

FUNDAÇÃO GETULIO VARGAS
ESCOLA DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO DE EMPRESAS DE SÃO PAULO

JOANA MARIE SLIWIK

RESILIENCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A comparative case study on how challenges were addressed and how new working
models were implemented

São Paulo,

2022

JOANA MARIE SLIWIK

RESILIENCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A comparative case study on how challenges were addressed and how new working models were implemented

Dissertação apresentada à Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo da Fundação Getúlio Vargas, como requisito para obtenção do título de Mestre Profissional em Gestão Internacional.

Campo do Conhecimento:
Internationalization of Companies

Orientadora: Prof. Dr. Isabela Baleeiro
Curado

São Paulo,
2022

Sliwik, Joana Marie.

Resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic : a comparative case study on how challenges were addressed and how new working models were implemented / Joana Marie Sliwik. - 2021.

101 f.

Orientador: Isabela Baleeiro Curado.

Dissertação (mestrado profissional MPGI) – Fundação Getulio Vargas, Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo.

1. Resiliência organizacional. 2. Teletrabalho. 3. Trabalho a domicilio. 4. Desenvolvimento organizacional. 5. COVID-19 Pandemia, 2020-. I. Curado, Isabela Baleeiro. II. Dissertação (mestrado profissional MPGI) – Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo. III. Fundação Getulio Vargas. IV. Título.

CDU 65.011.8

Ficha Catalográfica elaborada por: Isabele Oliveira dos Santos Garcia CRB SP-010191/O
Biblioteca Karl A. Boedecker da Fundação Getulio Vargas - SP

JOANA MARIE SLIWIK

RESILIENCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A comparative case study on how challenges were addressed and how new working models were implemented

Dissertação apresentada à Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo da Fundação Getúlio Vargas, como requisito para obtenção do título de Mestre Profissional em Gestão Internacional.

Campo do Conhecimento:
Internationalization of Companies

Data de Aprovação: 18 / 04/ 2022

Banca Examinadora:

Prof. Dr. Isabela Baleeiro Curado

Prof. Germano Glufke Reis – UFPR

Prof. Anderson de Souza Sant'Anna – FGV-
EAESP

Acknowledgements

Writing a master thesis in the middle of a pandemic is not an easy task. Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged most of us in numerous ways. Therefore, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to a number of people for their support during the process of researching and writing this thesis.

Firstly, and most importantly, I would like to thank my advisor Isabela Baleeiro Curado who supported, inspired, and taught me throughout the writing process. Her guidance was essential to this comparative case study, and what she has taught me goes way beyond the scope of this program.

I am deeply grateful to all my professors and advisors at FGV and ESADE for their support during the whole master's course, for the experience I gained, and the important things I learned. They all made the best out of the difficult times of the pandemic and provided excellent support for our studies.

I would also like to acknowledge my friends and colleagues for their kindness and camaraderie.

I am also grateful for my partner, Vinicius, who listened to me and helped me through this difficult and stressful time and made me see the light in the end of the tunnel. I thank him for always being there for me, right by my side, and for helping me to make everything work.

Lastly, I must thank my parents for always supporting every choice I make and making all this possible for me.

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic broke out in the first quarter of 2020, immediately raising challenges for the ways companies work. By March 2020, most companies around the world had followed governmental lockdown rules, which, for many, meant shifting to remote working overnight. This comparative case study analyzes how the companies implemented new working models and addressed the correlated challenges. The key objective is to identify the factors that made the companies resilient in terms of preparedness and adaptation. To achieve this, the cases of four companies were examined to understand how they responded to the pandemic and the changes they made, the new working models they adopted, how they coped with the challenges, which of their existing characteristics enabled them to cope effectively, and finally, if they made any permanent changes to their work models.

Resilience is defined as the “preparedness to react flexibly to a crisis, awareness of risks and opportunities, and the ability to respond effectively and rapidly to changing circumstances” within the study. It revealed that open-minded and innovative company culture, employee-oriented behavior, and constant reassessments of remote work strategies and policies were key factors for the successful implementation of remote work and can be defined as factors of resilience. As governmental regulations and therefore the circumstances in which the companies operate changed constantly throughout the pandemic, Facebook, Microsoft, Shopify and Spotify had to be extremely flexible in adjusting their strategies and policies. All of the above recognized the opportunities that emerged from the situation to develop new working models, acknowledged employees’ needs as a priority in order to respond effectively and address possible challenges. Their innovative and open-minded company culture enabled flexible and rapid implementations of newly developed strategies and policies regarding remote working, but also hybrid work models.

Keywords: Remote Working; COVID-19 pandemic; Change Management; Company Culture

Resumo

O estudo focou nas características que explicam a resiliência das empresas, sendo resiliência definida como “preparação para reagir com flexibilidade com uma crise, sabendo dos riscos e oportunidades, e habilidade para responder com efetividade e rapidamente a mudanças de circunstâncias“. Por meio de dados secundários verificou-se que empresas com determinados fatores - cultura inovadora e de mente aberta, comportamento orientado pela empresa, avaliação contínua de políticas de estratégias de trabalho remoto - foram fundamentais para sucesso da implantação do trabalho remoto e podem ser definidos como fatores de resiliência.

