practical purposes, I report an example of training modules for both managers and collaborators, extracted from the study of Rosen, Furst and Blackburn (2006).



### ***Training Modules for Virtual Team Leaders***

- Fitting the technology to the task
- Setting expectations, measuring, and rewarding team contributions
- Coaching and mentoring virtual team members
- Modeling desired virtual team behaviors (responsiveness, using groupware to share information)
- Managing external relations (on-site managers, sponsors)

### ***Training Modules for Virtual Team Members and Leaders***

- Face-to-face team-building session prior to virtual team launch:  
Establish team identity - Create mission statement - Establish team norms - Building trust
- Mastering virtual team technology:  
Use of groupware - Teleconference and videoconference procedures
- Communications skills:  
Electronic etiquette - Cultural awareness - Brainstorming electronically - Decision making
- Team management:  
Virtual meeting logistics (synchronizing schedules, setting agendas) - Defining roles - Resolving conflicts - Meeting milestones - Evaluating process and progress

### **Self-efficacy training**

With the so-called self-efficacy, a term coined by Albert Bandura in '86, we want to define that personal feeling of self-conviction in doing a certain thing. In other words, it can be defined as that perception of our abilities to carry out a task. It concerns our personal belief, understood as the ability to organize and carry out the actions necessary to achieve certain levels of performance.

According to this theory, there are four sources of information that people use to generate self-efficacy.

The first is the performance accomplishment, that is personal judgment resulting from past performance. Successes increase its intensity, while failures deteriorate it.

The second is the vicarious experience, that is that greater self-confidence resulting from the observation of others' behaviours. This is also referred to as modelling and generates an increase in the perception of one's skills.

The third is social persuasion and refers to that dimension in which people increase their awareness and self-esteem thanks to feedback, motivations and advice. The manager can then act on this driver, increasing the frequency of feedback and new stimuli.

The last dimension, on the other hand, is psychological and emotional states, that is the influence that an emotional state (anxiety, motivation, stress, etc.) can have in carrying out a task.

Self-efficacy is deliberately included in this chapter, as a careful and planned training program will be essential to reinforce it.

### **The importance of self-efficacy**

First of all, self-efficacy appears to be a positive predictor of personal performance. In fact, it has a causal function in determining individual's behaviours, so its greater intensity is associated with an improvement in personal performance. In addition, as reported by Staples, Hlland and Higgins (1999), the power of self-efficacy is even more relevant in a virtual environment. Indeed, remote work has, for definition, a less intense supervision and people are more autonomous and freer in choosing and executing their tasks. Therefore, a low level of individual self-efficacy could negatively affect the performance of people who work remotely more than those used to working in the office. The virtual context, as already discussed, is more fragile, therefore a positive perception of own abilities and skills is necessary to effectively accomplish own duties.

Furthermore, the paper demonstrates how self-efficacy is directly correlated with an increase in personal satisfaction, an increase in the likelihood of positively facing complex and unexpected situations, an increase in emotional and professional involvement in the organization and a decrease in the level of stress (Staples, Hlland and Higgins (1999)).

The study also conducts an empirical analysis to verify which factors can be decisive for the formation of self-efficacy.

Primarily, it has been shown that a good training program and positive past experiences are correlated with an increase in self-efficacy. This implies that employees with more experience and training at working remotely will have higher levels of remote work self-efficacy. This, in turn, will be positively related to performance, job attitudes and behaviours. Then, it is emphasized how the good example of the manager in carrying out certain functions is motivating in doing the same for his subordinates. Furthermore, it is added that an increase in anxiety due to digital inexperience precludes the formation of self-efficacy. Therefore, preventing this negative effect with a technological training plan is paramount. Finally, it is highlighted how the greater connectivity between people, therefore greater simplicity in relating with colleagues both in the virtual and in the physical office, is positively perceived, generating, in this way, greater serenity among people and decreasing the feeling of isolation.

### **Implications for practice**

These theoretical ideas must therefore have a concrete reflection. So, what are the implications that could have an impact in daily job? First of all, it is appropriate to reiterate that the leader must be a skilled communicator, must know how to listen to the perplexities and frustrations of his/her employees and must effectively schedule and hold virtual and physical meetings.

In addition, as highlighted by Staples, Hlland and Higgins (1999), a virtual organization need to develop training courses and training materials that help their remote managers both learn about and implement effective remote management practices. The results of the current study suggest that these investments in training can result in higher levels of employee performance.

Therefore, supporting people in carrying out their duties effectively, including teaching how to set goals, how to effectively manage their time, how to communicate with their colleagues and how to share and absorb knowledge, is essential to improve organizational performance and personal attitudes.

Furthermore, we have seen that the increase in personal experience is also related to a high intensity of self-efficacy. Therefore, training that makes people aware of the importance of meeting deadlines with maximum efficiency, then transmitting practical advices to optimize and take full advantage of the time available, would reduce the amount of time required to reach a certain experience level. Then, managers must widespread the mentality that already experienced people should be the mentor of inexperienced ones to convey knowledge and competences. This will be a win-win solution, both for fostering good relationships and improving workers' skills.

Finally, we noted how an improvement in the use of technological equipment decreases the anxiety and uncertainty arising from these new ways of working (Staples, Hulland and Higgins, 1999). Therefore, the training courses must also include careful attention to the correct use of technological devices and convey the awareness of being able to well communicate even if not in the office. In fact, people need to frequently interact with their colleagues, both from a professional and an emotional point of view, and therefore greater familiarity with the use of digital media foster dialogue and mutual interaction. Satisfaction and attitude are positively affected, and consequently the organizational involvement.

### **3.1.7 GOAL-ORIENTED ATTITUDE**

One of the main revolutions according to Smart Working is the new dimension of control. In fact, if, from a traditional perspective, the manager can constantly and real time supervise the progress of the execution of a given task, now in a context of greater geographical dispersion, this meticulous control can no longer be feasible. This traditional attitude is known as micromanagement. It is a negative term that refers to a management style characterised by extremely close supervision and control of the minor details of an individual's workload and output. Micromanagers generally avoid delegating decision-making power to employees and may be overly obsessed with information-gathering by forcing employees to produce regular, detailed reports that are often superfluous. Therefore, we can easily recognise that this kind of control is no longer suitable for our flexible environment. A different form of control, that is more results-oriented, turns out to be not only the unique feasible approach, but also the best in order to arouse greater involvement in the organization and to increase people's productivity.

In order to embrace these new needs, one of the most adapted approaches for changing this inclination, is to share the idea with workers. In fact, confronting and communicating, and expressing the new need to be evaluated no longer on the method of execution but on the pre-established goal, becomes a fundamental step to transmit this new awareness. Furthermore, in this way, it becomes even more natural and spontaneous to identify the ideal goal, and people can now be conscious of the reasons behind a particular choice. Often, in fact, the tendency is to leave people unaware of the motivations, so excluding them from the decision-making process.

Involvement should not be a rule, as it could generate confusion and lack of orientation, however it is essential for people to understand and become an active part of organizational choices. In this way, personal involvement and motivation are positively influenced and consequently the performance benefits.

In addition to involvement in the decision-making process, greater autonomy and responsibility in choosing and doing own tasks is also required.

## **A greater empowerment**

"The only way to develop a sense of responsibility in people is to entrust them with responsibilities" Kenneth Blanchard

This new managerial attitude, aimed at granting greater delegation and decision-making autonomy, is understood by the book "Smart Working and Smart Workers", as trust aimed at empowerment.

Greater responsibility is therefore paramount so that people can be up to the new decision-making dynamics. Therefore, the delegation process must not take place in an improvised and uncritical manner, but the results expected by the managers must be defined and agreed, the areas of responsibility of the employee assigned and formalized and the areas of decision-making and operational autonomy outlined: all this must be done upstream, so as not to create areas of shadow or ambiguity between the parties. Once the line over which responsibility is assigned has been shared, it is equally obvious that control, if necessary, will only be exercised above. If this line is set considering the expected results, therefore, managers must be careful to not control over the areas of the choice of methods or operational tools to use to achieve them: these things lie below this line, in areas that are precisely been delegated to the employee.

Another recurring word that recently has become increasingly important is empowerment. Empowerment means those managerial behaviours that stimulate the sharing of information, encourage personal initiative and promote training for individual and collective improvement. Promoting organizational empowerment therefore becomes essential to abandon micro-management. But how? Forbes magazine in the article "Five Ways Leaders Can Embrace Empowerment To Build High-Performing Teams" gives us four interesting insights.

- Identify and leverage individual's strengths and skills
- Encourage the sharing of knowledge among colleagues.
- Teach and support continuous improvement.
- Grant more delegation and motivate and guide through feedback.

## **KPI for performance assessment**

If the control and therefore the evaluation of people progressively lose that traditional nuances, it becomes necessary to find other KPIs in order to assess the activities of the workers.

The approach reported in the book "Smart working & Smart workers" offers us four dimensions of analysis that could adapt more effectively to the new working context.

The first dimension provided is the evaluation of the results against the agreed objectives. This first piece is the backbone of this new orientation. In fact, as previously analysed, managers could decide the objectives in concert with employees, or just communicate them after took the decision individually. Communication needs to be comprehensive and transparent, and it becomes equally essential to ensure that there are no spaces for perplexity and ambiguity. Providing the right direction without giving in to micro-management temptation is only possible if there is total clarity.

The second dimension is the responsibility intensity. This dimension aims to analyse how much the employee comply with the agreed priorities, how much is available for company meetings and how much is updated from a technological point of view. Please note that if the evaluation achieved is not satisfactory, the managerial attitude must be supportive and encouraging. Furthermore, investigating the reasons behind any negative scores is essential to avoid the onset of prejudices.

The third dimension is the assessment of personal innovation. The goal of Smart Working is the pursuit of continuous improvement. Traditional and conservative approaches that repudiate and deny change will be soon replaced by more open-minded and innovative ones. Therefore, stimulating people to a proactive approach that looks for improvements fits with this flexible context. Therefore, a measurement of the number of ideas proposed or of the "innovative" projects carried out by people could be an interesting KPIs.

In the last dimension of analysis there is the evaluation of relational connectivity. We have seen how geographical dispersion makes personal relationships much more infrequent and sometimes even more fragile. Furthermore, the technological tools become fundamental for remote project management. Therefore, the KPIs proposed to

measure relational connectivity are the response and reaction times and the number of internal and external relationships.

### **S.M.A.R.T. approach**

Another revolutionary approach that is functional to rationalize the measurement of an outcome, is the S.M.A.R.T. approach. Although this word is already very significant in itself, it actually conceals an English acronym. In fact, S.M.A.R.T. stands out for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely.

This approach was theorized to give an evaluative concreteness to the objectives that a person, or in this case, a company, sets. In fact, it may happen that in determining certain goals, the rational dimension is not considered, that is, its planning may be imprecise and vague. Managers, therefore, once a goal is achieved, may find difficulties to assess whether the result is coherent to what expected or, even worse, if it is aligned or not with the organizational interest. Furthermore, unclear objectives could elicit and boost disorientation and frustration.

The SMART approach therefore wants to put an end to such ambiguity situations. Besides, from Smart Working point of view, these rules help managers in determining and then evaluating the predetermined outcomes.

Therefore, it becomes important to deepen and understand each specific point of this acronym.

- **Specific:** the goal must be specific and tangible and clearly express what, how, who must be involved and why you want to achieve it. For example, an overall goal is "I want to get fit". A specific one instead is: "I want to join the gym and train 4 times a week".
- **Measurable:** the goal must be measurable. If not measurable, it is neither possible to determine its progress, nor to perceive any deviations from the ideal path. A measurable goal is: "I go to the gym 3 times a week to lose 5kg".
- **Achievable:** the goal must be achievable and realistic, therefore commensurate with the resources and skills available. Obviously, its feasibility must be well



thought out, that is, it will be important to assess the right balance between what is too simple and what is too complex. Returning to the previous example, losing 5kg can be the right compromise.

- **Relevant:** The objective must obviously bring added value, such as to justify the effort made. In fact, before using time, resources and money, it is advisable to evaluate how much it is worth, by analysing the costs and benefits. In fact, if it is found that the costs exceed the benefits, it is advisable to abandon it or to make changes such as to reverse the relationship. For example, if we had set out to lose 1 kg, against a € 50 gym-subscription, it will be wise to admit that this expense does not compensate for the benefits.
- **Timely:** Goals must be tied to a deadline. First, because if it were lacking, there will be insufficient motivation to initiate the effort due to procrastination tendency. Second, the infra-process deadlines can be verified to determine the state of progress. Therefore, planning the achievement of a goal, step by step and with consequent verification of the micro-objectives achieved, can be useful for the achievement of the parent goal. Therefore, if I aim to lose 5 kg in 2 months, the goal is to lose 2.5 kg per month.

### **3.2 BEHAVIOURS - BOTTOM UP**

One of the main complexities to be managed in a Smart Working context is the employees' dimension. In fact, people in this more flexible context have the possibility to work both in an office, at home or in any other place that makes remote work possible. People are therefore called upon to manage new contexts and new dynamics, which are very distant from those of the office. If, in fact, traditionally in the office, people work exclusively at desks and closely in contact with their colleagues, in a remote working context, people can afford to work anywhere, provided that the ideal conditions are obviously present. By ideal conditions, we mean those optimal conditions so that the work can be carried out without distractions and exogenous tensions. One of the main conflicts that frequently emerge are in fact the tensions that can be generated between the family and work, both in one direction and in the other. Namely, if people, in working from home, are unable to carve out that comfortable and easy space to work peacefully, that greater productivity that justifies these new working frontiers is lost, thus nullifying planned efforts. Or on the contrary, as there's the possibility to work at any time, if people were not able to effectively manage the work-time available, they could invade the family-time, increasing the feeling of stress and frustration. Furthermore, another complexity that people must face is the greater social distancing between colleagues. People see each other less often, and managing such relationships is more problematic.

Finally, even the new managerial orientation, which is based on the evaluation of the results, requires new employees' soft skills, as greater delegation and decision-making autonomy empower people with greater responsibilities. Therefore, new skills in managing and executing their tasks are essential.

"Smart worker", so, differs from the traditional worker for new soft skills and competences required, as well as greater mental flexibility, essential for interfacing with one's colleagues even at a distance.

### **3.2.1 SKILLS REQUIRED**

There are many new skills needed to work effectively in the virtual dimension. The literature therefore gives us some indications, suggesting what are the main aspects to consider. Schulze and Krumm (2017) propose a model that gathers the necessary abilities to face the new complexities.

This model is composed by four dimensions: knowledge, motivation, experience and personality characteristics.

#### ***Knowledge and skills for handling technology-related challenges***

*Knowledges:* people should know when to use "single", "sequential" and "concurrent" media. We remind that "single" means the one-shot use of a media, for "sequential" when multiple media are used sequentially and "concurrent" when multiple media are used simultaneously.

Regarding the use of "single" media, and in accordance with the MST (media synchronicity theory), there are two fundamental communication processes relevant to the resolution of each task, as well as "convergence" and "conveyance". Convergence processes are characterized by the goal to arrive at a common understanding. In contrast, conveyance processes deal with the transmission of information. Therefore, for needs related to the first dimension, medium with a high degree of synchronization are the ideal tools, while those with a low degree of synchronization are more suitable for "conveyance" processes. (Schulze and Krumm, 2017)

As for the use of "sequential" and "concurrent" media, many studies confirm that the complementary use is more effective as it reduces ambiguities, errors and information overload in a communication interaction (Stephens, 2007). Therefore, if other information is shared on the screen during a video conference, this is more effective than sharing it later.

*Skills:* According to Spitzberg's (2006), the skills for virtual communication, essential for its success, can be grouped into expressiveness (ability to communicate expressively, therefore through the use of facial expressions, vocal tone or use of emoticons), coordination (skill in responding promptly and comprehensively), attentiveness (ability to demonstrate interest and empathy towards the interlocutor, therefore knowing how

to listen, and composure (ability to master the communication tools available). These skills are predictors of communication effectiveness that increase the satisfaction and performance of a team.

### ***Motivation***

*Motivation to use technology:* In the motivational sphere, two aspects are linked to increase people's stimuli to use technological tools. The first concerns the so-called computer playfulness, that is that spontaneous tendency to interact with technological instruments as it is considered rewarding and challenging. The second, on the other hand, concerns the perceived utility, or the perception that the use of technological tools can improve one's productivity. The first motivational area is directly attributable to a perception of greater ease of use of the technology, while the second directly affects behavioural intentions to use a technology (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). Therefore, acting on these two motivational levers can be effective in increasing personal satisfaction and effectiveness. Regarding, instead, avoidance tendencies, several studies on virtual work focused on constructs such as computer anxiety and CMC apprehension. Whereas computer anxiety signifies a fear that is related to the technology itself (Scott & Timmerman, 2005), CMC apprehension points to the fear of the communication or interaction process via technology (Wrench & Punyanunt-Carter, 2007). Empirically, avoidance motives have been linked to reduced CMC skills (Wrench & Punyanunt-Carter, 2007) and negative attitudes towards technology use.

*Motivation to work geographically dispersed:* As pointed out by Hertel et al. (2004), spatial and temporal distribution of team members pose motivational challenges due to, for example, feelings of anonymity, low social control, as well as low visibility of own and other team members' contributions. In support of these notions, Blaskovich (2008) stressed that social loafing might be exacerbated in a virtual context because the geographic separation of team members decreases social impact (Blaskovich, 2008). On the contrary, individuals who engage in interdependent goal setting and who are self-efficacious about their task accomplishment are likely to be highly motivated, even in a dispersed working context (Hertel et al., 2004).

## ***Experience***

*Technology experience:* several studies confirm that people who have a good level of technological experience in their skills' baggage, or practicality and familiarity in the use of a particular communication vehicle, are able to effectively encode and decode all the visual and oral signals transmitted during communication (Brown, Dennis, & Venkatesh, 2010; Carlson, Carlson, Hunter, Vaughn, & George, 2013). Therefore, a person who has experience in using videoconferencing will be able to manage the conversation more transparently and naturally, sometimes also helping the interlocutor, if inexperienced, to do the same.