Com as regulações governamentais e as circunstâncias em que as empresas operam mudaram constantemente na pandemia, elas tiveram que ser extremamente flexíveis para ajustar suas políticas e estratégias. Todas as empresas citadas acima, aproveitaram as oportunidades que surgiram para desenvolver novos modelos de trabalho, endereçar as necessidades dos empregados para responder rapidamente e efetivamente os desafios. A sua política inovadora, flexibilidade e rápida implementação das novas estratégias referentes ao trabalho remoto e ao modelo de trabalho híbrido. A pandemia ocasionada pelo COVID-19 surgiu no primeiro semestre de 2020, imediatamente acarretando desafios no modo de trabalhar das empresas. Em março de 2020, a maior parte das empresas aderiram as diretrizes governamentais de “lockdown”. Esse caso de estudo comparativo analisa como as empresas A pandemia ocasionada pelo COVID-19 surgiu no primeiro semestre de 2020, imediatamente acarretando desafios no modo de trabalhar das empresas. Em março de 2020, a maior parte das empresas aderiram as diretrizes governamentais de “lockdown”.

Esse caso de estudo comparativo analisa como as empresas Facebook, Microsoft, Spotify e Shopify implementaram novos modelos de trabalho e seus desafios correspondentes. O objetivo principal é identificar os fatores que permitiram que essas empresas fossem resilientes em termos de preparação e adaptação. Foram analisadas quatro empresas da área de tecnologia para compreender como elas se adaptaram a pandemia, quais mudanças elas fizeram, os novos modelos de trabalho e gestão, como elas lidaram com os desafios, quais características não permitiram lidar com os problemas, e finalmente, se eles fizeram alguma mudança definitiva no seu modelo de gestão.

Palavras-chave: Resiliência organizacional, Teletrabalho, Trabalho a domicilio, Desenvolvimento organizacional, COVID-19 Pandemia

I

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	10
1. Remote working and its implications	12
1.1 Defining traditional office work and remote working	12
1.2 Changes in the working environment due to COVID-19	13
1.3 Effects of remote working	14
1.4 Implications of remote working for management.....	18
1.5 For which industries and jobs is remote working an option?	22
1.6 Considering key elements for implementation	23
1.7 Forecasts on the future of remote working	24
1.8 Defining organizational resilience	25
1.9 Reviewing literature on remote work and the pandemic	27
2. Methodology	28
3. Case Studies: Technology companies and their approach to remote working	37
3.1 Case A: Microsoft.....	37
3.2 Case B: Facebook	48
3.3 Case C: Shopify	55
3.4 Case D: Spotify	63
4. Results	70
5. Conclusion.....	79
References	81

II

Lists of Figures

Figure 1: Brainstorming model for the literature findings	30
Figure 2: Framework of analysis	31
Figure 3: Business Analysis: Microsoft	41
Figure 4: Change management and implementation of remote work analysis: Microsoft	45
Figure 5: Talent management analysis: Microsoft	47
Figure 6: Business Analysis: Facebook	50
Figure 7: Change management and implementation of remote work analysis: Facebook	53
Figure 8: Talent management analysis: Facebook	55
Figure 9: Business analysis: Shopify	57
Figure 10: Change management and implementation of remote work analysis: Shopify	60
Figure 11: Talent management analysis: Shopify	63
Figure 12: Business analysis: Spotify	65
Figure 13: Change management and implementation of remote work analysis: Spotify .	67
Figure 14: Talent management analysis: Spotify	70
Figure 15: Summary of the results of the talent management analysis	77

III

List of Tables

Table 1: Positive and negative effects of remote working	17
Table 2: Framework of analysis: categories, traits, definitions and questions	32
Table 3: Summary of results of the business analysis	72
Table 4: Summary of the results of change management and implementation of remote work analysis	74

Introduction

In December 2019, the COVID-19 virus was first identified in Wuhan, China. By March 2020, many countries had shifted into lockdown mode in an attempt to prevent the pandemic from spreading further. Despite these efforts, it rapidly evolved into a worldwide health crisis. This crisis has had a significant impact on the way people work. Government lockdowns forced most companies to shift to remote work in a very short period of time, which was an extremely challenging task for all sectors. Usually, change occurs within companies over a longer period of time and companies are able to, at least to some extent, foresee the need to make modifications and plan accordingly (Heathfield, 2020). Prior to the pandemic, changes in working models, in particular, were gradually and slowly introduced to accompany changes in workers' lifestyles and behaviors.

Although the concept of remote work was not completely new, before May 2020, only a minority of companies around the world worked in full remote mode. These kinds of companies were not the norm at all. Therefore, when the lockdowns were implemented, the majority of companies had neither an action plan on hand, nor the technological capacity and/or tools in place to support remote working. Moreover, these changes to the way of working around the world have had several obvious and not-so-obvious side effects.

It is important to put special emphasis on the time frame in which changes had to be made: for a lot of companies, this big change had to be made literally overnight. This comparative case study analyzed not only the companies' process from the first announcement of complete lockdown up to the middle of 2021, but also the factors that enabled them to successfully implement remote work and what their plans for the future are. To be more precise, it sought to understand how important resilience was in times of the COVID-19 pandemic and which characteristics companies already had that allowed them to cope successfully with this crisis and adapt to a new, rapidly changing environment.