*Dispersed work-experience:* In this case as well, other studies highlight how having already experience in working geographically dispersed, helps people to face the critical issues emerging from virtual work. For example, Staples et al. (1999) reveals how people who in the past had the opportunity to virtually manage workers, have a more proactive attitude and know how to prevent any arising problems. Even the same workers who have already had previous experience, are able to manage more effectively the greater condition of autonomy in the execution of a project, and therefore are able to compensate for the lower reliance on nearby colleagues for quick advice and clarifications.

## ***Personality characteristics***

*Personality and technology use:* Other studies show that having a positive attitude to the use of technology, and therefore having that mental openness that arouses gratification in trying something new, is positively correlated with a simpler learning of new means of communication. Furthermore, positivity seems to be related to greater cohesion with colleagues during video conferences, a greater likelihood of supporting those in difficulty, and a lower likelihood of generating stress and anxiety. (MacDonnell, O'Neill, Kline, & Hambley, 2009)

*Personality and geographically dispersed work:* It is even essential a positive attitude to face the work far from the office and the new working conditions. In particular, O'Neill et al. (2014), highlights how people who show high conscientiousness are more likely to manage their time more effectively, therefore planning activities and setting deadlines

(self-management tactics) and consequently decreasing the likelihood of engaging in social loafing behaviours. In the same study, it is also suggested that the people who tend to be more extroverted and inclined to reciprocal dialogue and comparison, are more able to overcome the difficulties related to physical distance, and therefore interface more with their colleagues.

### **Digital soft skills**

Other fundamental skills that people need to possess in order to work effectively both remotely and in the office are the so-called digital soft skills. By digital soft skills we mean those transversal skills related to behaviours, attitudes and competences of people, to effectively use new digital tools. If in fact, in the previous pages, we have emphasized how important it is that people have a good relationship with technology, now it becomes paramount to identify and formalize these indispensable skills. The observatory of the Milan Polytechnic proposes the following reclassification.

#### ***Knowledge networking:***

It is the ability to identify, save, organize and share information available online both on social networks and in virtual communities.

##### *-Competences:*

- Browser, search and filter data, information and digital content
- Evaluate data, information and digital content
- Develop digital content
- Integrate and rework digital content
- Manage data, information and digital content
- Sharing information with digital technologies

#### ***Virtual communication***

It is the ability to communicate effectively, coordinate projects and manage one's digital identity in digital environments.

##### *-Competences*

- Interact with digital technologies

- Collaborate through digital technologies
- Manage digital identity
- Structuring digital content in a visual way

### ***Digital awareness***

It means being able to understand the correct use of digital tools with the due attention to the balance between professional life and personal one. It is about knowing how to manage the various tools available, from a smartphone to chats on social networks, without going beyond the boundaries that can harm oneself or colleagues.

*-Competences:*

- Protect devices
- Protect personal data and privacy
- Protect health and well-being
- Netiquette: that is that set of informal or formal rules that inspire and promote good behaviour of internet's users, especially in relating through software such as forums, blogs, social networks etc.

### ***Self-empowerment***

It means having the necessary knowledge and mastering the digital tools to solve problems, that is being able to solve complex problems through a conscious use of digital tools.

*-Competences*

- Solve technical problems
- Identify technological needs and responses
- Identify digital competence gaps

### **Skills: traditional vs virtual office**

Another interesting aspect to explore is investigating the differences between the skills required in a traditional setting compared to the ones required in a smart working scenario. For the need, Krumm, Kanthak, Hartmann and Hertel (2017) reported a model which highlight the different and necessary abilities required in each scenario.

Firstly, it is appropriate to report what are the main groups of skills outlined by literature.

The paper divides the skills into 7 main domains:

- Leading and deciding: this includes behaviours such as: acting on their own initiative, assuming own responsibilities, motivating other members, setting concrete goals for themselves and other members and working independently.
- Supporting and cooperating: including sharing information and relevant resources, showing willingness to cooperate and helping those in difficulty, showing coherence and loyalty, encouraging cooperation in the group, promoting mutual trust, preventing feelings of isolation through communication and knowledge to listen.
- Interacting and presenting: including communicating in a clear and structured way, resolving conflicts, encouraging mutual discussion, persuading own colleagues and transmitting positivity and self-confidence.
- Analysing and interpreting: including using communication vehicles effectively, communicating in a simple and understandable way, analysing data effectively, understanding the duties of own colleagues, demonstrating analytical and timely skills and working effectively with computers and digital media.
- Creating and conceptualizing: including quickly gathering information, promoting innovation and change, showing creativity and addressing problems strategically.
- Organizing and executing: including being multi-tasking, planning personal goals in a structured way, effectively organizing available time, meeting deadlines, monitoring the progress of projects so that it is aligned with organizational interest and a strong spirit and attitudes in problem solving.
- Adapting and coping: including working under pressure, dealing with situations of uncertainty and ambiguity, showing open-mindedness with others, using the knowledge and skills of others and being flexible according to circumstances



Once clarified and understood what the various skills are, it now becomes necessary to understand which of these are most indispensable in a traditional or "virtual" work context, and therefore also in a Smart Working scenario.

First of all, the literature suggests that the skills concerning the sphere of Leading and deciding (and in particular act on their own initiative, set goals and work autonomously) and the skills concerning the analysing and interpreting sphere (and in particular communicate, write and use digital media more effectively) are more indispensable in the remote work scenario than in the traditional one (Krumm, Kanthak, Hartmann and Hertel, 2017). In fact, people, working distant and with greater decision-making and executive autonomy, must proactively seek the best path to pursue, without being intimidated by any failures or problems. In this circumstance, excellent skills concerning the sphere of organizing and executing are also fundamental, i.e. a strong propensity for problem solving. In fact, difficulties can often arise in the execution of a given project that cannot be discussed and resolved with the desk colleagues. In addition, good skills in the use of digital media are also essential, as face-to-face communication occurs less frequently. People must therefore be familiar with the use of technologies and must be more transparent and analytical in their explanations.

As regards the remaining behaviours of the organizing and executing sphere and those concerning the sphere of creating and conceptualizing, the literature does not provide a precise indication whether they are more relevant within the traditional office or in the virtual one. It is therefore assumed that they are fundamental skills in both dimensions, therefore necessary to develop both from a traditional perspective and from a smart working perspective.

Finally, there are also some behavioural skills that in a virtual context seem less prominent. I am referring to supporting and cooperating skills. However, the literature is not expressed univocally, and conflicting opinions remain. On one hand, indeed, it seems that the context of geographical dispersion is the justification for encouraging and promoting behaviours that stimulate mutual support and trust, thus solidifying the more fragile relationships. On the other hand, it is discussed how such support and cooperation skills occur more spontaneously in the office, so traditional workers are more inclined to these attitudes.

Finally, it has to be said that in a smart working scenario, where the traditional office dimension is therefore flanked by the virtual office dimension, all the previous skills are essential for each person. Obviously, there are skills that are better suited to one context than the other, however all appear to be essential to perform at own best. It should be noted that skills relating to the sphere of Leading and Deciding and Organizing and executing can be further enhanced by the new managerial styles that should emerge from a Smart Working project. If, in fact, managers grant more decision-making and executive autonomy, encourage personal empowerment and promote individual initiative and ideas, skills (the ones before cited) such as planning personal goal in a structured way, acting on their own initiative or effectively organizing available time will become critical regardless of the workplace (Krumm, Kanthak, Hartmann and Hertel, 2017). In this case, the greater relevance is, indeed, not only determined by the workplace but by the managerial attitudes as well.

To conclude, for the remaining skills not mentioned in the analysis, there are no significant differences between one context and another. It is therefore assumed that, as just mentioned, they are equally important in both dimensions.

### **3.2.2 REMOTE WORK EFFECTS ON PEOPLE**

A further analysis to outline benefits or possible criticalities in remote work, is to take into consideration the point of view of people and do an empirical research to identify impacting factors. We have seen that remote work can bring advantages but also disadvantages. It is therefore advisable to find in the literature whether these effects are confirmed or not.

Grant, Wallace and Spurgeon (2013), with the aim to outline a scientific profile of the effects of remote work on people, take three different macro areas as reference, that is job effectiveness, well-being and work-life balance. Job effectiveness can be defined as “the evaluation of the results of an employee’s job performance” (Jex, 1998). Well-being refers instead to the psychological and physical one of employees. Work-life balance, instead, refers to the level of prioritisation between personal and professional activities in an individual’s life and the level to which activities related to their job are present in the home and vice versa. These three areas intersect with each other and are directly connected, in fact the variable job-effectiveness (as well as the evaluation of a person's performance) can be directly correlated positively or negatively both by well-being (that psycho-physical well-being) and work-life balance.

First of all, from a preliminary analysis, it emerges that variables such as trust, aptitude to adapt, and individual differences in terms of character and skills are closely linked to the three macro areas of interest (Grant, Wallace and Spurgeon, 2013). The existence of a relationship of trust among people positively affects job effectiveness and well-being. The aptitude to adapt, that is the individual ability to adopt behaviours coherent with the new context, such as objectives planning and motivation in managing new complexities, is positively correlated to the three macro areas as well as those skills and character inclinations that allow to manage effectively their duties even out of the office. However, these factors are not explored further as they influence each macro-area on a general level and are therefore not univocally reconcilable with one of them.

The goal then becomes to find the factors that are specific for a given macro-area (job effectiveness, well-being and work-life balance) and to understand how they influence it. The findings below are mainly extracted and rearranged from the paper of Grant, Wallace and Spurgeon (2013).

### **Job effectiveness:**

Primarily, it appears that job effectiveness is influenced by these factors:

- E-working practices: it seems that the existence of guidelines on how to use technology helps people to increase their productivity. People therefore react positively to webinars and training courses on good practices in the use of new communication vehicles. On the contrary, it is highlighted how the lack of face-to-face communication is detrimental to individual performance. In fact, people in the survey expressed the need not to abandon personal communication (Grant, Wallace and Spurgeon, 2013).
- Role autonomy: a high degree of autonomy and accountability is a priority need among people. Therefore, far from their manager, they express the need to increase the delegation in order to be able to carry out their duties with greater autonomy. On the other hand, there are other interviewees who associate greater autonomy with a greater probability of working beyond normal hours. (Grant, Wallace and Spurgeon, 2013)
- Decision making: this variable positively influences job effectiveness, as people perceive that being able to access information in real time even outside normal working hours increases the quality of the decisions taken. People can therefore potentially work at times when they feel most productive.
- Productivity, measurement and performance: people associate working from home with increased productivity due to the lack of distractions that can arise in the office, the ability to ensure that a certain project can be completed on time and the ability to work without interruption. However, negative feelings are also expressed, that is work from home is associated with an increase of burn-out feeling. Respondents also complain the lack of ergonomic and comfortable work equipment (Grant, Wallace and Spurgeon, 2013).

### **Work-life balance:**

In addition, it is founded that remote working and the resulting greater flexibility have improved the relationship between private and working life. People positively evaluate

this modality as they declare that extra-work relationships are also intensified and consolidated. In general, people feel that they have more time both for work activities and for taking care own children. Moreover, the time saved for the lack of commuting is gratifying and further stimulating. All these factors positively impact mood by reducing stress (Grant, Wallace and Spurgeon, 2013). However, negative aspects also emerge from the analysis. In fact, people often fail to draw boundaries between the private and working dimensions, sometimes arousing conflict between the two realities. They show that, not infrequently, they give up family commitments to complete a work task, and therefore they express a lack of awareness of when to disconnect. The temptation to stay on to finish a work in progress is equally significant.

### **Well-Being:**

As for the psycho-physical well-being of people is concerned, they feel less stressed, both because they are able to reconcile better their private and working lives and because the days are longer as the time for commuting is saved (Grant, Wallace and Spurgeon, 2013). This feeling of greater mental serenity can also be stimulating for one's creativity and productivity. Furthermore, it seems that the rate of corporate absenteeism is also decreasing, demonstrating how people feel more involved in the organization. However, the relational aspect between colleagues is affected: people show greater isolation and disorientation and difficulty in intensifying those relationship born in the office. Finally, an increase in sedentary lifestyle is also reported. People, therefore, moving less from home, tend to assume excessively sedentary attitudes (Grant, Wallace and Spurgeon, 2013). Practicing physical exercise can obviously ease this drawback.

### **3.2.3 WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

One of the main reasons why Smart Working is greatly appreciated by people is the increase in the work-life balance. If, in fact, people are traditionally used to spending 40 hours in the office, and as many hours to go to the company headquarters, working remotely makes it possible to carry out work tasks directly from home. Working from home, therefore, is rewarding for people, as there is greater flexibility in meeting family needs. In addition, there is also an increase in the daily time available due to the saving of hours spent on commuting. The benefits are also confirmed by the literature. For example, Maruyama, Hopkinson and James (2009), underlines that workers who spend most of their work activities from home and who minimize the time spent commuting, find higher levels of work-life balance. It is also reported that such people record more intense and longer work sessions, which however do not compromise the work-family balance. An increase in the WLB (work-life balance) is positively perceived by people, who can therefore manage household chores with greater serenity and meticulousness. The greater mental tranquillity is also reflected in the work performance. In fact, people, emptied of excessive family pressures, can uniquely dedicate their energies to corporate projects.

Given these premises, it is therefore evident that people are able to react more quickly to the needs of the family and sometimes dedicate more time to them.

However, behind these benefits, there are a potential negative aspects that should not be underestimated. In fact, if the work in Smart Working mode is free from spatial and temporal logic, it may happen that, working from home, could result difficult to discern the working sphere from the family one. Therefore, in the long term, conflicts can arise between the two dimensions in both directions, both from work to the family, and from family to work. These conflicts are commonly referred to as work-family conflicts (WFC) and family-work conflicts (FWC), and have been widely studied, as they are the cause of tensions, increased stress and therefore less productivity.

Another paper written by Eddleston and Mulki (2017), suggest us some aspects which gravitate around the remote work and so, the conflicts just cited.

One of the first points highlighted is the different way of managing work from home. There are people who prefer to work according to the integration logic and just as many according to a segmentation logic. The first relates to the individual preference of making the boundaries between the working space and the family space very blurred, almost imperceptible. Examples of this modality include working in bed, alternating work with family chores, or simply working in pyjamas. Logic segmentation, on the other hand, pertains to the individual preference to keep the working sphere distant and separate from the family one, thus setting limits or physical boundaries. Examples include working at home in an exclusively dedicated space, staying connected during the normal working hours, and dressing with appropriate clothing.

We can therefore observe how people have different preferences in the way they work from home. There are some who prefer to immerse work activities in home dynamics. Others who, on the other hand, perhaps for reasons of productivity and concentration, prefer to keep the boundaries between the two spheres well defined and separate.

Another theme that is taken up by the literature is the lack of ability to interrupt work, also called inability to disengage from work. As stressed several times, Smart Working, thanks to technology, enables work in any place and time. Therefore, it can be seen how certain people are unable, if excessively overburdened by the tasks, to literally pull the plug from the PC. This inability relates to the set of attitudes, behaviours and emotions that are reflected in a continuous and constant commitment to work, without interposing pauses and breaks. There are therefore people who tend to overwork, to always remain connected and available and to be obsessively linked to the working reality.

Finally, the conflicts mentioned above are highlighted. As far as the WFC is concerned, it is explained that are those conflicts in which pressure and work demands interfere with family responsibilities. On the other hand, FWC conflicts are in the opposite direction, that is occur when family needs interfere with work issues.

It should be noted that the paper suggests that people who are excessively involved in company projects, therefore unable to switch off, and people who prefer to work according to logic integration, are more likely to accumulate job stress, i.e. that

condition of tension and pressure due to overwork. Furthermore, in these cases, it seems to be a positive correlation with the increase in the number of WFC and FWC conflicts. In fact, it is discovered that people, unable to set boundaries between the family and the working perimeter (therefore according to the logical integration), report more conflict situations in both directions (Eddleston and Mulki, 2017). It therefore appears that those who draw psychological and physical boundaries between the working and private dimensions are less likely to run into such conflicts. As for people unable to interrupt work activities and oppressed by the possibility of being constantly always-on, the increase in conflict is mainly related to the WFC. They find it more difficult to pass from the working role to the family one, therefore reducing time for family needs. This situation is not so rare as one would expect. If, indeed, we would have imagined that family chores stole efforts and time to work activities, the literature suggests that even the opposite situations are particularly frequent when working from home (Eddleston and Mulki, 2017). Furthermore, in these situations, people are potentially subject to exhibiting the so-called symptoms of burn out, that is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when one feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands.

Burnout can occur on 3 levels:

- Cognitive / emotional level, i.e. emotional detachment, neglect of affects and social relationships, demotivation at work and irritability.
- Behavioural level: i.e. aggression, alcohol abuse, lack of initiative and absenteeism.
- Physical level: i.e. headache, respiratory symptoms, insomnia, intestinal disorders and weakness. This condition is obviously the most extreme that could occur in the event of inability to interrupt work chores and to be obsessively oppressed by the possibility of being "always connected". It is therefore appropriate to become aware of it to prevent its onset.



### **Implications for practice**

Regarding minimizing conflicts that can arise from the integration logic, it is appropriate that people begin to gradually release themselves from the family dimension. It must obviously be premised that a smart approach is also essential in this case, that if people prove to be more productive working under such circumstances, it is good to leave them the right freedom in choosing the best approach. If, on the other hand, they realize that what is hypothesized by the literature occurs, namely an increase in WFC and FWC conflict, taking into consideration the subsequent practical implications can help to quell any tensions.