We have seen economic crises before, but the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the entire world in various ways. The ability to adapt fast to and be flexible in new situations has become essential in times in which change occurs faster than ever. Resilience can help companies manage a crisis more successfully and adapt to new situations (Schache, 2020). Therefore, this comparative

case study not only reviews and analyzes what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic, but its findings offer interesting lessons for the future and for companies who are still struggling with this change, which is connected to the ongoing pandemic. As mentioned earlier, prior to the pandemic, working models were evolving slowly to adapt to changes in workers' lifestyles, needs and behaviors. After the past one and a half years of living with the COVID-19 pandemic and experiencing this imposed change in the work place, people's behaviors, needs, and lifestyles have changed as well. Many workers and companies have started to see opportunities in remote work.

First, a literature review was conducted to understand what remote work is; the benefits and barriers that are correlated to it; the industries for which it is an option; the elements that are key for implementation; its effects on work-life balance and gender roles; the impacts of relocation; forecasts on the future of work, and how to define organizational resilience in this study. This was followed by an analysis of the cases of four companies, which focused on how companies have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes they have made to their working environment. More specifically, this study explored their process of shifting to remote working and how they coped with the challenges raised by this change. This allowed for the identification of factors that contributed to their success in implementing remote work. Lastly, the research also sought to identify whether the four companies have made any long-term changes to their work models.

1. Remote working and its implications

Understanding the difference between traditional office work and remote work is essential for this thesis, and, therefore, both terms will be defined in this chapter. Additionally, this chapter will analyze the effects, benefits, and barriers of remote working and their implications for a company's management team when it is implementing remote work.

1.1 Defining traditional office work and remote working

Traditional office work refers to work which is carried out at a company's office. Therefore, the main difference between traditional office work and remote work lies in the location.

Remote work, also known as "work from home" (WFH) or "telecommuting" (Gartner, n.d.), is organizational work performed outside of the normal organizational confines of space and time (Olson, 1983). There are different forms of remote work. In a broader sense, it includes any situation in which the employee is physically separated from the employer, such as work carried out from the employee's home (Olson, 1987). Therefore, it is a flexible work arrangement that allows a worker to choose his or her place of work freely (Gartner, n.d.). In this study, to take the COVID-19 pandemic into consideration, remote work refers specifically to work from home.

But why was this change to remote working in 2020-2021 so drastic? In EU countries, remote working was slowly becoming more common in the 10 years before the pandemic. It was mostly an occasional occurrence, and many workers had never worked from home in their working lives. In 2019, only 5.4% of workers in the EU were working from home on a regular basis; this percentage had remained rather constant since 2009. Another 9% of the workforce worked remotely sometimes; this number increased 5.2% between 2009 and 2019. Working from home used to be more common for the self-employed workforce than for dependent employees. In 2019, almost 36% of self-employed workers worked from home sometimes or even on a daily basis. The use of remote work depended strongly on the sector or occupation. Highly-skilled professionals and managers were likely to have had experience with remote working. However, it is important to highlight that overall, the use of remote work strongly differed between countries within the EU (The European Commission's science and knowledge

service , 2020). In the United States (US), only one out of five workers said they had worked remotely all or most of the time before the pandemic; the large majority had rarely or never worked remotely before (Parker, et al., 2020). Other statistics show that before the pandemic, 47% of the US workforce had never worked remotely, and only 17% had worked remotely five or more days of the week. In comparison, during the pandemic, in 2020, around 44% of the workforce worked from home (Statista, 2020). Therefore, most of the workforce around the world has experienced a complete change in the way of working since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. They went from working in an office to remote work, which most had never experienced before. This means drastic changes not only to the location, but also to the way work is carried out and managed.

1.2 Changes in the working environment due to COVID-19

During the first semester of 2020, to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic from spreading and to protect workers, companies had to close their offices, factories, warehouses, and stores to adjust to new government regulations. This created new and dramatic challenges for businesses (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2020). Many companies had to make an abrupt shift to working from home, and millions of workers lost their jobs. This development has been described as the “most rapid transformation of the workplace” (Kirby, 2020). More than half of the global workforce is currently working remotely, and long-term changes in the working environment are forecasted, especially when taking into consideration the continuous health threats due to the pandemic (BBC, 2020). The increase of remote working has created a “coronavirus moving phenomenon”. As people continue to do their jobs remotely, they can do it from anywhere. Many people have left big, densely populated areas and spread into suburbs or smaller communities (Paez Bowman, 2021).

Before the pandemic, companies invested intensely in prime office space in major urban locations to compete with other companies and attract talents. This has changed entirely during the pandemic. In early April 2020, 62% of the American workforce was working remotely. A couple of years earlier, this number was about 25%. The adoption of technologies for videoconferencing and other forms of digital collaboration helped make this radical shift to remote work (Boland, et al., 2020). Relationships between companies and customers and the one between employee and employer have been digitalized, and working from home has become “the new normal” (Kirby, 2020). Recent data show that the pandemic has accelerated

migration to digital technologies, moving the process light years ahead, and that many of these changes will remain in place in the long run (Baig, et al., 2020).