Therefore, starting to draw physical boundaries is a good start. It is therefore appropriate to dedicate a room or space that is free from family matters and that can be stimulating for personal concentration. Having good lighting, a comfortable and ergonomic chair and desk, and everything you need close at hand, are certainly useful tips. Even planning goals and following them in a structured and meticulous way helps concentration and makes it less likely to run into home distractions that may arise. In addition, taking breaks, and taking moments to breathe and recover mental energy can be necessary to keep your productivity high. As for the psychological and emotional detachment from the family, it is advisable to clarify the working hours with own spouses and children and that in those moments it is preferable, except in emergencies, to avoid private conversations that can divert attention from professional matters. Therefore, even simply hanging a visual signal on the door that makes it clear that in those moments it is preferable not to disturb, it makes the onset of conflict less likely. Finally, try to respect the work routine, imposing rhythms that are approximately in line with the traditional ones, and look for suitable clothing for the work, therefore avoiding pyjamas and any other garment that could lead to a feeling of excessive relaxation, would stimulate concentration and they would make the border between home and work more perceptible.

As for preventing the born of negative feelings due to excessive work, which could result in burn-out phenomena, it becomes relevant to put some limit on worktime.

If, therefore, technologies enable the possibility of always being contactable, it becomes essential to impose working hours to avoid an excessive load of psychological stress.

Also, in this case the advice is to respect traditional timetables as much as possible. However, even in these circumstances, we may adopt a *smart* approach, that is we have to take into consideration the fact that no one of us will be the same productive along the whole day. Someone will be more productive in the morning, other ones in afternoon, evening or night. Obviously, we must try to align our schedules with those of colleagues, for communications and comparisons, however it is now possible to manage certain individual matters during the hours in which we feel better performing. Obviously, it should be noted that this advice is not a stimulus to work at unacceptable times, but it should transmit the awareness that according to smart working the goal is the search for greater productivity.

The boundary, however, between this need and resulting in burn-out phenomena becomes blurred and very thin. Therefore, people from home should be able to identify that moment in which to unplug and continue what is interrupted in the next day. Taking breaks, even in this circumstance, therefore becomes paramount, as it revitalizes the body and mind. Also, do not underestimate the benefit of having conversation with colleagues. In this situation of isolation, taking moments to share reflections and opinions can help not to disengage from the relational dimension. Alternating physical exercise, such as stretching, can also help to gain awareness of when to finish. In addition, managers should also outline working times in which people has to be connected, assuming that outside of them people are free to behave as they feel.

To conclude, it should also be mentioned that the right to disconnect is also protected by the law, which wants to regulate precisely this people's inability to comprehend when stop working and protect the distance between private life and work. This law 81/2017, albeit without providing a legal definition, says that "(...) the (working) agreement identifies the worker's rest times as well as the technical and organizational measures necessary to ensure the disconnection of the worker from the technological work equipment".

### 3.2.4 PRODUCTIVITY

The productivity dimension is one of those that most justify Smart Working. Research by the Smart Working Observatory of the Milan Polytechnic has, in fact, found that the adoption of agile work has had some beneficial effects, including an increase in productivity of up to 20%. Mind you, that an increase in productivity of 20% does not coincide with an increase in productivity from home. Also, but not exclusively. Smart Working is the adoption of those practices that most stimulate people to improve performance. Therefore, these good practices also include working from home, but also countless other aspects, including the re-planning of the corporate and office layout, a different managerial orientation, the appropriate use of technology, etc.

In any case, in this paragraph, we try to analyse the reasons why remote work is more efficient and reporting some practical advices that can help people.

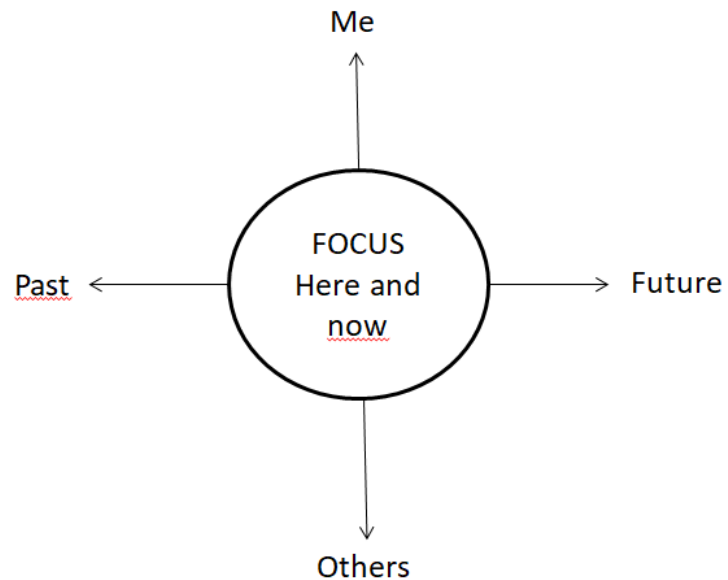
First of all, Vega, Anderson e Kaplan (2015) show us that working from home is associated with an increase in creativity. People should therefore be encouraged to perform those tasks that require greater creativity in the home context. Furthermore, the study, in support of the Polytechnic thesis, highlights how people sometimes feel more productive working outside the office. Other times, instead, the office remains a good meeting point that stimulate comparison and discussion. Finally, the study denotes how remote work increases people's job satisfaction which positively impacts performance.

Furthermore, higher productivity from home is associated, as already mentioned, with greater working continuity. In fact, people are far from office distractions and can devote their energies exclusively to organizational projects. Additionally, they can allow themselves to work when they feel most productive. Not everyone, in fact, as soon as they arrive at the office in the early morning, feels sufficiently active to manage tasks of high complexity. There are people who, physiologically, react more positively and promptly to stimuli in the evening. In these circumstances, people can take advantage of it to complete and modify any projects left unfinished during the days.

However, in a home but also office context, the potential distraction is around the corner. We have seen how the overlap between the working dimension and the family one can affect the goodness of the performance. In any case, even endogenous

distractions can be dangerous since they can compromise the attention at work. For the occasion, the book "Smart Working & Smart Workers" (Botteri, Cremonesi, 2016) offers us a model that can be used as a practical tool to increase the effectiveness of execution.

In the diagram on the right, the place of concentration and productivity is at the centre, in the focus on the "here and now": the idea is that you can reach a high level of productivity only if you are present and focused on what you are doing. In the reality in which we operate, however, at least two centrifugal forces are always active that keep us distant us from this centre.



The first is the temporal one, placed on the horizontal axis between the two poles (past and future), which exerts its attractive power by projecting us with thoughts into a temporal dimension different from the one we are in: it can happen that we are here and now physically, because we are doing something, we are focusing on a task or a problem, but in reality we are thinking about something that we will have to do soon, or in a day, or in a week and that maybe worries us.

The other centrifugal force is what we could define "relational", which acts along the vertical axis. We have an example when we are dealing with a contingent situation and at the same time, we are thinking about an answer that an important customer expects from us, the request that our boss made us, or an annoyed response received from our spouse. These centrifugal forces therefore move us from the centre of attention, and create distraction, waste of energy, unnecessary fatigue and in the long run even stress.

It is therefore appropriate to perceive how much intensely the two centrifugal forces act both in an office context and in a home context. Being aware of this pattern puts the person on alert as soon as he feels diverted from the central focus. People, therefore,

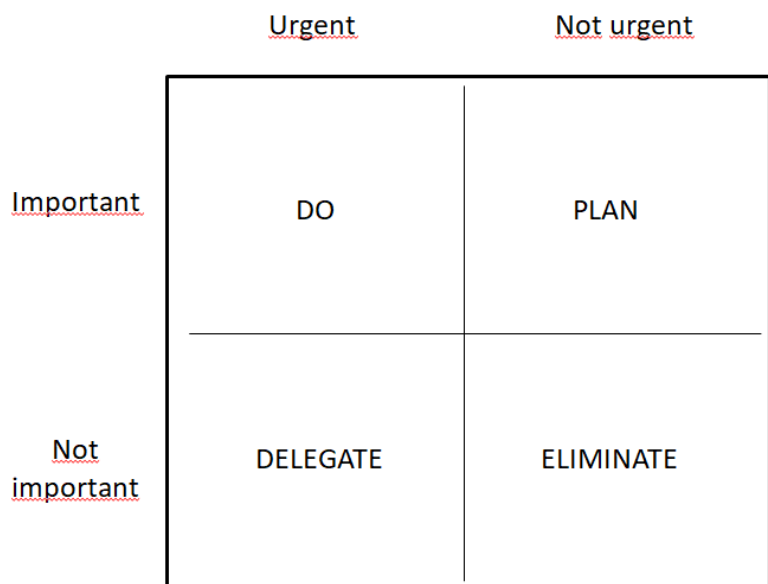
should be able to intercept what are the recurring distractions and consequently adapt their working methods in a context where these centrifugal forces are less intense.

Another prominent point for increasing productivity is the personal planning of one's work. If Smart Working presupposes greater decision-making and executive autonomy, then people should be able to carry out their tasks effectively and efficiently. Therefore, planning one's activities through a simple to-do-list, where the various tasks to be pursued are collected, will be of fundamental support. Furthermore, identifying priorities and discerning the activities that can be postponed and those that must necessarily be carried out now will be relevant as well. In addition to various applications that allow you to organize your projects in a structured way, including Evernote, Trello and Asana, there is also the Eisenhower matrix (here on the right), useful for discriminating important tasks from useless ones.

In this matrix, four quadrants are reported, each identified by a different degree of urgency and importance.

In the upper left quadrant, we find those actions that must be carried out as soon as possible and that cannot be delegated to others (projects that are due to expire, pressing problems, etc.). The activities in this quadrant are those that need to be minimized as they increase the probability of losing control of the situation, and therefore increase the risk of running into errors and too hasty and inadequate resolutions.

In the upper right quadrant, there are those important but not



urgent activities, such as medium / long-term projects, activities aimed at improving personal activity, etc. They have a long-term strategic nature and can also be addressed

without the pressure of urgency. However, continuing to procrastinate inevitably leads them to the first quadrant. Therefore, they should not be underestimated.

In the lower left quadrant, activities that are urgent but not important are included. In this quadrant, there are those tasks not considered of primary importance, but which need to be completed in the short term. Therefore, given the irrelevant nature, these tasks should be delegated, so that you can concentrate on what instead generates added value.

In the last quadrant, the activities are characterized by the features of non-importance and non-urgency. These activities are therefore superfluous and useless, so they are a waste of energy and time. Very often, here we have those more or less conscious excuses to postpone what is really important and urgent. The best approach therefore becomes to skip them and devote energy towards what matters.

Once we have ascertained the definition of each quadrant, the winning strategy is to focus on the activities of the upper right quadrant. Therefore, managing the development of a specific project in time decreases the likelihood of stumbling in urgent situations that could affect its effectiveness. Furthermore, it becomes essential to become aware that urgency does not mean importance. Therefore, it is worth bearing in mind that something urgent does not necessarily become relevant and can therefore be delegated.

A final aspect to consider that could decrease one's productivity is the excess of connectivity, or the modern situation whereby people are, through technology, potentially always connected to other people. The first example is notification. Today, on the screens of our laptop or mobile phone, we are overwhelmed by email notifications, previews of social-network messages, chat alerts and sound messages that remind us commitments, etc. Indeed, it happens frequently that, during a work, we are interrupted by these notifications that can divert our attention from the focus. The most recent neuroscience studies explain that there are neurophysiological reasons linked to these hyper connectivity distortions: answering the phone, looking for something on the internet, sending a text message, are all activities that create in a certain sense addiction because they have an impacts on the brain centres dedicated to the search for novelty

and reward. Therefore, doing many activities at the same time creates the illusion of multitasking, which can become a source of distraction and a loss of effectiveness and efficiency.

We speak of the illusion of multitasking, because we, as humans, cannot physiologically manage to process multiple activities at the same time. A PC, on the other hand, is developed and programmed to digest simultaneous processes, our brain mechanisms are not yet up to it. What we actually do is jump from one activity to another in a frenetic way, creating a series of frequent interruptions and fragmenting time with an inevitable loss of concentration. What could be some tips to ease this excess of connectivity?

- Focus on real priorities, on the things that matter. Don't get distracted by things of lesser importance;
- Define with own colleagues, with the boss, with customers the boundaries and the modality of using the new communication tools;
- Limit your connectivity by switching off notification or technological devices;
- Remove all alerts on the desktop (remember that if an alert appears, you can also decide to not reply to the email or message immediately, but, in reality, you have already been interrupted and lost your concentration on what you were doing);
- Don't check your emails all the time. Open the mail 4, 5 times a day, at defined times (so today the experts on the subject say) and in any case let's do it when we choose to do it, not when the emails appear on the desktop requesting our attention;
- Regaining possession of the right of not being always connected (it is a right, not a luxury. It is a way to do things in a more concentrated way and to dedicate our energy to certain activities, including those private and personal).

Finally, an effective method to avoid such distractions is the tomato technique, the time management method developed by Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980s which involves the use of a timer to divide the work into traditionally long intervals. 25 minutes of activity separated by short breaks.

### 3.3 BYTES

The second fundamental pillar that gravitates around the Smart Working sphere is Bytes. By Bytes we mean the technology that makes these new working dynamics possible. People now have access to new communication vehicles and new software platforms to work on which, that if used correctly guarantee greater effectiveness and efficiency of execution. People therefore need to be educated and trained for learning how to use them in order to fully exploit this new technological potential.

Furthermore, Fuller, Hardin and Davison (2006) highlights how the variable *computer self-efficacy*, measured as the ability of people to use technology, has a positive and direct impact on the effectiveness of a virtual team. In the cited paper, this effectiveness is defined as the individual and collective perception of the success of a virtual project enabled by technology. It is therefore confirmed that the importance of technological education is the prerogative and necessity of each virtual reality that wants to increase its performance.

Another word concerning technology, and which makes Smart Working possible is Digital Transformation. By Digital Transformation we mean those organizational practices aimed at digitizing business processes, using new technological innovations, so that people can both continue their professional activities even away from the office with an improvement in performance. In fact, if most of people's activities are still carried out mainly on paper, it would become difficult if not impossible to continue such projects away from the office. If, on the other hand, the processes were digitized, alongside an increase in effectiveness, there is the possibility of continuing the job in any place, thus freeing oneself from that spatial limit in accordance with the assumptions of a Smart Working project.

The following paragraph aims to trace the foundations to fully understand the technological reality that enables Smart Working, analyse its complexities and finally transmit good practices for a correct use.



### **3.3.1 TECHNOLOGY LANDSCAPE**

A first step towards identifying the technologies available is understanding if there is the possibility of dividing them into macro-groups, in order to trace the perimeters among the various application areas. For this purpose, the observatory of the Milan Polytechnic suggests four potential grouping areas.

#### **1) Social Collaboration**

These are tools that integrate and support communication flows by creating new opportunities for relationships, collaboration and knowledge sharing such as instant messaging tools, web conferences, fixed-mobile convergence.

Learning to use these technologies correctly allows you to enable ways of communication, collaboration and interaction with colleagues, customers and partners between people who are not always in the same place. Social Collaboration technologies reduce the need to transfer for meetings where physical presence is not essential by providing a valid alternative to collaboration; this allows to have positive implications for people and organizations in terms of avoided travel costs.

#### **2) Security**

These are technologies that allow flexible, simple and immediate access, regardless of the device used, to a profiled environment that contains applications, data and information in total security and preserving the integrity of the data. This group of services includes both more traditional solutions such as access via Virtual Private Network, and cloud-based virtualization solutions. During a Smart Working implementation, it is essential to guarantee the presence of a secure channel to have access even remotely: these solutions, aimed at guaranteeing the security of the data sent and received, are present in almost all large companies and must now also be adopted from small ones. Beyond the tools, however, it is also necessary to train people and make them fully aware of the importance of adopting correct behaviours even and above all when they work in remote contexts, including a part dedicated to safety in the training sessions and providing periodically some disclosure and suggestions on both risks and hazards.

### **3) Mobility**

These are the devices that, allowing access to professional services and tools at any time and from any place, free people from the need for a "fixed station" (eg Notebook / portable PC, Smartphone, Tablet) to carry out their work. These devices are used both outside the workplace and inside, facilitating forms of internal mobility.

Mobile devices are now present in all large companies, but they are not so widespread among workers. Too often, they are assigned based on professional classification rather than with respect to specific needs.

If companies do not provide the technological devices to all employees, an alternative solution could be the BYOD (Bring-Your-Own-Device) strategy which allows workers, under specific agreements, to use their personal devices to access some business applications. This approach has the advantage of allowing people to use mobile tools that they already know to carry out their tasks. It offers advantage to the firm as well, in terms both of money-saving for devices and time-saving for a quicker implementation of digital processes.

### **4) Workspace Technology**

These are all technologies that allow a more effective and flexible use of physical environments, facilitating not only the usability of the spaces themselves, but also supporting the work of people and improving the quality of employees' life within the company. These technologies are for example Wi-Fi, systems and tools that allow you to make video conferences, or centralized print area systems which enable people to operate on any printer by entering credentials or using company badge to confirm the print. Here we have also that devices which allow people to book and reserve seats in the sharing rooms or common areas.

In conclusion, this reclassification transmits awareness of which technologies are necessary to start a Smart Working project. Therefore, managers, early in the process, should prepare an inventory to check which of the following technologies are already present in the company and which ones need to be purchased.

### **3.3.2 «TASK-TECHNOLOGY FIT» THEORY**

Another aspect to consider when you want to deepen the technological dimension is the task-technology fit (TTF) theory. This theory suggests that there are no suitable technological tools to accomplish each task. In fact, each instrument is better suited to particular needs. Goodhue and Thompson (1995) define this theory as the degree to which a technology assists an individual in performing his or her portfolio of tasks.

Therefore, in carrying out a certain task, people should be able to identify the technological means that best suits the circumstances. Trivially, the asynchronous feature of the email cannot adapt to those tasks between colleagues that require real-time communication and coordination.

In accordance with this theory, it now becomes appropriate to understand the implications in Smart Working's panorama. In fact, if Smart Working requires technology, understanding the possible consequences of a lack of adaptation between task and technology becomes paramount.

First of all, Fuller and Dennis (2008) show us how those working groups, under study, which register the highest intensity of adaptation between technology and task, show superior performance compared to non-fit teams. To be precise, higher fit teams report greater quality in the decisions made and greater efficiency, therefore less time spent to reach a certain goal.

However, this study adds that, in the long term, those poor-fit working groups tend to change the technological means used and converge towards the more similar solution. Therefore, translating into business terms, if people do not initially perform effectively, in the long term they would converge towards more suitable technological solutions to increase their productivity, perhaps conditioned both by the visibility of others' work and by the comparison and advice of their manager.

In any case, it remains essential to immediately seek the compatibility between the characteristics of the task and the technological ones in order to immediately record higher performances.

Another interesting paper to understand how the FTT can have practical implications in the management of any conflicts and organizational needs is the one made by Maruping and Agarwal (2004).

The objective of this study is to identify the most suitable technological vehicle to resolve conflicts related to tasks and relationships and to manage needs related to people's motivation. The study also considers the temporal dimension as a determining factor so that a communication vehicle can, over time, change in adaptability. Therefore, the theoretical ideas differ according to whether people have known each other for a short time or have already developed a relational bond.

Finally, we believe that, always remaining in a Smart Working perspective, these implications can have practical implications to better address the problems that may arise in a virtual context. The paper suggests the following ones.

To resolve conflicts relating to the relational sphere, as well as those tensions that arise for socio-emotional reasons and which manifest themselves in dislikes and resentments, in the first cognitive stages videoconferencing and telephone tools are indicated, while for groups already started, the email can be enough (Maruping and Agarwal, 2004). The theory in fact suggests to us how, among unknown people, the use of videoconferencing is essential to stimulate a clearer and more complete conversation. Conversation needs include the communication of non-verbal signals, and the transmission of emotions and feelings.

To resolve conflicts relating to the sphere of the task, or those limited to the execution of a particular task, in the first cognitive phases it is advisable the use of tools such as group decision support system, chat and videoconferencing, while, for people already acquainted, the use of email is sufficient. Again, the use of videoconferencing, or GDSS tools respond to the need to facilitate conversation and discussion between people, so that they are stimulated to produce constructive and in-depth dialogues. The use of email can be sterile and superficial, unless people have already consolidated solid relational ties, as well as trust and mutual understanding (Maruping and Agarwal, 2004).

As regards, however, the dimension of motivating and inspiring people, the most appropriate technological tools are videoconferences and chats. This need arises mainly

from encouraging people to keep their level of performance high, communicating positive perceptions of their group's success and transmitting positive feedback. Furthermore, this motivation is instrumental in increasing group identity, creating greater individual involvement in organizational projects, and increasing both individual and collective satisfaction (Maruping and Agarwal, 2004). Therefore, in the early stages of a project, managers should frequently convey feedback and opinions via the videoconferencing tool. Subsequently, once the individual self-efficacy (see dedicated paragraph) is consolidated, the transmission of feedback through a messaging platform is enough. What remains fundamental, however, is the constancy and frequency of communication. Therefore, regardless of the choice of the technological vehicle, managers must keep in mind that the frequency of contact is fundamental in order to consolidate the sense of belonging and involvement in people.

As for the need to manage any discontent, such as stress, isolation and frustration, which may arise due to the distance, it is advisable to use the telephone or video conference.

Having direct and spontaneous contact in these circumstances is more effective for empathizing with the person. Managers therefore need to be skilled listeners and communicators. The goal then becomes to understand the cause of the onset of discontents in order to propose solutions and remedies. Furthermore, videoconferencing also allows the visualization of facial signals that can give greater clarity and transparency to the communication. Finally, also managing these situations in a collective way, if more people show the same feelings of frustration and tension, such technological vehicles would facilitate discussion and common reflection, and therefore would help the formation of a group identity.

### **TTF according to McKinsey**

McKinsey, in its recent article, "a blue print for remote working: lessons from China", also gives us practical advice on the use of technologies according to the TTF logic. In a Smart Working scenario, it is essential to understand how the technologies available fulfil different needs. People and managers must therefore be aware of how there are

communicated vehicles more suitable for certain circumstances and as many more suitable for managing different contingencies.

In the list below, video conferencing, chat, calls, voice notes and emails are taken into consideration.

First, calls are more appropriate for improving personal relationships, for discussing sensitive or complicated topics and for urgent alignments with your manager. This tool is highly practical as people are generally already familiar with it. A call is particularly suitable for handling urgent and complex situations. People often also use it to get quick and timely feedback.

Videoconferencing is the technological tool that is becoming more and more important, as it accompanies the auditory sense with the visual one. In a context of Smart Working we can say that it is the first candidate for the substitution of personal confrontation. It is especially well suited for talking about problem solving processes, for planning days and weeks to come, for informing people about sensitive and complex issues, for organizing and managing group meetings, for sharing important information and data etc. Videoconferencing tools are also equipped with screen sharing functionality, so they can also be useful for making and promoting training in various fields. Furthermore, the visual input makes the conversation less apathetic and superficial, therefore ideal for resolving emotional and personal conflicts.

The chat tool is also becoming indispensable for carrying out daily tasks. It is mainly indicated for quick and urgent alignments and to request any non-complex and informal information that requires a reactive response.

It also helps with real-time updates and facilitates coordination between team colleagues. Furthermore, thanks to group chats, it is possible to organize and plan the tasks to be performed and keep colleagues updated on the progress of the project.

Voice messages or notes are a technological vehicle that is not frequently used but which can help to explain the execution of a certain job, to update people who could not attend a specific meeting, to report any problems, to communicate certain information more clearly and empathically, etc. Given the nature of non-real-time communication, the voice note can be an ideal tool in the presence of non-urgent

matters or if you do not want to disturb the interlocutor excessively. The vocal note is in fact not intrusive and can be heard at the moment that is considered most appropriate. Therefore, if your reference manager is excessively busy and you want to bring a non-urgent problem to his attention, then the choice of the voice note may be the best.

Finally, the last in-depth communication tool on McKinsey's list is email. The email, together with the call, is one of the most traditional means of communication in the professional panorama. Although it is gradually losing relevance, email remains the ideal medium for formal communications between work colleagues and external stakeholders. It can also be essential for quick post-meeting recaps and for sharing files and information that are not too "heavy". Furthermore, it can also be used to formally agree on meetings and activities to be done by gathering a multitude of people. A final precaution to consider for a good use, is not to begin long cycles of questions and answers. The e-mail does not have the character of real-time synchronization, so where there is a need for an interactive and concise conversation, it is preferable to use the chat. Finally, proper and correct use also prevents the overload problem. Our mailboxes are often flooded with a huge amount of e-mail that causes disorder, distraction and therefore inefficiency. The more our inboxes are overloaded with e-mails, the more the truly important e-mails are less easily identifiable and the lower the response rate. A conscious and responsible use of the e-mail therefore prevents the onset of this discomfort.

### **3.3.3 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

This is a new term which is gaining momentum in the corporate landscape and it refers to the profound change in activities and organizational processes, skills and business models, which is carried out to fully exploit, in a strategic and priority way, the changes and opportunities that the mix of digital technologies and their accelerated impact have brought to society.

In our context of Smart Working, this digital transformation is therefore essential, and it makes the implementation of related logic possible. In fact, if most of the company tasks were still managed on paper, it is obvious that it is not practical and feasible to reorganize the work activity that is independent of space. Where paper was still the main resource through which projects are executed, it becomes objectively more difficult to continue work away from their office: it would in fact be necessary for people to bring paper material with them and everything necessary to continue the activities every time they decide to work out-of-the-office. This arrangement is not the optimal and most practical one, therefore dematerialization and digital conversion are the only enabling strategy if we want to start an organizational restructuring according to the rules of Smart Working.

Furthermore, embracing a digital transformation project, in addition to enable the work at distant, can also become an opportunity to review business processes to make the business itself more efficient and promote continuous improvement. Through automation and computerization, companies become more flexible and efficient in the execution of their activities and more competitive in the market. Technological progress is proceeding at an impressive speed: either companies can keep up with it, thus riding the wave of innovation, or they will succumb and see their margins and reputation gradually contract. Also Forbes, in one of its article, (Shur, 2020), highlights how the digital approach will positively impact on performance, customer experience, competitive advantage, revenue and streamlined processes.



### **The new working tools**

One of the main changes that the digital transformation brings is the implementation of a multitude of different technologies for the execution of various business tasks.

Koen, Solimene and Tufani (2015) tell us which new software tools can be used to conduct business according to a smart approach.

### **Community for sharing knowledge**

Communities are the best virtual spaces to start and stimulate a discussion, to update colleagues or partners with relevant news, or simply to request information and ask questions. They offer the possibility - and the advantage - of starting interactive conversations: the insertion of the message, as well as the display of subsequent comments, is extremely immediate. In this virtual environment, contrary to what happens in e-mails, communication is much more fluid and you do not have to worry about too much information received: they are reported and collected in chronological order, so there is the possibility of following the flow of the speech even if it takes over a second moment. In this way, the processing of new information is facilitated, and the conversation is optimized. Interactions through communities are also very fast. Just a +1, a Like, or an Interesting, to confirm your approval of a colleague's comment.

Furthermore, through these platforms, the exchange and sharing of knowledge becomes faster and more effective. Often it is enough for a person to ask a question for their own perplexity in order to receive an adequate answer from those who are competent. Thanks to this immediate process, people can receive feedback and the dissemination of knowledge is thus encouraged. In a context of geographic dispersion, these communities will therefore be essential for interfacing with their colleagues, discussing and comparing with ongoing projects, any critical issues or quick advice and suggestions. A fundamental rule to keep in mind for an effective dialogue is transparency: the more people are identifiable, therefore through a photo, personal information and a brief description, the more the acquisition, response and feedback process is speeded up.

Don Tapscott, international expert of Information Technology impacts on innovation and marketing, describes in his two bestselling essays Wikinomics and Macrowikinomics, how transparency is the basis of the five principles of the new way of doing business: collaboration, openness, sharing, interdependence and integrity. The integrity of information is an aspect that is becoming increasingly important as, since the freedom of digital expression is open to anyone, it is good that the dissemination of knowledge is managed with authority and responsibility. The information shared must be verified and verifiable so that fake news does not spread.

Among the technological software that are useful for organizations to create a community space we find Yammer, Facebook, Google Plus, LinkedIn and Social Intranet, as well as the creation of their own internal social network. In other words, we are referring to a social network for your organization designed ad hoc using, for example, CMS (content management system) platforms such as Microsoft Sharepoint. So, top management can have full control of its network, a fundamental aspect for any types of organizations. However, the creation of a social intranet requires a lot of work both from a technical point of view (design, development and management of the technological platform) and strategic (definition of guidelines, planning of activities, training).

### **Applications for writing**

In a digital world, paper is gradually being abandoned. There are many applications for writing and editing documents, first of all Word, which allow you to write on a virtual platform. However, one of the main problems that could arise if you work on a document that needs to be modified by several people, is the duplication of the same. In fact, in the drafting, suppose, of a report, the draft is first drawn up by one person, subsequently modified by another and perhaps then corrected by a third party. In this case, the transfer of the file created is duplicated in proportion to the number of workers involved. These multiple steps create slowdowns, overlaps, misunderstandings and sometimes even repeated comments, in other words inefficiency. To overcome this, there are on-cloud writing platforms, such as Microsoft Share Point, Google Drive, etc., which allow you to write a document in a single repository, avoiding infinite copies of the same. The document saved in this way is unique and at the same time visible and

editable by anyone authorized to view it. In addition, the document is linked to a URL and allows it to be easily shared via PC, tablet or smartphone, speeding up the content sharing process. However, the real key element that allows the optimization of the entire process of reviewing and integrating the contents, is represented by the fact that it is possible to work simultaneously, in real time, on the same document. By doing so, it is possible to reach a high level of interaction that eliminates any overlap or misunderstanding that can be created via email, but above all, the processing time of a document from the "draft" to the "final" version is reduced.

### **Digital Notes**

If traditionally we are used to writing down notes, or reminders on post-it or notepads, in the digital age new technological software will help us. The main problem with notes which are usually taken quickly during a meeting or during an explanation is that they tend to be retrievable and can be consulted soon. However, it happens that if after, we assume six months, there is the need to recover what was written that day, the note becomes very difficult to trace if not impossible. Therefore, that information is lost. So, although the practicality of writing memos on paper is high and rapid, the counterpart is that often such information is handled in a chaotic way and therefore dispersed over time.

To overcome this situation, there are applications that allow you to transcribe notes in a structured and organized way. One of these is Evernote, a digital tool that effectively replaces the traditional notepad. With Evernote you can write notes on your smartphone, tablet or laptop in a very simple way and organize them by groups and categories. These notes are directly synchronized on your account and then become accessible on the other devices on which the tool is installed or directly on Evernote.com.

Collaborators can easily access this information through the Evernote application. You can share the single note, even audio, or the entire group of notes.

For those who are still very fond of their paper notebook, a much softer digital transition is recommended, and Moleskine notebooks offer a combination with the Livescribe pen. The solution allows to bring back in digital format what you had written on the paper.

## **Organize and plan your activities**

We have seen how in a context of Smart Working people are called upon to manage their work activities even far from the office. Furthermore, the way in which these activities are carried out is also different. In fact, if traditionally they are used to manage them under the supervision and direction of their manager, they are now called to fulfil them more independently and responsibly. In fact, what increases is empowerment, i.e. greater delegation and greater responsibility for the goals that has to be achieved. People must therefore learn to organize their work with method and criteria. However, this new approach is not immediately absorbed: only those with a strong organizational sense and strong motivation are able to perform these tasks effectively. Others, on the other hand, either due to lack of personal organization, or due to excessive distractions or lack of stimuli, struggle to perform at high levels. Therefore, to help people in such planning, there are several project managements tools that allow the user to organize their activities in a structured and timely manner.

Furthermore, in addition to the individual benefit, the environments created by the online project management tools improve communication between colleagues involved in the same project. In this way, traditional project team meetings can focus more on the relevant issues or on the "bottlenecks" that slow down the development of the project, rather than on the progress of the work, which can be easily managed through the online tools. There is no longer a need for a solely dedicated person to supervise activities using an Excel file or a Google Spreadsheet. Online tools track changes and additions automatically. So, you can know who made the last comment or completed the last task, or view the completion status of an output, etc.

Among the project management software that deserve to be mentioned are:

- Wunderlist: access is free, simple and intuitive to use. You can create task lists for your own activities, or for those that interest a worker or team. The file is shareable with all members involved in the project and allows you to enter deadlines, upload documents or link links, view tasks on the calendar and create sub-categories of activities.
- RememberTheMilk: has the same features as Wunderlist but real time synchronization is only guaranteed by the paid version. It is very easy to use and

allows the management of low-medium complexity projects. However, the tool, when integrated with Evernote, provides more solutions for project management.

- Trello: it is also an intuitive and easy to use tool that represents, together with Wunderlist and RememberTheMilk, a valid alternative for not particularly complex projects. Trello is organized in boards on which to add the various tasks with the indications of deadlines and dedicated resources. You can create checklists with individual tasks to be done, combine a calendar and enter comments. The individual boards are modular, and the real peculiarity of the tool is represented by the fact that you can always have a clear picture of the progress of the project.
- Slack: was created with the aim of rationalizing the use of email and optimizing communication within the teams. It identifies itself as "a platform for team communication": an enterprise social network. It is an excellent tool for project management and for managing the resources involved: you can talk, exchange ideas, share files with one or more people at the same time and on one or more projects, manage tasks and monitor the progress of activities. The interesting part about Slack, aside from eliminating about 60% of emails and grouping all conversations on a specific topic in one place, is the ability to integrate with other applications such as Dropbox or Google Drive.

### **Virtual meetings**

Another important aspect to consider in the Smart Working era are virtual meetings. In fact, if we free ourselves from the spatial dimension, it becomes appropriate, to communicate, to create virtual meeting spaces. Although the classic face-to-face meeting remains appropriate for managing complex tasks and situations that require meticulous and analytical discussion, virtual meetings become a good alternative for all other meeting occasions. Again, we have many technological tools available to help us converse and discuss digitally.

Among the many, the following deserve special mention:

- Microsoft Lync .: Suitable for anyone with a Windows PC (almost everyone in the office), and also for windows phones and iOS and Android smartphones. Lync offers the choice between a private chat, audio and video call. It also allows you to simultaneously edit a work done on a whiteboard and share the screen. Useful for example when you want to show a drawing or the functionality of a computer program.
- Skype: Many people already use Skype, often in their private sphere. Skype is available as a program on your PC or laptop and as an app on most smartphones. Using the free version of Skype you can have one-on-one or multi-participant video conferences.
- Google Hangout: Hangout was initially accessible only through the Google social community, Google Plus. From this year there is also the Google Hangout app. To access the service, you must have a Google Plus account. It is possible to participate in video conferences for up to nine people. The advantage of Hangout is the seamless integration with other Google services, such as YouTube and Google Drive. This allows you to share your screen, to work simultaneously in a Google document (googledocs, googlesheets, googleslides) or to watch a video on YouTube together with Hangout participants.
- Join.Me: Join.me must be installed on the computer / laptop or as an app on a tablet / smartphone. The call starts with a link that you can share via email. Join.me allows you to share your screen (and even control your laptop). It is also possible to send files via Join.me; in the free version up to ten people can participate in a videoconference.