However, as mentioned before, COVID-19 has also led to an increase in unemployment. Governments are especially worried about youth unemployment, as many jobs impacted by the pandemic are held by the younger population. This concern is justified, considering that 49.3% of senior risk experts believe the high level of structural unemployment, particularly among the young workforce, is a likely consequence of the pandemic (Kirby, 2020). Recent studies warn that although unemployment rates are slowly declining, geographic and demographic inequalities have increased, poverty has risen, and there are fewer decent jobs (ILO, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a worldwide economic crisis, which was expected to raise the number of unemployed in the world to over 200 million people in 2020. Youth workers and women are forecasted to be worst-hit (United Nations, 2021).

Based on the findings of this study, which will be presented in more detail in the following chapters, the main characteristics of the changes in the work environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic are extremely rapid changes, communication has become primarily digital and a widening gap between the best- and worst-performing companies.

Further on the primary strategies to tackle these changes, addressed in the results of the study, are the focus on more resilience and business-model innovation in terms of new digital experiences, products, and services, new partnerships within and outside the industry, supply-chain and operating-model adjustments and changes to sales models.

It is interesting to note that although most of these strategic changes have been made to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, many innovations and adaptations are expected to be maintained in the long term (Diedrich, et al., 2021).

1.3 Effects of remote working

This section aims to explain the impacts of remote working, especially on the workforce. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, workers all around the world had to shift to remote work, which involved several benefits, but also disadvantages for employees.

One of the many advantages of remote working is related to job satisfaction, which it can increase according to the American Psychological Association (Wu, 2020). One study found that 83% of workers stated that the opportunity to work remotely would make them happier with their jobs (International Association of Independent Accounting Firms, 2020). Since the pandemic has been a rapid driver for the complete shift to remote working, many employees agree that they would not like to go back to working full-time in an office, as they are able to avoid the commute, and they feel their employer trusts them. Having the freedom to customize their days to their personal needs is increasing job satisfaction further (BBC, 2020). Workers tend to feel less stressed and have more gratitude (Harris-Briggs, 2019). Many studies confirm that overall stress levels have fallen significantly. However, one study showed that after working remotely for a longer period of time, 68% of employees began to feel stressed about their job and reported concerns about job instability. This stress, in turn, affects job satisfaction and productivity (Pacific Workplaces, 2021).

Employees working remotely affirm that they have experienced some positive effects on their work-life balance. The absence of long commutes and traveling gives workers the possibility of using this time in more productive ways, such as working or spending it with their families. One advantage they perceive is greater flexibility in balancing their personal and professional life, and some explain that they prefer to work remotely rather than in the office (Boland, et al., 2020). Some employees do not struggle anymore with not being able to raise their children. By organizing their time more efficiently, they can manage their private life and keep up with their job (Spiggle, 2020). Studies show that 51% of knowledge workers would like to permanently work from home “to be closer to family and friends” or “to have a family” (Schwabel, 2021). Conflicts regarding the work-life balance usually emerge when the boundaries between work and personal life become blurred. The risk of this increases significantly when people work remotely (International Labour Organization, July, 2020). Most parents are obligated to work at home with their children, which can cause greater stress and eliminate the possibility of clearly dividing work and personal/family life (International Association of Independent Accounting Firms, 2020). Many employees find themselves working overtime, answering emails, and scheduling work calls after regular business hours, especially those with children at home (Sarkis, 2021).

Gender roles and their possible effects on one’s professional and private life have played an important role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Just like the rest of the world of work, remote

working is gendered. Working from home may have disadvantages, especially for women, as they are typically responsible for household and childcare chores in addition to their paid employment (International Labour Organization, July, 2020). The pandemic has exacerbated this situation even more. With the entire family having to stay at home, the demand for unpaid work (cooking, cleaning, and childcare) has grown significantly (BBC, 2020). In the US, surveys reveal that during the COVID-19 pandemic, women took on most of the childcare in heterosexual couples where both spouses were working full-time (Huzar, 2021). Although many authors are concerned with the work-life balance of women who work remotely, others see this way of working as advantageous for women, as it allows them to manage their private and professional life better. A survey among Canadian fathers, for example, shows that a majority of them took over more household chores and spent more time with their children now than before the pandemic (BBC, 2020). Another negative gender-related effect of the pandemic is related to the fact that many women were already clustered in low-paying jobs. Studies show that they were 1.8 times more likely to lose their jobs than men (BBC, 2020). The United Nations (2020) warns that compounded economic impacts are felt especially by women, who are generally earning and saving less, hold insecure jobs, or live close to poverty. There is a heightened risk for the exploitation and abuse of girls and young women who are facing severe economic shocks and, therefore, are more likely to take on high-risk work to ensure their economic survival (Plan International, n.d.). Overall, women have less access to social protections and are the majority of single-parent households. Taking all this information into account, they therefore have less capacity to absorb economic shocks in comparison to men (Burki, 2020). Experts are furthermore worried about the deepening of economic and social stress. When coupled with restrictions on movement and social isolation measures during the pandemic, this stress led to an exponential increase in gender-based violence, as many women were forced to lockdown at home with their abusers (United Nations, 2020). Intimate partner violence cannot be tackled without addressing social factors, such as economic instability, unsafe housing, and lack of social support. The context of the pandemic is causing substantial isolation (Evans, et al., 2020). Overall, it is women who are more likely to suffer from the economic and social consequences of the pandemic (Burki, 2020). It is interesting to see, however, that the 21 countries led by women in the world have been more effective in managing the COVID-19 health crisis. Women heads of government in Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, New Zealand, and Slovakia have been recognized for the rapidity of the responses (UN Women, n.d.).

Improved mental health is an additional benefit of remote work. Eight-two percent of workers describe lower stress levels when working from home compared to when they are working in an office environment. The opportunity to create a healthier work-life balance combined with reduced stress levels can help decrease anxiety and the risk of depression (International Association of Independent Accounting Firms, 2020). However, stress not only influences employees’ mental health, but also effects workplace productivity and communication.

Remote work can also have benefits for workers’ physical health. It is easier for workers to make doctor appointments, eat healthier, and take better care of ailments. It can also thus lead to a significant decrease in sick-days (Harris-Briggs, 2019). Studies have revealed that most individuals agree that remote working has benefitted their overall wellness. Flexible hours and locations were mentioned as a reason for improvements to workers’ mental health (Wiest, 2020). On the other hand, many employees report an increasingly pervasive effect on their mental wellness. A survey by Qualtrics showed that 44.4% of respondents working from home report that their mental health has declined since the COVID-19 breakout; 8.5% stated that the challenges of working from home have had the biggest impact on their mental health (Qualtrics, 2020).

Remote working is reducing commuting, as the need for long commutes to and from work become unnecessary. Dell, the tech company, estimated an annual saving of \$350 per year per employee who works 33% of the time remotely. This means that remote working can relieve employees of some financial pressure while giving companies a way to reduce their footprint. Less time spent in traffic can also be an incentive for workers to spend the time saved on commute on working longer hours instead (International Association of Independent Accounting Firms, 2020). Moreover, it may help lower absenteeism, which can be high partially due to commuting time. Not to forget that long commutes can increase stress levels and dissatisfaction (Harris-Briggs, 2019). With hybrid models being increasingly discussed as the permanent working models in the future, this change will have substantial impacts on the transport industry, the workplace, and the future of cities (Mizen, et al., 2021).

Table 1: Positive and negative effects of remote working

Positive	Negative
Increased job satisfaction (employees feel trusted, less stressed)	Less job satisfaction (concerns about job instability and stress)

Work-life balance: less time commuting, more time with the family, more flexibility	Work-life balance: blurred boundaries between work and private life, increased stress levels, working overtime
Canadian study showed that men took over more tasks within the household and dedicated more time to child care during the pandemic	Women needed to take care of the household, their children, and their jobs all at the same time, especially at the beginning of the pandemic, when kindergartens and schools were closed.
	Overall higher risks for women due to the crisis and changing economic situation (job loss, violence, and exploitation)
Increased mental and physical health due to greater flexibility	Decrease of mental health due to challenges related to remote working
Reduced commuting (saving time and costs for employees)	

Source: by the author

1.4 Implications of remote working for management

Having considered all the effects of remote working on the workforce, it is important to now consider the implications for the management of a company. During recent years, companies have primarily used work-at-home programs to attract and retain talents or as a cost-saving measure (Global Workplace Analytics, 2020). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the main drivers were new regulations and the need to protect employees’ health. In the following section, the different opportunities and barriers of remote working are discussed.

Some companies face challenges when integrating remote working into a long-standing company culture. While managers can supervise and follow-up on work through casual conversations in a physical office space, remote working requires pre-planned meetings. Communication changes drastically when moving towards remote working systems (International Association of Independent Accounting Firms, 2020). This lack of face-to-face supervision and access to information and social isolation have been main challenges to the implementation of remote work (Larson, et al., 2020).

One important advantage of remote working is increased productivity. Many workers are able to set up a home office in which they can avoid distractions and work without interruptions, and some workers are even more likely to work uninterrupted when working remotely than at the office. A comfortable environment and higher morale are also conducive to higher productivity levels. Most employers have learned by now that many tasks can be accomplished remotely without a significant decrease in productivity or quality, and that in some cases, there has even been a recognizable increase. Many businesses point out that remote workers state much higher work satisfaction than in-house employees (Harris-Briggs, 2019). Recent studies show that the increase in remote work will continue to lift productivity in the U.S. economy by 5%, mostly due to savings in commuting time (Curran, 2021).

However, both employers and employees have expressed concern about the impacts of remote working on productivity and workers' health. Many companies fear a decrease in performance due to reduced team interaction, as well as negative impacts on the company culture (International Association of Independent Accounting Firms, 2020). In some cases, face-to-face interaction is required to facilitate collaboration. From a social perspective, being able to work in the same room or office space can be helpful for building relationships, solving complex challenges, and generating new ideas. Furthermore, some experts are concerned about extended working hours, difficulties in achieving a healthy work-life balance, and negative impacts on employees' mental well-being. Surveys confirm an increase in productivity in many cases, but they also confirm that there is reason for concern about mental well-being, as many employees report feeling anxiety and being burned out (Alexander, et al., 2021). Therefore, it is important for managers and company leaders who want to adopt remote working models on a permanent basis to recognize the unique challenges they raise (BBC, 2020).