### 3.3.4 CYBERSECURITY

One of the main problems that could arise due to the more frequent use of technological devices and the more flexibility in the choice of the work place, are the so-called data breach phenomena, that is the security breach that involves, accidentally or unlawfully, the destruction, loss, modification, unauthorized disclosure or access to personal and company data transmitted, stored or otherwise processed. This circumstance has also been identified and mentioned by European law 2016/679, which lists the following as potential examples of violation: access or acquisition of data by unauthorized third parties; the theft or loss of IT devices containing personal data; the deliberate alteration of personal data; the inability to access data due to accidental causes or external attacks, viruses, malware, etc.; the loss or destruction of personal data due to an accident, adverse event, fire or other calamity; unauthorized disclosure of personal data.

It is therefore tangible to what extent these violations can be harmful to both personal and corporate information. Sensitive and critical corporate information, if not properly protected, could therefore be stolen, tampered with or lost. It is therefore advisable that people are made aware of these risks, and that companies have concrete and practical awareness to distribute private and secure networks and connections to their employees.

To understand practically what the most frequent causes of data breaches could be, Forbes magazine propose us an article made by Rubinstein (2020) that suggests three examples.

- Home Wi-Fi security: the security of the home Wi-Fi, in spite of the company one which is constantly monitored, is less and therefore more susceptible to being violated by potential hackers. The lower security is mainly related to the different types of protocols, usually WEP for private networks and WPA-2 for corporate networks.
- Phishing scans: they are one of the most frequent causes of violation today. Phishing essentially is the sending by hackers of deceptive emails, apparently safe but really harmful links and attachments, where the user is influenced to open the content. Once the link has been clicked, or the email received has been

opened, the hacker can easily become available to your technological users, thus invading your IT privacy.

- Insecure passwords: the security of a long and complete password of every character is of fundamental importance. In fact, short and easily reproducible passwords can be extracted and found by hackers with extreme ease. Furthermore, the risk is exacerbated if people use the same password for a multitude of different services and accounts.

In addition, another of the main causes that can facilitate the breach of personal data are the BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) policies. With this acronym, we mean the business strategies that allow you to bring your personal devices into the workplace and use them to have privileged access to company information and their applications. This policy, albeit apparently win-win on both the company side and the employee side, as on the one hand it produces savings limited to technological devices which do not need to be bought and on the other they allow employees to feel more confident in the use of them, the downside is the problem that private devices are more susceptible to being hacked. Indeed, the use of private email, chat and social networks on the same device used for work raises the problem of a possible data breach as a "side effect" of an employee's private account attack.

Especially, according to the data reported in the Clusit 2020 report (the Italian association for IT security), since phishing attacks and those based on social engineering techniques are constantly increasing (+ 81.9%), they represent one of the greatest risks for the integrity of corporate systems.

With this in mind, the use of Mobile Device Management (MDM) systems extended to notebooks, tablets and smartphones is an indispensable tool that allows you to create a clear separation between the two ecosystems and thus protect company data even in the event of device breaches.

In conclusion, it is therefore appropriate to report some recommendations that can help organizations in effectively managing these risks.

First, people should be made aware of such potential risks. It is therefore essential to inform and urge workers to set secure passwords, possibly with two-factor



authentication, not to open links whose nature is unknown, not to open websites that are perceived as dangerous and deceptive and not to reply to e-mails of dubious origin.

Furthermore, on the corporate side, as many recommendations and advices are necessary for the optimal management of Cyber Security. For this purpose, the ICT Security Magazine 2020 offers us the following tips:

- plan the security of your remote access, assuming that the networks crossed by the client device of the employee and the organization's network itself cannot be trusted;
- assume that the client devices of employees are infected with malware, setting up the related security checks accordingly;
- implement strong authentication mechanisms to validate the identity of the remote worker. If possible, mutual authentication mechanisms should be implemented;
- protect the confidentiality and integrity of any sensitive information that may cross untrusted networks using the encryption;
- securing client devices must maintain an adequate level of protection over time. If possible, remote workers' client devices should have the same level of security as corporate client devices.
- have a policy for handling sensitive information, such as certain types of intellectual property or classified data and having a good use of new technologies.
- define a security policy for Smart Working that identifies what forms of remote access are allowed, what types of devices are allowed to use, the various channel of remote access and the type of access guaranteed to each worker.

### **3.4 BRICKS**

The last driver that we take into consideration to complete the Smart Working analysis is Bricks. By bricks we mean the analysis of every potential working space, both home and co-working rooms, as well as the office. We will also explore how the physical layout of the offices will change, that is the reorganization of the spaces in the company offices according to a smart logic. In fact, if the smart approach suggests us that work should be carried out in areas where people feel more productive and stimulated, then we gradually deviate from the idea of the fixed station, as well as the traditional desk where people remain anchored for the whole time. People in the office must therefore be "free" to choose the workplace that best suits the circumstances of the moment. In fact, if a quiet, stimulating and distant environment from corporate distractions is needed, then it becomes appropriate to think of isolated and soundproofed spaces that can be of support and help for the concentration of workers. At the same time, if it were necessary to seek an environment for sharing information and the comparison of opinions, then it becomes appropriate to seek common rooms where dialogue and mutual conversation are stimulated. The smart approach is therefore evident: we will no longer have to be bound and conditioned by the only desk at our disposal, but to restructure our office space so that it can best adapt to individual and collective needs, therefore oriented towards collaboration and the well-being of people.

Furthermore, the restructuring of company spaces is often recognized and considered fundamental because of greater digitalization and greater geographical dispersion. People, being able to work in any place, preside less in the office and therefore more frequently desks are left empty in the company. This consequence, in addition to being inefficient, as it occupies useless space, is also inefficient from an economic point of view. So, restructuring also the physical layout, abandoning the rooted idea of the personal desk and embracing a flexible approach, such as the rotation of the desk, can materialize both in a greater usability of the desks and tools available, and in an economic saving of desks that have now become superfluous.

In the following paragraph, we will first trace an overview of possible workplaces, then we will analyse the productive and motivational differences between the physical and

the "virtual" office and finally we will outline the best management choices to make our physical company spaces smarter.

### **3.4.1 THE NEW WORKING SPACES**

Smart Working, as already repeatedly stressed, knows neither spatial nor temporal constraints. Therefore, if traditionally we are used to associating our office and our desk as the one and only places where you can practice your profession, from a smart perspective we can instead work potentially anywhere. Among the new workstations that are emerging, there are some that deserve special mention. The book "The smarter working manifesto" proposes this reclassification, then listing potential advantages and disadvantages for each item.

#### **Offices:**

- Quiet rooms: small soundproofed spaces isolated from noise
- Quiet areas: comfortable and welcoming, ideal for both individuals and groups
- Collaboration areas: comfortable and suitable for projects or group work, therefore far from quiet areas.
- Social hubs: corporate spaces or external or internal meeting points, welcoming and modern, to stimulate communication and discussion between work colleagues.

#### **Elsewhere:**

- Inspiring spaces: stimulating environments, such as museums, libraries, or outdoor locations, such as parks, gardens, etc.
- Neutral ground: places to hold meetings and coworking rooms outside the company perimeter.
- Transition spaces: public transport such as trains and buses used to work while commuting, or cafes located around the city and equipped with internet connection.

**Home:**

- Home or hotel rooms: spaces in your personal home, or spaces in your hotel room that are useful both for seeking concentration and for stimulating creativity.

Quiet rooms are small rooms designed for carrying out activities that require strong concentration for a relatively short period of time. They can also be ideal for holding private conversations and making important calls. Unlike quiet areas, they stand out for being a smaller space, sometimes physically isolated with soundproofing barriers and for carrying out activities that are not excessively long. For such, in fact, it is preferable to use quiet areas than open spaces, as there is a ban on making noise and engaging in chats and conversations with colleagues. The latter are ideal, however, in collaboration areas or social hubs. Collaboration areas are open spaces designed to carry out group work that require discussion and communication. They tend to be located far from quiet areas to avoid causing disturbance. These areas, together with social hubs, are therefore recommended to stimulate the comparison and sharing of ideas and knowledge among people. However, what differentiates the social hubs from the first is their conformation and structure. They are, in fact, areas and meeting points with an attractive design, which encourage the transmission of information that is not critical but equally important for a complete interaction and which are also essential for consolidating and strengthening interpersonal relationships. In these social hubs there may be refreshment points, essential to accompany the conversation with your colleague with a coffee.

As for inspiring spaces is concerned, they tend to be places outside the company to seek creativity and concentration. This category, however, is not well defined, as each one has a subjective "inspirational" perception and perhaps different from the others. Not necessarily an inspiring place for someone can be the same for others. These places are ideal for finding new ideas and stimuli both individually and through communication with others. Neutral grounds, on the other hand, are suitable for organizing and planning meetings outside the company perimeter. These meetings can be held externally when

customers and people from other companies are invited and when there is an interest in organizing an event that deserves to be remembered. For example, if the goal is to communicate the launch of a new product, then it is advisable to choose a memorable and suggestive location. This category also includes co-working spaces, that is ideal workplaces for scheduling appointments and for drawing inspiration and motivation by meeting new people. These spaces are designed to accommodate people and are equipped with offices, relaxation areas, kitchens, children's areas, wifi etc. In these spaces it becomes paramount to work with your PC, having conversations with other freelancers and people present. What is different from the intra-company collaboration rooms is the atmosphere that goes beyond company boundaries and that allows workers to share experiences and knowledge and thus promoting a culture of smart working.

As for the transition spaces, instead, they are those places, such as public transport, cars, etc. that can be used to work while commuting. In addition, this item also includes the so-called cafes as well as those bars and meeting points equipped with tables, internet connection, technological accessories and private rooms to work in a productive and concentrated way. In such circumstances, it is possible to meet people from other companies with whom to share experiences and knowledge. Finally, the most common space where people will become used to work is the home. In this environment it is advisable to carve out spaces for concentration trying to stay away from family distractions. At home, for better productivity and an increase in physical well-being, it is equally ideal to buy ergonomic chairs and tables similar to those ones of the office.

### **The new working spaces: in-depth analysis**

Once identified what are the new working spaces of Smart Working, it becomes appropriate and interesting to understand the effects and impacts on the person and on the work they conduct. For the purpose, the scientific paper written by Jeyasingham (2019) demonstrate how people value working from home and working in public spaces, such as in cars or in cafés.

As for working from home, the article highlights how people value the experience of working from home positively, as it offers both a better reconciliation with private life and a more productive environment as it is far from office distractions. Furthermore, several participants show that the greater productivity is also correlated to a greater number of hours worked, i.e. from home it seems that the time available to carry out one's work duties is greater. In fact, some express how the possibility of potentially working at any hour reduces the stress and pressure of finishing a certain task within a set time. Others, however, complain that this opportunity can become exhausting and tiring, as it enables work even at night, thus invading their private life. Finally, what is highlighted by the analysis is the emotional and personal dimension between colleagues which is perceived as less intense given the greater distance between them.

For what concerns working in cafés, the experience is perceived as pleasant as the rooms available for working are comfortable and welcoming. Although obviously the atmosphere is not the most suitable for seeking concentration and tranquillity (maybe because there aren't any silent rooms), it remains an excellent environment for managing less complex and hasty matters. Other participants, on the other hand, perceive the possibility of connecting to the local Wi-Fi network as potentially risky, due to data breach concerns. Finally, work in the car is also mentioned, and it is considered as a quiet and private place that can be stimulating for concentration. However, it should be noted that this solution is ideal for those people who, after attending off-site meetings, prefer to continue their work directly in the car rather than returning to the company. Obviously, the convenience of a car can never replace chair and desk's one, however it could be the best solution for such circumstances.

Another interesting paper to analyse the impact on work of new workplaces is the one written by Hill, Ferris e Martinson (2003).

The scientific paper aims to find the impacts and consequences on professional and private life of different workplaces including the traditional office, "the home office", and "the virtual office", i.e. any other places where it is possible to work.

We therefore begin to understand the impacts and consequences on professional life. For this purpose, the variables job performance, job motivation, job retention, workload success and career opportunity are analysed.

Starting with job performance, although the participants declare an increase in their productivity in the "virtual office" and in the "home office" compared to the traditional one, the hypothesis is not objectively confirmed by the study (Hill, Ferris e Martinson, 2003). This misalignment between what was perceived and what emerged from the data analysis, may be due to design flaws in the model, as underlined by the authors. In fact, the perception that participants feel more productive when they work far from the office remains a salient consideration.

As for job motivation, data analysis converges in one direction, as well as confirming how workers feel more motivated to work from home or in a virtual office. Such findings can be explained in Bond et al., 1998, where it is emphasized that increasing autonomy and flexibility in choosing the most rewarding job is correlated with an increase in personal motivation. Motivation is a determining factor within the company, as it stimulates people to work both qualitatively and quantitatively better than those who are not motivated. Therefore, granting the opportunity to work outside the office is an effective strategy.

As far as job retention is concerned, people are more incentivized to remain in the company when there is the possibility of choosing the workplace. This flexibility is positively assessed by the people present in the company as well as the company's reputation and image are improved (Hill, Ferris e Martinson, 2003).

Concerning the workload success, that is the efficient and effective management of one's work tasks, the results of the analysis reveal how the work in the "virtual office" is positively correlated to a good performance. This positive effect has a less intensity for what concerning traditional office, and so confirming again the benefits of working out-of-the office (Hill, Ferris e Martinson, 2003).

Finally, the last aspect considered is the career opportunity, that is the perceived possibility of career advancement within the organization. Although many studies including those of Kossek, 2001 and Kurland & Bailey, 1999 demonstrate how people

who usually carry out their work far from the office perceive with greater difficulty the possibility of advancing their career within the organization, due to less personal contact with managers and important figures, such study proposes, instead, the opposite thesis. "Direct comparisons revealed virtual office workers and home office workers were more likely than traditional office workers to view their opportunity for career advancement optimistically. In addition, being a virtual office worker was a significant predictor of career optimism in the multivariate model as well" (Hill, Ferris e Martinson, 2003). This result may be an explanation of the fact that the people in the sample have been carrying out their duties away from the office for a long time, and therefore no longer perceive this possibility as an impediment to career opportunities.

Moving on to the second aspect of the research, that is the impacts of the different workplaces on private / family life, as many factors emerge as critical and salient. As for "virtual" workers, that is, those used to work everywhere, both in the office, at home or elsewhere, there is no positive correlation between work and a greater quality of private life. The work impact therefore appears to invade the private sphere. This result may be caused that often these people are unable to manage and keep distinct the boundaries between private and working life. This circumstance, as already analysed in the previous pages, can provoke conflicts and tensions between the two dimensions, thus compromising one of the potential positive sides of greater flexibility. Therefore, in order to keep the two spheres separates, people should plan and organize their work tasks so that they do not invade the space dedicated to the family and vice versa. In any case, it is subsequently confirmed that people which are used to work mainly from home are able to reconcile household chores, demonstrating that with a minimum of experience and strategic management of family and professional commitments, the balance between private life and work can improve.



### 3.4.2 THE SMART OFFICE

If, from a Smart working perspective, people will be less present in the office as they are enabled to work anywhere, then it is advisable to rethink the structure of the office itself, both seeking efficiency and a smart reorganization. To clarify our ideas, the book "The smart working book: the age of agile working has arrived" directs us towards the best strategies.

First of all, the smart office will become increasingly smaller: there will, in fact, be fewer people in the office at the same time and the spaces will be distributed more efficiently. Digitization will allow the resizing of offices: more and more organizations work without paper, so there is no need for shelves and space for archives. The design and layout of offices will also become more flexible in line with the evolution of organizations and business models that change faster.

The office of the future is not only smaller but is also designed in a radically different way from the classic office with long corridors and rooms for each worker. The office of the future will be a place that will give more inspiration, where people will gladly go. Instead of working in a permanent position, they will choose the workplace they deem most suitable to carry out their tasks. Therefore, there will be different places that people will be able to choose to carry out their activities. Among which:

- Concentration points: small rooms where you can work in complete tranquillity, for example on an important task or on other jobs that require high concentration.
- Common work points: large tables where you can work together with colleagues. There are many power outlets to connect laptops and mobile devices. In these points you work quietly and in relative peace (consider that, for example, it is not possible to make telephone calls).
- Lounge Points or Social Hubs: large spaces where you can talk to colleagues in a more informal environment.
- Meeting room: spaces dedicated to meetings or brainstorming sessions with colleagues. Preferably we orient ourselves on transparent and light rooms.

- Booths for Skype / Calls: small spaces where fast (telephone / Skype) calls can be made. Designed so that you can call in peace, without your colleagues disturbing you or disturbing others.

However, although there are such practical tips to make our offices smarter, it should be noted that there is no predefined model for reorganizing our environment. Each model needs to be adapted to the needs of people and their businesses. A useful tool for identifying how the hypothesized model can adapt and be compatible with organizational and personal needs is the Leesman index<sup>3</sup>, a questionnaire based on four elements:

1. What activities are important for the job
2. The impact of the office design (current situation)
3. What facilities and equipment are important for the job
4. What are the characteristics of a professional environment

Finally, there are many other practical tips to organize our spaces. I'm referring to the consideration of the impact of furniture, light and sound. The ideal approach is first, to arrange the office furniture in the way that is most compatible with sunlight. So, if there are rooms that are most exposed to the sun, then it becomes smart to use them for activities that require creativity, concentration and possibly collaboration. It is in fact known how light is important for people's well-being and good performance, since it guarantees the synchronization of our biorhythms. Furthermore, exposure to natural light during the day has a positive effect on our mood, our alert levels and our metabolism. A recent American study<sup>4</sup> showed that workers who are exposed to natural light sleep better and do more physical activity than workers who work with artificial light.