Other advantages are related to talent management. First of all, remote working makes it possible for companies to access new talent pools with fewer locational constraints (Boland, et al., 2020). Companies can choose the best candidate for a job from anywhere in the world. Although it is important to keep time zones in mind, remote working allows them to choose from a much larger talent pool (International Association of Independent Accounting Firms, 2020). Another advantage resulting from these possibilities is that it makes it easier to increase diversity, and it facilitates processes, especially for multinational companies. In regard to employee retention, new working models might be especially appreciated by mothers after

maternity leave. As work-life balance becomes increasingly important to millennials and women, offering remote work opportunities might help keep trained staff in the company (Harris-Briggs, 2019).

One of the biggest advantages of remote working is the cost factor. Accountancy firms view the move away from physical office spaces as an opportunity to cut expenses (International Association of Independent Accounting Firms, 2020). The cost of office space varies according to where the company is based, but in most cases, rent accounts for a high percentage of company expenses, as do electricity and water bills. Also, companies can also save on equipment costs. Freelancers, for example, typically purchase their own equipment. As employees in a remote working system no longer have to cover the cost of commuting, their salaries could be lowered in some cases (Harris-Briggs, 2019). Although companies may be able to increase their savings, they also need to adjust to changes in the current context, which means investing in technology. However, this investment can be seen as an important strategic move for not only responding to the current situation, but also to prepare for the future (DeVerter, 2020).

Additionally, organizational advantages need to be considered. One of the major benefits is that workers can organize their work independently from working hours. Companies operating internationally can benefit from having workers located in different time zones, especially when taking customer service into account. While remote working is usually considered unsocial, it facilitates the management of international teams, as it allows employees to make contact and work with employees or experts who they would otherwise never meet at their physical working spaces. The possibility of building international teams will also increase diversity significantly. Many experts believe that remote work is the way of the future. Due to new software and modern technology, remote working has never been so easy (Harris-Briggs, 2019). The pandemic has shown how fast companies can actually adapt to this new form of working. Being forced to move to remote working has demonstrated that companies can move faster and be more agile than they thought they could (Kirby, 2020).

Another key advantage is the acceleration of digital transformation spurred on by the need to respond to the pandemic. These changes are also likely to be what keeps companies competitive in the future (IBM Institute for Business Value, n.d.). At the same time, they raise one of the biggest challenges: updating IT infrastructure to support remote working can be difficult. Because of the increase in costs and the time that needs to be invested, some companies struggle

to deliver the same quality of work to their clients. Acquiring the software and equipment required generates high costs for companies. To support remote working, some firms needed an entirely new set of laptops and mobile phones. Companies who had already invested in this kind of technology before the pandemic greatly benefited from having a remote technical infrastructure in place (International Association of Independent Accounting Firms, 2020). However, surveys show that in 2020, 23% of CEOs cited technology as a challenge. This number dropped to 16% in 2021 (Colletta, 2021). One of the major challenges employees have experienced during the rapid shift to remote working has been internet performance (Arruda, 2020).

Looking further into the move from office work to remote work, we also find environmental advantages. It reduces the need to travel to meetings, conferences, and other events or activities. Face-to-face formats can be replaced by virtual meetings (Harris-Briggs, 2019). Before, climate change experts had difficulties in enforcing a change in traveling habits, as the impact was hard to see for many people. However, even in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a dramatic reduction in traffic, congestion, and pollution. Although sustainability has not been the primary driver of remote work, being able to see a difference in pollution levels, for example, could be another incentive to maintain remote working models in the long run. Global Workplace Analytics (2020) states that “The annual environmental impact of half-time remote work (for those who both want to work remotely and have a compatible job) would be the greenhouse gas equivalent of taking the entire NY State workforce off the road”. However, it is important to remember that although some emissions might be reduced, others will be shifted. Keeping employees in remote working systems might decrease a company’s overall carbon emissions, but emissions from energy and food still exist in employees’ homes, where they may be higher or lower than at the office (Holder, 2021).

Employees’ work-life balance has been affected by the rapid change to remote working. Many have reported both positive and negative experiences in this area. It is very important to support workers so they may maintain a healthy work-life balance. One way can be to manage remote workers by their results, rather than focusing on the numbers of hours they have been working. It is important to set clear and realistic expectations on results and give workers the opportunity to organize their own time and tasks efficiently (International Labour Organization, July, 2020). Managers need to review and update team members about their responsibilities and ensure that everyone clearly understands their roles. At the same time, it is important to address team

members' responsibility for ensuring open and consistent communication to prevent and resolve conflict (Deloitte, n.d.).

There are various ways companies can help their employees improve their work-life balance. It is important to assist workers in managing their work-life boundaries by setting clear expectations about work outputs, responsibilities, and deadlines, as well as the times when workers will and will not be reachable (Schwabel, 2021). Flexible work schedules can be key for enabling workers to manage their work and personal life better. Companies need to ensure that workers feel empowered to disconnect from work, without fear it will have negative repercussions on their careers. Open communication and cooperation between workers and managers around scheduling and availability and boundary setting within teams are crucial, as are rules for communication (Deloitte, n.d.). Workers with small children or other care responsibilities may face difficulties during the pandemic and thus need special support. One way of managing these cases can be special parental leave schemes (International Labour Organization, July, 2020).