As for the impact of sound, although often forgotten and underestimated, it acquires greater relevance from a smart perspective. Julian Treasure, an American lawyer, and

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.leesmanindex.com/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2014/08/natural-light-in-the-office-boosts-health>

passionate about issues concerning audio and sound, explains in his TedTalks how much it can influence our physiology, our mental well-being, cognition and even our behaviour. Furthermore, excessive exposure to a noisy environment can also affect our mood, thus fuelling stress, tension and fatigue. One of the points of attention, are therefore the open spaces that are increasingly frequent nowadays. Although these environments are particularly effective for seeking a good brightness, to perceive a greater connection and approach with own colleagues and to be more flexible to modify the layout if the circumstances require it, it is advisable to carefully consider the sound variable. In fact, in such environments, as there are a multitude of people who talk, confront and converse on the phone, they could become annoying places where people struggle to find concentration. Consider that various scientific researches including the one written by Banbury and Berry (2011) suggest how open spaces with bad acoustics and ineffective layout organization can reduce people's productivity by up to 66%. In addition, the noise can also have an exogenous origin, i.e. come from outside, and therefore come from the street, from the vicinity of a courtyard, a school, etc. If these problems are therefore tangible and of a certain importance, it is essential not to ignore them and to take the right technological and organizational measures to mitigate them and make the work environment peaceful and stimulating for concentration and creativity. Fortunately, nowadays many technologies can resolve this discomfort. To mention a few, we can highlight the acoustic panels that can be installed on walls and ceilings that absorb sound and attenuate background noises, sprays that can be applied inside walls, a cheaper solution, but equally effective, or of the latest generation there are also furniture, such as desks, chairs and tables, created with special materials that muffle the surrounding noises. Finally, equally used are the so-called box offices, which are, in other words, open spaces surrounded by a sort of padded box that allows you to be in an open and transparent space but without the amount of noise normally associated with open spaces.

### **3.4.3 HOT DESKING**

What becomes innovative and revolutionary is the lack of a traditional personal desk.

This new flexible and dynamic environment is enabling for the so-called hot desking, that is the rotation of the desk or of one's workplace. This solution arises mainly from the need to seek efficiency in interior spaces, reorganizing spaces considering that people will not always be present in the office, and from the need to seek a more stimulating and productive environment. Therefore, people will now have the opportunity to go to the workstation that feel them more performing and that best suits the work contingencies. In addition, being able to move within the company facilitates meeting and exchanging views with other people. However, it should be noted that hot desking does not seem to be fully suitable for full time jobs in which employees perform regular duties within the same team.

Furthermore, psychological and attitudinal barriers, therefore of resistance to change, can also discourage people from effectively adopting these new working styles. In the paper of Tagliaro and Ciaramella (2016), territoriality is mentioned as a potential obstacle to these new flexible logics. Territoriality is here understood as a tendency towards "sedentarism" and the desire to personalize one's desk. In the study, it emerges that people have the habit of marking their desk using photos, strokes, magnets, plants, post-its, etc., thus highlighting a sort of emotional attachment. In these circumstances, it therefore becomes very difficult to imprint a culture of rotation of the available spaces, as people can feel disoriented and uncomfortable in frequently moving from one place to another.

However, even if just one workstation is normally privileged in these circumstances, this should not discourage organizations from seeking a smart dimension, through the installation of the new workstations discussed above, i.e. concentration rooms, call rooms, collaboration rooms, etc. If the context offers this possibility, the employee still anchored to his/her desk will be able to experience and realize that the myth of a single workstation is ephemeral and destined to be overwhelmed by the new flexible and dynamic settings. Moreover, if there is a strong tendency to personalize spaces, to discourage the single station and at the same time satisfy this desire, it becomes smart to hypothesize common but customizable desks, through the use of lamps that change

brightness, color and shape, or others modern accessories that can be temporarily arranged according to people's tastes.

#### **3.4.4 THE NEW RULES OF THE GAME**

In conclusion, the application of a smart layout requires reflection and comparison with people's attitudes and motivations. We have previously seen how the Lessman index can help in understanding how people feel integrated into the company dimension. It therefore becomes essential to carry out a specific analysis upstream of the various organizational and personal needs, and downstream, when the project has been implemented, to frequently collect feedback to understand if the organizational layout fits with organizational needs. It also becomes advisable to be ready to upgrade the layout if the average number of people present in the company changes significantly and if the activities to be performed change. In fact, the company layout is designed to adapt to specific conditions: it should be noted that if these conditions change, it will be advisable to reorganize the workstations according to the new needs.

In addition, to enhance the potential of these new smart spaces, behavioural and cultural rules are essential. The book "the smart working book: the age of agile working has arrived" basically offers us three suggestions:

1. There is no fixed "flex" seat. Sometimes it happens that groups of workers, implicitly or explicitly, take fixed positions either out of habit or for convenience. Well, this should not be allowed since everyone can work where wants.
2. Ban on "leaving the towel". If people leave their chosen workspace for more than a couple of hours, they have to ensure that the workspace is empty from personal belongings. Workspaces have to be disposable for each one. ICT also helps us: after 1 hour of inactivity the computer logs out automatically. This is a very important rule since there is a danger that some colleagues will no longer find a place while others have gone elsewhere and left their things on the tables.
3. Silence space = silence space. To truly give the opportunity to concentrate in the office, it is necessary that the rooms dedicated to quiet are effectively silent. For example, when you receive a call and must be answered immediately, it is a good idea to get up and go to an area where you can make noise.

## **CHAPTER 4 - QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 PURPOSE**

This section is dedicated to the analysis of a real smart working case. Our reference firm is Amadori who is involving in implementing smart working practises in its organization. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, smart working project got a boost and many smart working practises had implemented already along the last year.

The purpose is understanding how Amadori reacted to make such changes feasible and effective and how both employees and managers coped with these new working dynamics. These two perspectives (team members and team leaders) were thought according to the model proposed in chapter 3, where literature is analysed differentiating between bottom-up and top-down behaviours. Furthermore, this research tries to help Amadori to understand main complexities, difficulties and feedbacks, proposing finally some effective tips to overcome issues and accelerate this revolution. The model proposed in the end will be even helpful and practical for each firm that is facing same problems or need some suggestions to implement such virtual practises.

This paragraph starts explaining the method in which interviews had conducted, then illustrating the results and in the end, discussing what is emerged.

Purposes so can be synthetized as follow:

1. Understanding how Amadori is implementing Smart Working practises.
2. Understanding how team leaders are dealing with these new working practises, by extracting benefits and criticalities.
3. Understanding how team members are dealing with these new working practises, by extracting benefits and criticalities.

## **4.2 METHOD**

### ***Participants***

I approached people by e-mail to ask if they were available to be interviewed. All participants were interested to take part, except for one. In the end, the sample is composed by 16 people, grouped by 3 categories: 1 smart working manager, 5 team leaders and 10 team members.

The Smart Working manager is interviewed to understand the implementation steps that Amadori is following to approach Smart Working. Results are then discussed considering also literature analysed previously.

Team leaders are instead interviewed to deepen whether their leadership style, attitudes and behaviours are changed in comparison with the traditional settings. Results are then compared with the literature discussed in chapter 3.1 and 3.3 “Behaviours top-down” and Bytes.

Team members finally are interviewed to comprehend how employees have adapted their behaviours in the virtual dimensions, gathering then feedback of both benefits and criticalities. Results are then compared with the literature discussed in chapter 3.2 and 4 “Behaviours bottom-up” and Bytes.

Participants were selected from three different offices of Amadori, that is IT, Purchase Office and Organization & Business transformation. All participants are between 30 and 50 years old and there are 5 women and 11 men. These details are specified just to make the context clearer, but there weren't any specific selection criteria. Participants were selected exclusively due to their availability. Namely, this sample is obtained with the objective to extract general information, without the aim to discriminate results according to their age or gender.

### ***Interview***

The interviews were derived by taking into consideration some literature's aspect analysed in previous paragraphs. Interviews are thought differently based on the different roles of people.

To the Smart Working manager was asked the main steps that Amadori followed to bring Smart Working into the organization. (1<sup>st</sup> purpose)

To team leaders were asked opinions about managing a team in the virtual dimension (linked with chapter 3.1.1), by highlighting benefits and criticalities of communication (linked with chapter 3.1.3 and 3.3), relationship with their collaborators (linked with chapter 3.1.5) and execution activity and performance measurement (linked with chapter 3.1.7). (2<sup>nd</sup> purpose)

To team members were asked opinions about working remotely by highlighting benefits and criticalities of communication (linked with chapter 3.1.3), relationship with own colleagues and team leader (linked with chapter 3.1.5), projects execution (linked with chapter 3.2.2), work-life balance (linked with chapter 3.2.3) and usage of technology (linked with chapter 3.3). (3<sup>rd</sup> purpose)

### ***Procedure***

Each interview was conducted remotely through Google Hang Out. In a first moment, each participant was contacted for getting the availability. Then, once received, a virtual session through Google Hang Out was planned. Interviews lasted from 10 to 25 minutes and each was recorded with a smartphone. At the beginning of each interview, it was explained the purpose of the research, clarifying that answers were completely anonymously.



## 4.3 RESULTS

### *Understanding how Amadori is implementing Smart Working practises*

The following results are extracted after the interview with the Amadori manager responsible for the implementation of Smart Working.

Smart Working in Amadori is a crucial topic which, in the last 3 years, gained more attention and consideration. Amadori has always been more convinced that these new working dynamics will affect inevitably our future, since they can bring to organization many benefits both from company's point of view and employees' one. However, only in the last year, due mainly to Coronavirus pandemic, some Smart Working practises became concrete and effective.

The approach used to embrace these new working practises is strongly coherent with the model analysed in chapter 3. In fact, Amadori has established a Smart Working-focused-team which grouped own activities into 3 main point of views that is bottom-up, top down and layout.

According to bottom up logic, one of the first step that Amadori considered to make the transition into virtual dimension more pleasant and effective, was the sending by mail of a weekly newsletter which gathered suggestions and practical tips to face the remote work. Newsletters was sent to all employees and aimed to convey more awareness and confidence in working distant from the office.

Some of the newsletter topics are the following:

- 10 rules for a videoconference and 2 tips to be more productive
- IT support and how to have a good virtual communication
- How to use Google Drive and how to organize own activities
- Some tips to have a correct use of mail and Google Suite tools.
- How to optimize internet connections while working remotely
- Some tips to extend Smartphone and Laptop's life
- How to use Google Jamboard and how to manage priorities and incumbencies

We can observe that some of these topics are recurrent even in the literature analysed in chapter 3. These weekly newsletters have received only positive feedback since

people got helped to run their activities as best as they can. Even if a newsletter is sometimes labelled as spam, in this case employees found added value in its reading. This is maybe justified that in addition to practical tips to be more effective at work, in some newsletter was attached a Google Map link to make a virtual journey through best wonders in the world. People so had the possibility to begin a virtual journey, making their remote work more enjoyable and relaxing.

According to top down point of view, Amadori provided 4 webinars to team leaders. The purpose was educating and assisting team leaders to manage a hybrid team (virtual and physical) in order to valorise at most both individual and collective efforts. These webinars were conducted though video conference, and before each one a questionnaire was sent to participants in order to gather information about their management style. This information was useful since they could be after compared with the topics presented during the webinar. These webinars were really appreciated and each team leaders were trained to improve their management skills. The topics covered during the 4 webinars were the following:

- Practical suggestions about the correct use of communication channels
- How to conduct a virtual meeting
- The communication with own team member
- How to organize, monitor and coordinate remote activities

Then, according to layout point of view, guidelines about the right frequentation of the office were given. These guidelines had the aim to establish the maximum number of people allowed in the office. The rational for these guidelines was the square meters of each office: greater offices allow for more people and vice versa. However, we can admit that this step is mainly connected with the pandemic in order to avoid a greater contagion. In better times, people should be free to choose the place that they consider most suitable for being more productive, as underlined by literature in chapter 3.

Another planned but not already executed step is the implementation of an app which will trace the presence of employees. This app will allow employees to signal and book

their work-position, so that people can be ensured about the availability of a certain place in the office, knowing at the same time where their colleagues are. This app is one of the first step towards a hot-desking logic, discussed in chapter 4.3, and it will be extremely helpful for each employee eager to know the position of a certain colleague, maybe for personal alignments, communication etc.

Furthermore, IT office bought and delivered more than 100 laptops to equip people with new devices. The purpose was providing more powerful PCs that can boost and facilitate remote work. In addition, IT empowered VPN net and internet connection. These steps are coherent with the paragraph analysed in chapter 3.3, where technology (Bytes) is considered one of the main drivers of Smart Working. Then, even HR reacted promptly to these new dynamics by delivering new contracts to regulate the remote work.

In the last part of the interview, the manager highlighted that the greatest strength which permitted Amadori to continue its business processes even in a virtual dimension, is mainly due to the digital transformation process which have characterised last years. We can notice that this strategy is coherent with the chapter 3.3. Namely, Amadori is involving in a digitalization and dematerialization project, abandoning so the traditional paper, and converting most of its activities into digital processes. Manager continued saying that: *“If a company wants to bring Smart Working philosophy into its organization, it is necessary that the processes’ architecture can support the virtual dimension. This will allow, not only to continue own activities from a remote location, but even to improve and make own business more effective.”* Amadori started this revolution by delivering Google Suite, which allows employees to have all digital software in one location. This Google Suite is composed by on-cloud writing software, mail, meeting rooms, calendar, videoconference rooms etc, all tools which allow people to execute their project even far from the office. In addition, some processes have completely digitized, thanks to the introduction of digital signatures and the conversion of traditional documents into digital ones.

***Understanding how team leaders are dealing with these new working practises, by extracting benefits and criticalities***

The following results are extracted from the 5 interviews with 5 different team leaders.

*Managerial style*

All team leaders agreed that to lead in a virtual dimension one of the main critical variable is the trust as highlighted in the chapter 3.3.2. Anyway, no one of the team leaders interviewed found difficulties in trusting team members which are not present in the office. All team leaders are at the head of already established teams, where people have been already working together from at least one year, and where a fiduciary relationship was already developed. In addition, team leaders' attitudes are coherent with the philosophy of Smart Working, namely no one of them have expressed a need of physically seeing people working. So, managerial style seems not have changed as already before the control was primarily based on activity results and not on the time people spent in the office.

*Communication*

All team leaders claimed that Smart Working have changed strongly the communication modalities. If before, most of conversation were personally, according to Smart Working, communication was transmitted through mainly the usage of videoconference. In most of cases, videoconference was used both to have reunions and to share and debate project progresses. Videoconference tools such as Google Hang Out was preferred to carry out most of the discussion regardless the importance: even the most critical issues were discussed through video conference. However, 4 out of 5 team leaders, reported that sometimes the virtual communication is not the most effective to gather all kind of information, and in particular the implicit ones. They said that the personal confrontation is more natural and more spontaneous and allows for more effective exchange of views. They didn't exclude so, that once coronavirus pandemic will be over, conversations that require collective active participation will return to physical

reality, coherently with Daft, R.L. & Lengel, R.H., 1986. In fact, S.S. outlined that the conversation that are most suffering virtual condition are the collective ones. This team leader outlined that videoconference which require the presence of all team members can be less efficient since people struggle to understand when they can intervene and sometimes voices overlap each other. Furthermore, he found more difficult to interpret implicit signals. However, he continued saying that these criticalities are mitigated when the number of people is lower

Anyway, all of them have recognised the huge potential of technological tools which permit teams to be together even if team members are distant. Other three team leaders argue that virtual conversation is optimized. *“Virtual conversation in comparison with personal ones are more task-focused. When we have a video conference, we don’t waste time in speaking about something else, but we get straight to the point”* (A.B). Furthermore, it seems that communication is also optimized since team members before asking for clarifications, normally try to solve their problems on their own. *“For any doubts, if we were in office, people would ask immediately a quick help. In this virtual condition instead, team members are more prone to find autonomously a solution and only then they look for a help.”* (A.B). Team leaders also recognised that it is more likely that people approach video conference in a more professional way than personal confrontation. They reported that before starting a virtual conversation, team members often arrange and prepare their speech in a proactive way, which seems less frequent in personal dialogues. Also, thank to this reason, communication through video conference results to be optimized. Finally, virtual reunions seem to be more effective since there is the collective need to conclude the meeting with something done or decided.

In addition to videoconference, another communication tools which gained momentum is the chat tool. Team leaders said that chat was used primarily to quick and informal information and it is coherent with McKinsey TTF (chapter 3.3.2). The usage of chat seems having the same functional purpose of a quick personal alignments. So, people that are far from each other, rather than intercepting orally their office colleagues, they chat each other for brief opinions. In addition, one team leader said that he had created many chat groups based on different activities, by letting his members to communicate

and exchange ideas. This method was thought both to reduce the perceived distance among intra-colleagues and even to make the word of mouth information more efficient and effective. He continued saying that without group chats, information pass from one person to another, and in each step, a bit of information is inevitably lost. Thanks to group chats, information is written just a time and all members have immediately access to it. These arrangements received positive feedback since each member recognised that they are more aligned and updated with team activities.

### *Relationship with team members*

All team leaders reported that their approach and relationship with their collaborators have totally changed. Due to a less frequent physical proximity, most of the interactions are conducted via digital tools. Each team leaders begun to plan with the team a weekly appointment to discuss about projects progresses and confrontation about critical issues. Some team leaders, rather than talking immediately about work activities, prefer to begin the videoconference talking about personal matters to distress the atmosphere and to simulate typical office conversations. In general, all team leaders scheduled also 1 to 1 meeting in case certain topics need to be treated individually. P.V. highlighted that, in comparison with the past, people perceived these weekly reunions in a positive way, and he stated that the synchronization among people is improved. Further, he noticed that people respect, with a higher likelihood, the meeting start time and it appeared less frequent that people ask to procrastinate the meeting. Anyway, another three team leaders called the attention to the lack of personal contact. Even if they recognised that virtual conversation is greater optimized, they expressed the profound need to keep personal interactions. They are convinced that personal interactions are fundamental to increase cohesion, group spirit and mutual harmony and this is even more important for those people that barely met each other personally. Therefore, it seems emerging that, after this Coronavirus outbreak, virtual dimension will remain, however it will be flanked by office reunions. S.S. said: *“You really know the company if you hear company’s rumours while walking around corridors, drinking tea or coffee in the break rooms, if you hear your colleagues discussing about critical issues. The virtual*

*dimension cannot never replace the corporate experience. A good balance between these two realities is necessary”.*

Continuing the analysis, one team leader experienced a criticality with one of his collaborators. *“Every time I have a virtual dialogue with him, he appeared quite aggressive and suspicious. In one occasion, he even put the phone down.”* Team leader specified that these abnormal behaviours never happened in the office and the reason, so, stays behind the virtual dimension. He hypothesized that, being this collaborator over 55, he could have had problems with technology and therefore distrusted virtual communication. Therefore, this team leader in order to be more empathetic, he tried to approach each conversation by asking him personal question such as “how are you?” “what’s going on?” before turning to professional questions. In addition, team leader began to synchronize his presence in the office with those of the collaborator, so that conversations could also take place personally. Thanks to these measures, relationship with this person have improved, and now, even virtual conversations are more peaceful and constructive.