As mentioned earlier, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected gender roles, which has some implications for management. One of the main reasons why women have more difficulties in reaching senior management positions is that they are more likely to prioritize their family responsibilities over their careers. It is estimated that women spend three times as much time as men on childcare and household activities. The pandemic and lockdown measures taken by governments have intensified this burden, which has increased mental health problems and decreased self-care (ISGlobal, 2020). During a pandemic, it is therefore important to give women employees more flexibility to choose when and how they can work to increase and maintain gender equality within an organization.

1.5 For which industries and jobs is remote working an option?

A few years back, remote working was considered especially appropriate for customer service jobs. However, the rapid change of working models due to the COVID-19 pandemic has proven that sectors such as computers and IT, medical and health services, sales, and education can benefit from remote working as well (Wu, 2020). Also, the banking, public, and manufacturing sectors were also able to implement the new way of working successfully (Walk-Morris, 2020). In fact, 56% of the U.S. workforce holds a job that is at least partly compatible with remote

work (Global Workplace Analytics, 2020). When workers were asked about their transition to remote work in a recent Crowe Pulse Survey, 48% of respondents described it as excellent, 38% rated it as good, and only 13%, as okay (Walk-Morris, 2020).

1.6 Considering key elements for implementation

“There are both right and wrong ways to implement remote work. If you’re holding back because you’re only looking at the wrong examples, you are going to miss out on many rewards.”

Laurel Farrer, President of the Remote Work Association and CEO of Distribute Consulting

Before the pandemic, some companies had already implemented occasional remote working models – for example, ones where employees could opt to work remotely one or two days of the week. However, the number of companies who had a system in place for occasional remote working varied significantly, depending on the industry and the country. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these circumstances have changed. For many companies around the world, remote working became mandatory, rather than voluntary, and full-time, rather than part-time. The implications of remote working for management were discussed in section 1.6 above. In this section, we highlight the elements that are key for the successful implementation of remote working.

The first lesson is that experience matters. When companies make the rapid change to remote working, productivity and communication are often a challenge in the beginning. Once integrated into the new working environment, however, managers and employees manage to find tools and strategies to improve collaboration and work satisfaction (Slack, 2020).

The Boston College (n.d.) recommended certain steps for implementing a remote work policy. Firstly, companies need to prepare themselves to respond flexibly to possible disruptions. The first step here is to set up a team of managers and representatives of all departments (IT, HR and communications, among others) whose mandate will be to develop an action plan. Companies should map out which tasks can and cannot be executed off site. They will need to install IT software to support remote working and set up technical support to manage the software. Communication protocols need to be established, as do measures of performance. The next step is to prepare a remote work policy that identifies roles and responsibilities, the equipment required, the right software and tools, and communication guidelines.

To set up remote working during the pandemic, some strategies were recommended. CEOs and others in leadership roles need to use online tools and channels and communicate proactively. The company's mission, purpose and values should be reinforced. The company needs to stay open and authentic, while promoting a digital company culture. Using the right digital tools at the right time is another important factor. Furthermore, managers should be creative when handling conflict and problems and show compassion. When implementing remote work, companies should first communicate the shift to workers. Video communication and basic remote work tools should be installed as quickly as possible. Over-communicating will become the new way of working, paired with organized virtual meetings. It is important to ensure that the remote work culture is as strong as the office culture. At the same time, companies need to support their employees. It is essential that the company sees every employee as an individual and considers their personal situation. Expectations should be set early on and be clear. To communicate proactively, managers will need the support of the company (Boston College - Center for Work & Family - Carroll School of Management , n.d.).

1.7 Forecasts on the future of remote working

With all the changes that have occurred in the working world due to COVID-19, the question is: what can be forecasted for the future? An estimate by Global Workplace Analytics (2020) stated that 25-30% of the workforce would be working remotely multiple days of the week by the end of 2021. Although the change came rapidly, it can and should be considered as an opportunity to modernize the way we work and rethink work schedules (BBC, 2020). Flexibility is likely to become the new mantra (Arruda, 2020).

Even with more people being vaccinated, many companies will still require employees to wear masks all the time, and they will have to redesign space to ensure physical distancing and restrict movement in congested areas. In view of this, even after reopening, attitudes towards offices will probably continue to evolve. However, there is no one-size-fits-all solution for all organizations. How companies will continue to work depends on several factors, such as the type of company and the market it works in, what talents it is looking for, how much collaboration is needed, where offices are located today, and what kind of work is needed to satisfy customers, among others. Decisions on permanent changes require exceptional change management skills. Reopening will raise many challenges (Boland, et al., 2020). Regardless of

what is best and possible for the company, an IBM survey showed that 58% of employees who are currently working remotely would like to continue to do so also in a post-COVID era (International Association of Independent Accounting Firms, 2020). Eventually, organizations will have to rethink their working arrangements and might settle on a hybrid workforce and decentralized workplace as the “sustainable new normal”. Numerous companies have already decided to make remote work permanent, which means that ways must be found to keep people productive and connected, while avoiding overburdening them (BBC, 2020). If employees are taught to build a learning mindset, it will prepare them for a constantly, sometimes even abruptly changing environment, as we have recently experienced with the global health crisis. As for companies, the pandemic has led to greater flexibility and improvements in their corporate culture and leadership skills, which should better prepare them for disruptions in the future (Kirby, 2020).