This is the only negative experience that emerged from the interviews. In all other cases, collaborators responded well, and no one had particular problems in using new technological tools.

#### *Execution activity and performance measurement*

All team leaders claimed that work activities have regularly continued. A team leader specified that projects continued without interruption mainly due to the efficient technological architecture which allow people to work at home like if they were in office. From this statement, are obviously excluded all kind of projects which do not require physical activity. The manager of purchase office said that negotiations with suppliers are not so effective and practical through videoconference, so the personal confrontation would be preferable. Team leaders stated that their collaborators are at least as productive as they were in the office, in some cases even more. G.B. claimed that *“Sometimes, I found my collaborators more productive from home rather than office, maybe due to the condition of tranquillity that they can enjoy. In office there could be some distractions that could be deleterious for concentration.”* B.V. instead noticed

that *“The productivity from home is normally greater than the office’s one. People can work more if they have to finish a certain activity. However, what is missing in the virtual dimension, is the rapid interaction among people which can be essential to finish a certain task without interruption”*.

Another interesting point which emerged from the analysis is the formalization of the activity, even at micro-level. S.S. claimed that thanks to virtual dimension, activities must be more clearly formalized in order to share easily progresses and results with the team. This punctual formalization has never done before, since people that works always in the same place were used to share progressions simply by quickly communicating them to their office colleagues. In this new reality, S.S. continued saying that it is fundamental to break up and explicate the granularity of activity so that people can easily control them, and share progresses and complexities.

Another criticality pointed out by a team leader are the consolidated habits of over 50 people. He said: *“People that are used to work for a long time in a certain way found more difficulties in adapting their behaviour for the virtual dimension. Many over 50 have expressed their desire to spend more days in office rather than at home.”* So, it seems that “older” people have so strengthened their working habits that now find more challenging adapting their behaviours for the virtual dimension. For example, for those people who are used to print paper, their performance at home could suffer. Team leader continued: *“One of the main priorities to make Smart Working effective is changing people’s behaviour. People must be trained and educated in order to make work from home more productive. This require time, but it is the only win-win solution.”*

Other activities which is suffering the virtual dimension are the creative ones. S.S. reported that generally activities continued without interruption. However, he noticed that the activity which require creativity, deep thinking and active confrontation were strongly penalised. *“If we were in office, we would have a share board where we can highlight with visual shortcuts priorities, complexities and criticalities. Through a video conference you cannot have the same depth of interaction and comprehension. I know that exists many tools which simulate a share board, but behind a video-camera some information are lost.”* S.S. has experienced that, instead, the activities which was easily formalized, with a low level of uncertainty and with a standardized approach are



benefitting virtual dimension since people resulted more productive. Therefore, what seems discriminating the outcome of an activity is its nature: creative ones obtain better result in office, standardized activities instead get benefits from the work at home.

For what concerns instead performance measurement, no team leaders reported specific criticalities. All team leaders based their evaluation on projects progressions together with quick personal or collective alignments. One of the most used digital software is Jira which allow both team leaders and team members to plan their activity signalling expire time, activity's owner, criticalities and many other information which can be useful for an assessment. This software was used even before Smart Working become a reality, so the passage into virtual dimension didn't raise any complexities. Two team leaders highlighted, instead, that the outcome evaluation can be based on two main dimension that is the efficiency and the efficacy. They continued saying that Jira is particularly useful to assess the efficacy of a certain activity, however information about efficiency is missing. Therefore, in addition to the evaluation of Jira, they are using some KPIs and reports to have a better comprehension of the way activities are done. They concluded saying that the achievement of a result is fundamental, but it is equally important to assess the quality of what is achieved.

***Understanding how team members are dealing with these new working practises, by extracting benefits and criticalities.***

*Virtual communication*

All people interviewed retain that the virtual communication is a good substitute of personal one. One of the greatest benefits that people recognised is that virtual dialogues are optimized, that is conversations converge immediately to key issues without wasting time in talking about something else. However, most of the people highlight that in certain cases it is preferable the personal communication for a greater spontaneity and mutual comprehension. A.B. said *"According to my personal experience, normally, I don't have any problems in communicating through a videoconference. However, it happened that I had to explain a project to my colleagues,*

*and that time I preferred the personal meeting which I consider more helpful to interact more effectively".* On the contrary, two people stated that since there are many technological tools that can allow to interact in the way that you prefer, virtual communication should be the rule. N.V. said: *"There are no reasons to prefer personal conversations. Virtual meetings start with a greater likelihood in time, and if you want to make videoconference richer, you can easily share your screen, or you can use the Jam-board to take notes as you would do in office. Anyway, it is fundamental that people leave own camera open, otherwise you would lose some facial cues."*

Therefore, facial signals appear fundamental to reproduce social presence, as underlined by literature (Short et al., 1976). In fact, many team members affirmed that the huge potential of videoconference is the possibility to see each other. Therefore, if one would keep own camera closed, this potential would be strongly mitigated, and the videoconference would be as effective as a simple phone call.

Among other benefits, two team members said that thanks to virtual communication, people are more prone to ask you whether you would be available or not to have a conversation. M.G. continued saying that if I were in the office, I would be interrupted many times due to people that ask for quick information. At home, instead this is less likely, since people normally ask you the availability to talk rather than calling you directly. However, connected to this aspect, I.A. is convinced that the impossibility to talk in an informal way is the greatest criticalities of virtual communication. She told that the unstructured communication, which is missing in the virtual dimension, is the only reason for preferring personal communication. *"We have all the tools to have an effective communication even at home. However, if you want to ask some information to your colleagues, you can either chat or plan a call. Instead, if you would be in the office, you would more easily ask it to your colleagues, accelerating in this way the process of knowledge sharing."* Another team member, coherently with this statement, answered that during the time spent in office you can indirectly absorb many other information which can be useful for work activities. She said that this kind of indirect communication is also essential to be more conscious of work's colleagues and to feel more involved in the organization. *"If someone have asked me something about my colleagues' projects, maybe, I would have been able to answer. Working at home,*

*instead, doesn't grant you this possibility, so generally, people are less aware about office's activities."*

#### *Relationship with colleagues and team members*

For what concerns this aspect, most people agreed that relationships with own colleagues suffered the missing social dimension. According to answers, social dimension seems a fundamental aspect which foster collaboration, empathy and group spirit. In general, many team members miss the possibility to drink a coffee with own colleagues and sharing those office experiences which can improve the quality of mutual relationship. However, other respondents argued that a less intense social dimension doesn't represent a criticality for those people that know each other for a long time. N.V. said: *"Surely, I miss the more spontaneous office dialogues, however, I didn't experience any slowdown due to lack of personal interactions. Virtual relationships are more difficult to cultivate, however with a right meeting schedule you can keep your relationship level at a high threshold"*. N.V. finished saying that this statement can be true where a relationship already exists, however less true for people that have never seen each other.

Then, all people said that their relationship with own team has profoundly changed. A.P. reported: *"If before, we were used to have a weekly reunion to share projects progressions, nowadays we try to keep us in touch with a weekly virtual meeting. However, these meetings are only task-focused, and there's not enough space to talk about personal matters."* Therefore, it seems that relationship that born in the virtual dimension are mainly based on professional activities. On the contrary, relationship which born in the office, can be based both on professional activities and personal matters due to the greater likelihood of having a private conversation. L.P. said: *"In the virtual dimension, you are less prone to call your colleague just for private reasons"*.

One benefit that emerged from the interviews is that, in certain cases, relationship with own team leader is even improved thanks to virtual reality. N.V. reported that: *"When I spent all the time in office, I found many difficulties to talk with my team leader, as it was always busy. Now, thanks to chat tools, when I have something to ask, I just send him a message. It is a paradox, but I feel him closer to me than it was before."* M.G. reported instead: *"From when we have begun to work at home, team meetings are*

*scheduled with a greater frequency and cadence. From the professional point of view, relationships are even improved."*

#### *Execution activity*

For what concern this dimension, divergent opinions emerged from the interviews. Half of team members outlined that remote work have positive impacted activities execution due to greater concentration and less office distractions. L.B. said that: *"I really need the home's tranquillity to carry out certain projects. I felt more productive mainly because of I have less distractions than office. I have my quiet rooms that allows me to converge all energies into my activities"*. This feeling however was contrary to what said by D.M. *"When I work at home, I'm more inclined to get distracted by YouTube, social networks etc."*. Then R.M. reported a benefit: *"What I really appreciated when I remote work, is the greater flexibility. You can work when you feel more productive. Therefore, you can manage your time according to your both energy and physical energies. In the end, this leads to a better output's quality."* Also A.P. reported an advantage: *"Since we started working from home, there's a stricter planning of activities, and therefore we can react more promptly in case of deviations, having at the same time a greater control of what we are doing."*

On the other side, the other half of respondents said that their activities didn't experience relevant benefits, or they were just offset with some potential criticalities. V.S. stated *"If, from one point of view, it is true that working at home grant you more flexibility in arranging own activities, from the other side, the isolation condition is detrimental to receive knowledges and information with the same office's speed. Sometimes it happened that I had to procrastinate projects' deadlines just because the sharing of information is slower than the office."* This thesis is then corroborated also by M.G. who affirmed: *"I found that the activities which require collaboration are the ones that are most suffering. Otherwise, for individual's ones I didn't experience any criticalities or benefits"*. Also D.M. retained that: *"I didn't encounter any slowdowns due to remote work. I have all the necessary tools to carry out my activities on my own. However, the greatest criticality is the absence of that office micro-communication (that is the typical office's conversations) which can reveal necessary to optimize the process of knowledge sharing, and so speeding up the activities execution."*

Another critical issue that emerged from the interviews is the one reported by A.P. who noted that while she didn't find any difficulties to adapt own behaviours to work remotely, some of her older colleagues (over 55) have encountered many challenges in changing their ways of working. Anyway, this is an interesting point since some interviewees admitted to having encountered difficulties the first few times they worked from home. However, these difficulties have been overcome over time. Therefore, it seems that younger people know how to adapt faster to new work habits than older people that have been working from a longer time.

However, in addition to these benefits and criticalities, most people reported that they didn't find any particular problems in continuing their activities from a remote location. D.G. said: *"In general, I have all the necessary software to execute my projects. For sure, some activities which are not digitized and require physical presence remains, however most of them can be easily carried out even from home."*

#### *Work-life balance*

Each respondent confirmed that Smart Working brought many benefits to this dimension. At first, the most appreciated thing is the time saved for commuting. Many people, thanks to remote work, can save almost 2 hours per day which can be used for private matters. Then, parents interviewed said that they have more time to take care of their children. I.A said: *"If I have to pick up my child from school, thanks to flexibility, I can do it without any problems."* Further, A.B. stated: *"Remote working have allowed me to intensify family's relationships. For me, it is really important to have lunch with my children, and now I can do it."* Also D.M. stated: *"When I work from home, I can better meet friends' commitments. This has positive impact on my morale which could translate into better performance when I work."* However, it is emerged that single people who don't have a family didn't experience same benefits. N.V. said: *"I think that, for what concerns me, benefits due to remote work are less impacting in comparison with a parent. Anyway, I recognise that I have more flexibility to balance more efficiently my hobbies with my work, and this is positive."*

In addition, there are also some critical issues concerning home's spaces. Three team members experienced much greater home tension due to little spaces available. M.G.: *"Work-life balance is improved. However, I'm living in a little house with my girlfriend,*

*and when we both work from home, we don't have enough space to keep a quiet atmosphere. If she receives a call, home becomes too much noisy and this is detrimental for my concentration."*

Furthermore, other two people reported another criticality that can become severe in the long term. I'm referring to family-work conflicts (chapter 3.2.3), a potential drawback which even emerged from the answers. D.G. said: *"I'm really grateful to have the possibility to work at home. However, we must be able to manage our activities, otherwise we could become a slave of connectivity. In the first period, I wasn't capable to recognise when I could stop working, and sometimes I worked longer. Nowadays instead, I arrange my remote work trying to respect the traditional working hours."* Also A.P. said: *"The first times that I worked from home I couldn't find the time to have lunch quietly. My phone was always on and I received constantly many calls which had prevented me to have lunch relaxed. Now instead, when I finish my activities, I directly switch my phone off."* These evidences highlight that the work organization is fundamental to not invade private sphere. However, it seems that, as time passes, people can react to find a right balance between work duties and private matters.

To conclude, other two people reported that working overtime at home is more enjoyable than working overtime in office. D.M said: *"If I work longer at home, this is less frustrating than working longer in the office, just because I perceive the home atmosphere more comfortable than office's one. Premising this, we have to pay attention that this condition has not to become a rule, otherwise in the long run, it could be deleterious."*

#### *Usage of technology*

According to this dimension, nobody experienced any relevant problem. The only criticality that is emerged from the half of respondents is that VPN sometimes didn't work so well. It happened that VPN wasn't as fast as would be in the office, and therefore activities experienced a slowdown. Except for this issue, all appreciated that Smart Working gave the possibility to use many technologies that have never used before. For example, D.M. stated: *"Thanks to remote work, the importance of technology has become paramount. I discovered the value of many technological tools, especially communication tools, which I previously considered only marginally. This had a positive*

*impact on my private life as well. For example, the jam board that I discovered while working, it happened that I used it also for private matters.” Also A.P. said:” I must be grateful to Smart Working as it made me discover the high potential of many technological tools.”*

#### **4.3.1 SUMMARY**

##### ***Understanding how Amadori is implementing Smart Working practises***

- Introduction of newsletter which gathered tips and suggestions to help people cope with remote work.
- Planning of 4 webinars that aim to support to team leader in managing a hybrid team
- Implementation of an App to signal own presence
- Purchase of many laptops and distribution of VPN to all employees.
- Accelerate the process of digital transformation

##### ***Understanding how team leaders are dealing with these new working practises, by extracting benefits and criticalities.***

*(Underlined results are shared by at least half of respondents)*

*(Managerial style is not considered as no relevant results have emerged)*

#### **Virtual Communication**

##### **Benefits**

- Virtual communication is optimized since it is more task-focused
- People approach virtual communication in a more professional way, by planning and organizing own speech
- Virtual communication is more likely to end with something decided
- Possibility to create group chats to get closer members with same competences

#### Criticalities

- Virtual communication isn't as spontaneous as personal confrontation
- During a virtual communication is more difficult to capture implicit signals

#### **Relationship with team members**

##### Benefits

- Synchronization among people is improved
- Digital meetings are less likely to start in delay or to be skipped
- Possibility to schedule digital meeting whenever is necessary

##### Criticalities

- A lower personal contact could be detrimental for cohesion and group spirit
- There could be some people who distrust virtual communication

#### **Execution activity and performance measurement**

##### Benefits

- Home productivity is higher than the office's one
- Virtual dimension requires a deeper formalization of activity which can transmit more awareness of projects
- Standardized activity benefits the virtual dimension

##### Criticalities

- Negotiations with suppliers are less effective though videoconference
- Virtual dimension lacks personal interactions which can foster execution activity
- Older people can experience complexities in changing working modalities
- Creative and problem-solving activities are less effective through digital technologies
- Needs to find some KPI to assess the quality of virtual projects



***Understanding how team members are dealing with these new working practises, by extracting benefits and criticalities.***

*(Underlined results are shared by at least half of respondents)*

### **Virtual communication**

#### Benefits

- Virtual dialogues are optimized
- Videoconference starts with a greater likelihood in time
- People are more prone to ask you the availability before contacting you

#### Criticalities

- Virtual communication is not as spontaneous and natural as personal one
- Virtual communication lacks unstructured and informal communication
- Someone doesn't leave the video camera open, so some facial cues are lost
- It is more difficult to absorb colleagues' knowledges

### **Relationship with colleagues and team leaders**

#### Benefits

- Thanks to virtual communication, virtual meetings are planned more frequently than physical ones, so work-relationships are improved
- Relationship with own team leader can improve due to greater possibility of contacting him

#### Criticalities

- Virtual dimension suffered the missing social dimension
- Relationships which begin virtually are more fragile, since they are based just on professional matters and not on private ones.

### **Execution activity**

#### Benefits

- Home productivity is greater due to higher concentration and less distraction
- The greater flexibility allows you to work in the most productive moments
- Activities are planned with a greater formalization

### Criticalities

- Isolation condition is detrimental to receive useful knowledges for activities
- Virtual dimension lacks micro-communication
- In the remote location, it is more likely to get distracted by YouTube and Social Networks
- Older people can experience problems in changing their work modality

### Work-life balance

#### Benefits

- Remote work allows saving time of commuting
- Remote work allows reconciling private commitments with work ones more effectively
- Working overtime at home is more pleasant than at office

#### Criticalities

- Greater family tension in case of lack of comfortable spaces
- Greater likelihood to working longer due to inability to recognize the boundary between working time and private one
- Greater likelihood to get frustrated due to the possibility to be always available

### Usage of technology

#### Benefits

- Using more technological tools is perceived as a personal growth
- Some work tools become useful also for private matters

#### Criticalities

- VPN sometimes doesn't work well

#### 4.4 DISCUSSION

We can note that as regards the team leaders, all have adopted a managerial attitude consistent with Smart Working dynamics. No one has expressed the need to have serial control over people, and everyone aimed to evaluate people considering how much they produce and not how much time they spend at the PC. As anticipated before, this managerial style is consistent with the transactional style, according to which the focus is mainly on projects' outcomes. However, if according to the transactional style people are motivated with the promise of a reward, the interviews show that team leaders, through the weekly alignment appointments, motivate people by conveying awareness about ongoing projects. Therefore, we can retain that this managerial style takes the aspects of both styles proposed by the literature. This is also consistent with what is suggested by paragraph 3.1.1, namely that the managerial style most suitable for managing hybrid teams is the one that takes into consideration the behaviours and attitudes of both figures. It can be assumed that this positive result may be a consequence of the good effectiveness of webinars which have trained and educated team leaders in managing hybrid teams.

Then, we can notice that team leaders appreciate virtual communication as it facilitates and optimizes project-based conversations. It therefore seems that in virtual meetings compared to personal ones, people are more inclined to respect the topics of discussion, without dwelling on misleading issues. This is also confirmed by the responses of team members who believe that virtual communication is less suitable for conversations of a private and personal nature.

However, it is also highlighted that during a virtual communication it is more difficult to catch those mimic and facial signals that can improve the quality of the conversation. This becomes even more critical when people keep their cameras off.

Finally, the desire that personal communication should not be abandoned is equally strong. From the interviews it emerges, in fact, that private conversation is fundamental to avoid misunderstandings and to discuss issues of a certain criticality and complexity. Besides, personal conversation is retained necessary to solidify and intensify personal relationship. This sentiment is consistent with what was discussed in paragraph 3.2.2 and is shared by both team leaders and team members.

In addition, virtual communication can be even more critical for older people who find challenging using new technological means. As the results show, a team leader had to increase personal interaction with a collaborator who mistrust virtual communication. We can conclude that the dimension of personal communication should not be set aside. Virtual communication isn't a replacement, but a complement in order to increase and intensify mutual dialogue and therefore relationships. Virtual communication does not require a physical presence in the same place, so conversations can be held more frequently. However, a correct alternation between physical and virtual meetings is essential in order not to lose those benefits of personal communication which amplify mutual understanding.

As for the relational aspect is concerning, the team leaders found greater synchronization between people due to an increase in digital meetings. However, digital meetings are extremely focused on the execution of projects, so they are not an opportunity to intensify personal relationships from a private point of view. Furthermore, digital meetings seem not to be ideal for increasing the sense of cohesion and belonging to the team. Therefore, it is advisable that each team may collaborate both via remote and in office in order to increase team spirit, cohesion and therefore mutual trust. This solution is also corroborated by chapter 3.1.3, paragraph the role of face-to-face conversation.

We can affirm that personal relationships are one attention points most cited by the interviewees, demonstrating the fact that this dimension assumes even greater importance in a Smart Working project. One of the major shortcomings of the digital reality seems to be the social aspect. Both the team leaders and the team members have expressed the need to return to the office so as not to abandon those informal communications between colleagues which, in addition to having a positive impact in the emotional sphere, are also determined for greater awareness about the company reality. "You can live the company only by walking through its corridors, by hearing and interacting with own colleagues" said a team leader.

The execution of projects that do not require physicality have not encountered any particular slowdowns. However, the interviews show that office micro communication (or informal communication) can sometimes be useful to speed up the execution of

certain tasks. Furthermore, it is also reported that the mere presence in the office can be useful for indirectly absorbing those colleagues' knowledge and skills that are crucial for the professional growth of each one. This information will also be necessary to gain greater awareness of the workplace and the surrounding atmosphere. Furthermore, it is also highlighted how creative activities that require active and reactive participation of people are more effective if carried out in the office. On the contrary, standardized activities seem to be carried out more effectively in a quiet home environment. These considerations more clearly outline the main difference between the two working dimensions. The home (or remote) reality is more stimulating to seek individual concentration, therefore it better adapts to those sequential activities with a low degree of uncertainty, while the office reality is more recommended for those collaborative activities that require frequent interpersonal interactions.

In addition, another criticality that emerged from the responses is that there may be people, generally over 55, who may find more difficult to adapt their consolidated working methods to a digital context. It is easy to understand how a person who is used to working in a certain way for many years, may find challenging changing own work modalities for the home context. Therefore, team leaders should assist and support these people more carefully to prevent the generation of tension and frustration. Or team leaders could designate younger people to train and educate older ones to make the digital transition more enjoyable and collaborative.

As for the aspect of work-life balance is concerned, the interviewees unanimously declare that they have found a clear improvement in the management of private and professional commitments. This thesis is also supported by the literature in paragraph 3.2.3. The people interviewed especially appreciate the greater flexibility afforded by working from home, therefore the possibility of being more reactive in the event of unforeseen family commitments. However, the negative sides are not missing: if on the one hand there is greater reconciliation with private commitments, on the other there is the risk that people become slaves of remote work and are no longer able to distinguish the boundaries between professional life and private. This risk also emerged from the interviews and two people declared that they had worked beyond normal working hours due to inability to log out. However, these incidents occurred in the first

two months of working remotely. Over time, these people have learned to organize their days, self-imposing limits on working hours and availability from colleagues. Therefore, team leaders should immediately transmit to their collaborators the need to organize and plan their remote days, both to be able to carry out work activities with methodology and criteria, and to avoid the systematic extension of the working day beyond the canonical hours.

Finally, it must be emphasized that all the interviewees did not encounter any difficulties or slowdowns due to the new technological tools. Everyone expressed that they know how to use the new work and communication tools with good familiarity and the only complexity faced have exogenous nature, that is the VPN connection that is not always very fast. This result may be caused by the relatively young sampling age, that is between 30 and 50. We therefore believe that older people may experience difficulties, as in the example cited above. In any case, this positive result can also be attributable to the effectiveness of the weekly newsletter which, by offering practical advices and guides on the correct use of technology, has transmitted greater practical awareness to people.

To conclude, we can say that one of the greatest strengths that is allowing Amadori to effectively support Smart Working modalities, is the digital transformation path which is characterizing last years. Many activities can be carried out through a remote location thanks to the increasing processes dematerialization. This consideration seems banal, however fundamental to support this revolution without losing efficacy and efficiency.

## **CHAPTER 5 - SMART WORKING ROADMAP**

Based on the result of the qualitative analysis and the literature analysed in the first paragraphs, now, we try to outline a roadmap which can be helpful for each company that are eager to start implementing smart working in its organization.

The following roadmap will be structured as a series of practical sequential steps which can be followed to implement Smart Working in an effective way.

Here steps are grouped into the three main dimensions presented in first chapters, that is Behaviours, Bytes and Bricks, that we retain that are the main drivers around which Smart Working needs to be built.

### **Premise:**

Digital transformation is necessary. Most of work processes should be digitized otherwise people cannot work remotely. Even if some work processes still run via paper, it doesn't matter. What is important is that there are projects that can be carried out without any technological restrictions even at home. Meanwhile you can exploit this moment to accelerate your digital transformation path.

Once, you have ascertained that people have all the necessary tools to work at a remote location, you should appoint a team group which is responsible to implement the following steps.

Following steps are, indeed, aimed at this group of people.

### **BEHAVIOURS**

#### **Top Down**

Taking a cue from Amadori's example, you should plan some personal or digital meetings (personal is preferable) to help team leader in managing a hybrid team. These meetings will aim to convey awareness of new managerial style that virtual reality requires.

You should plan several meetings each one with a different focus: you are free to decide the duration since it depends on topics covered.

One meeting can be focused on the necessity to abandon the command & control logic. People will not have to be evaluated on time spent while working but on results achieved. (Chapter 3.1.1 and 3.1.7 can give you some precious insights)

One other can be focused on the necessity to have a team where people trust each other. It is fundamental that you transmit the awareness that trust is even more important for those team groups that barely meet personally. It is paramount that you transmit the awareness that people need personal contact to strengthen mutual relationship. You have to highlight that people suffered the condition of long isolation, and they need to come back in office to have informal conversation with their colleagues. (Chapter 3.1.2, 3.1.5 and 4.3 can give you some precious insights)

Another meeting should be used to educate team leader in properly using technology. We have seen that digital communication can hide some discontents. Therefore, team leaders should be trained in paying more attention to facial signals which could be more eloquent than words. You have also to teach how to use all the functions and potentiality offered by digital tools. (Chapter 3.1.3 can give you some precious insights)

Then, you should plan a meeting to convey awareness about the new working methods. Activities are no longer executed exclusively in the office. Therefore, this new reality requires a stricter formalization of projects. This necessity is expressed also by one team leader interviewed (Chapter 4.3). In addition, team leaders should plan, with a greater frequency, meetings to talk about the project's progressions. This will be helpful for both strengthen again relationships and to gain a better awareness of the collaborators' activities. You should take in mind that there could be activities which are better carried out personally, like the creative ones and others which requires the home's quiet atmosphere. (See chapter 3.1.7 and 4.3). In addition, team leaders should not underestimate that the process of knowledge sharing can suffer the virtual dimension. Therefore, a correct alternation between the two dimensions would be ideal (Chapter 3.1.4 can give you some precious insights).

In addition, chapter 3.1.6 proposed already some other interesting topics that you could cover during your meetings.



In conclusion, what is really important to convey is the awareness to adopt a flexible (smart) approach. There aren't perfect behaviours for each situation. Therefore, team leaders should be enough flexible to perceive any collaborators' needs and adapt each circumstance in the way that collaborators feel most confident and productive. For example, if a team leader perceives that one collaborator is greater productive at home, he/she should grant him/her more days at home. And again, if one collaborator found more criticalities in changing their working modalities in comparison with own's colleagues, he/she deserves more attention and interest.

### **Bottom-Up**

Taking a cue from Amadori's reality, we retain that the use of newsletter is an effective way to dispatch tips and practical suggestions to teach employees how to use the new technological tools.

However, this newsletter should not provide only technological suggestions but also some helpful advises to effectively manage activities from a remote location.

Therefore, each newsletter should have a particular focus. We can summarise the most relevant topic as follows.

Some newsletters should convey awareness about the new technological tools and relative functionalities. Thanks to Smart Working, we have discovered that there are many tools which allow people to work equally effectively even from home. If before, people were used to take notes in papers, now there are many tools which have replaced traditional notebooks. Now, it is possible having conversation also thanks to digital technological tools. Therefore, people must know how to use all of them in a correct way. Then, it is necessary that each person has an adequate digital awareness such as to be able to carry out all activities independently. (See chapter 3.3.1 and 3.3.3 for precious insights)

Other newsletter should educate people to effectively work from a remote location. We have seen that people, when work for example at home, are in isolation. They have less control, and they are required to manage own projects autonomously. We must

consider that not all employees are able to self-manage own time, therefore you have to dispatch useful tips that can help people for this objective. The purpose, in the initial phase, is obtain at least the same productivity as the office's one. Then, once people have consolidated their new working methods, you will see an improvement. (Chapter 3.2.1 and 3.2.4 can give you some precious insights)

Then, other newsletters should focus the attention towards the possible risks that people can encounter while working from home. We have seen that people are more likely to work beyond normal business hours. This condition is well explained also in the literature analysed in chapter 3.2.3. You, as responsible for Smart Working implementation, should convey the awareness that working at home can involve many risks linked to hyper-connectivity. Employees need to be aware when they can stop working to prevent them from invading the time dedicated to family. This is true also for the other direction. Then, family commitments must not divert attention from work in order to keep one's productivity high. People should find a quiet place at home which can be stimulating for own concentration. (Chapters 3.2.3 can give you some precious insights)

Then, in addition to newsletters, it is equally advisable organizing some physical meetings where all employees are invited. (Obviously, depending on company size you can plan more sessions.) These meetings can cover the same topics covered by newsletters, but with the difference that in the ending, you can plan half an hour (or just the necessary time) to gather any questions and debate the answers publicly. Or even better, before meetings you can gather by e-mail some questions that will be discussed in the end. Before, or during meeting, you can also hand out some brochures that highlight the main take-away tips, so that people have something to bring at home. Don't forget, obviously, to gather at the end some feedback, since they will tell you if the narrative language was appreciated or not.

In conclusion, we retain that the one-to-one formation cannot be ignored. For those people who, despite newsletters and physical meeting, still find it difficult to use technology or carry out their activities, it becomes necessary that team leaders plan a one-to-one conversation to analyse and indagate problems. (As even showed by interviews). This will be necessary both for increasing employee's productivity and even

to strengthen relationship with him/her. Smart Working, inevitably, have enlarged distances among people: if you will be able to be empathetic with your collaborators, by maintaining personal contact, you will be well regarded.

## **Bytes**

This aspect supports your Smart Working infrastructure. Before beginning working according to Smart Working modalities, it is fundamental to provide employees all the necessities tools to work from a remote location. Taking a cue from Amadori's reality, you can draw up a technological inventory and then distribute laptops to those who have not already one. In addition to Laptops, you should consider all the technological tools which are gathered in chapter 3.3. Then, as did by Amadori, you should equip your employees with a package of tools that includes writing software, videocalls tools etc, that allow people to work like if they were in the office. Amadori, for example, bought and provided their employees the GSuite which includes Drive, Gmail, Google sheets, Google modules, Chat and meeting tools and many other helpful software. (In chapter 3.3.1 and 3.3.3 you can find precious suggestions)

Then, it is equally important to distribute a remote VPN which allow employees to have access to company network even at home. However, as underlined by Amadori's interviews, you should pay attention that this VPN will not cause slowdowns to projects due to malfunctions. For example, some Amadori's team member complained that office connection was faster than the VPN connection causing in this way a lesser performance at home. Therefore, it is necessary to put people in the conditions to express themselves at their best.

Then, another topic that needs to be sensitized, is the cyber security. As underlined by the chapter 3.3.4, there are many cyber risks that people can encounter when working from PC. Due to the increase of Internet connection, people are daily expose to a series of risks which have not to be underestimated. In worst scenarios, it can involve the theft of precious data which can compromise the security of the whole network system. So, it is important that you strongly suggest IT office, to build a technological infrastructure with the strongest level of security. On the other side, you should educate your

employees to the correct use of technological tools, to decrease the likelihood of private data breach.

## **Bricks**

This last driver requires more time and money, but it will be the conclusive step that will transform your company into a real smart organization. In the chapter 3.4 we have seen that new working modalities require different working spaces from traditional ones. People are no longer 40hours per week in the office, therefore you must rethink the layout of your organization to both meet the new needs and to increase the productivity of your employees. Indeed, you don't have to forget that the primary purpose of Smart Working is to increase people's performances.

The first winning solution that you could apply in your organization, is the one adopted by Amadori. You could implement an App to signal employees' presence, so that people can have real time information about where a person is. This will be really important to synchronize the office' presence with the colleagues who you collaborate with. And it will be even necessary for each people, that while working in the office, needs to know whether a colleague is at office or not for quick alignments.

In addition to this solution, there could be many other infrastructural ones that will change the layout of your office. Firstly, you could begin thinking your office as a set of different productive areas where each one will be suitable for specific needs. For example, you could predispose some quiet areas, for those people that needs concentration. Then, you could set some collaborative areas which are meant for those people who needs to collaborate with some other colleagues. Then you can predispose some other rooms which are indicated for meetings and reunions. Finally, you can organize some other spaces for relaxing and let people having personal conversations in a pleasant atmosphere. This transformation will be fundamental to increase people's productivity and motivation. (Read chapters 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 for precious suggestions. Meanwhile, do not forget to establish new behavioural rules so that people know how to use the new common spaces. (Read chapter 3.4.2 for some suggestions).

In conclusion, you should even raise awareness about the hot desking logic to increase people's productivity. (Read chapter 3.4.3. for some suggestions)

## **CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this thesis is to give a clear and complete overview about how to implement Smart Working in an organization, with a support of real case.

In the first 3 chapters are gathered many theoretical and practical suggestions, with the help of scientific literature and organizational papers, which will be helpful to have a greater comprehension of this phenomenon. The analysis of Smart Working was conducted taking into consideration 3 main drivers (Behaviours, Bytes, Bricks) and each one was meticulously deepened.

Then, it was reported a qualitative analysis of a real case which have enriched the research bringing the witnesses of both Amadori's team leaders and team members. These interviews were useful to extract benefits and criticalities of a Smart Working real case, and to have even some feedback and opinions to increase our personal comprehension of this revolution.

At the end, it is proposed a real practical model which can be helpful for each organization eager to embrace these new dynamics. This chapter can be seen even as bridge between first 3 chapters and chapter 4 since it gathers suggestions and practical tips both offered by literature and by the real case of Amadori. This model will serve as a guide for each manager that is responsible for the implementation of Smart Working in own organization.

At this point, I want to conclude this research with a personal reflection.

We have to keep in mind that Smart Working isn't the work at home. They are not synonyms. As many times mentioned along this research, Smart Working is a wider concept which gathered a lot of aspects which must be taken into consideration for a successful Smart Working revolution. Therefore, in this exceptional period due to Covid-19 restrictions, many companies didn't implement Smart Working into their organization. They have just allowed people to work at home. This could be, surely, a good starting point, however, not enough to take advantages of all potentialities offered by these new working modalities. Then, it becomes paramount to consider Smart Working in all the dimensions here reported to experience most of benefits. I also recommend to all managers to not lose what they have learnt from this initial

implementation when Covid-19 restrictions will end. Smart Working is inevitably changing the way we are working, and it will be the standard of the future. To do a parallelism, in 2008, when first Smartphones broke into market, they seemed a niche product that not all people could afford it. Now, after 13 years, the word Smartphone became a synonym of cell phones, and most of the people have one. The same we can affirm for Smart Working. Even if, in this period, Smart Working seems an interesting concept but just relegated to few realities, in 10 years Smart Working will be the standard and it will become a synonym of work. Do not miss this opportunity!

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