The future of work with flexible hybrid models could make the workplace a far more social environment – one designed to foster and promote interaction and community engagement. At the same time, internet in homes is likely to continue to improve drastically and quickly. As such, home offices, and perhaps even home video studios, could become a priority for many (Arruda, 2020).

Companies that capitalize on post-COVID opportunities are likely to find themselves in a good position to retain their talents and attract future employees when the situation stabilizes. Those who fail to change will be left behind. Many companies will have to reevaluate their priorities due to the pandemic and, as a result, resilience is likely to become as important to their strategies as costs and efficiency (Kirby, 2020).

1.8 Defining organizational resilience

A resilient organization can be defined as one that is able to achieve its core objectives in the face of adversity. This means that the company is able to not only reduce the size and frequency of crises (vulnerability), but also improve its speed and ability to manage crises effectively (Seville, et al., 2006). Considering the massive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on economies worldwide, resilience is now of even greater importance.

The ability to survive a major crisis, such as this pandemic, depends on a company's organizational structure, management, and operational system, and their resilience. During a crisis, an organization needs to work outside of their comfort zone and make strategic decisions quickly and effectively (Seville, et al., 2006). Therefore, organizational resilience "is the function of the overall vulnerability, situation awareness and adaptive capacity of an organization in a complex, dynamic and interdependent system" (McManus, et al., 2008). The three primary attributes are: situation awareness, management of keystone vulnerabilities, and adaptive capacity.

Another definition comes from the International Organization for Standardization (2017). In this case, resilience is defined as "the ability of an organization to absorb and adapt in a changing environment to enable it to deliver its objectives and to survive and prosper".

Furthermore, the literature on resilience can be classified into three general areas (Bhamra, 2015):

- Readiness and preparedness
- Response and adaptation
- Recovery or adjustment.

This thesis will focus on readiness and preparedness and response and adaptation.

For this comparative case study, resilience is defined as follows:

Organizational resilience is preparedness to react flexibly to a crisis, awareness of risks and opportunities, and the ability to respond effectively and rapidly to changing circumstances.

As this study focuses on preparedness, response and adaptation, under circumstances, which the world economy has barely experienced, the definition above was developed. To understand how companies mastered the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and implemented changes accordingly, resilience is the key factor to success. It was important to have a definition in place, which makes it understandable why companies can be defined as resilient. Therefore, several factors were taken under consideration:

- Preparedness: Cultural characteristic and/or strategic abilities, which made companies prepared to react flexibly to the crisis following the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Adaptation: Awareness and acknowledgement of risks and opportunities emerging from governmental regulations related to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Response: Responding effectively to unusually rapidly changing circumstances, while addressing emerging risks and taking arising opportunities, also for the long term.

Other definitions of organizational resilience did not take these factors into account in much depth and are not related to crisis that can be compared to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.9 Reviewing literature on remote work and the pandemic

The literature review for this study was conducted to obtain an overview of all the changes in the world of work brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The main and most massive change worldwide was the rapid transition to full-time remote work for the majority of workers. The literature on this process identifies several advantages and barriers of this working model and, therefore, the opportunities and risks as well. Research has been conducted on which industry is most suitable for remote work, on forecasts for the future, the key elements for the successful implementation of remote work, and the pandemic's impacts on work-life balance and gender roles.

During the literature review, one of the terms mentioned the most was 'resilience'. Therefore, the importance of organizational resilience in addressing the challenges created by all of these changes became very clear.

The findings of the literature review on the changes in working models triggered by the pandemic served as the basis of the following methodological approach.

2. Methodology

The methodology used for this thesis is a comparative case study. In comparative case studies, two or more cases are analyzed to identify similarities, differences, and patterns (Goodrick, 2014). The comparative case study approach can be selected when it is not feasible to use an experimental design, which is the case with this study. Additionally, it can be useful to understand how characteristics of the context influence the success of, in this case, different companies. One benefit of this approach is that it allows different methods of approaching the same challenges to be compared and analyzed. However, there are also some limitations. It is often difficult to find sufficient suitable data. Furthermore, as the comparison is made among only a few companies, it is questionable whether findings can be generalized and are useful to other industries or even companies in the same industry but with different organizational structures (Goodrick, 2014). Case studies involve six steps:

1. Identify and clarify key evaluation questions and the purpose of the evaluation.
2. Identify initial theories, drawing on a theory of change.
3. Define how the case study will be conducted and which cases suit the study.
4. Define how the information will be collected, analyzed and synthesized within and across cases.
5. Consider alternative explanation for results.
6. Report findings. (Goodrick, 2014)

This research effort consisted of analyzing and comparing the cases of different companies to identify how they have been implementing remote work, how they have dealt with the challenges, and which elements in place before the pandemic increased their resilience to the global health crisis.

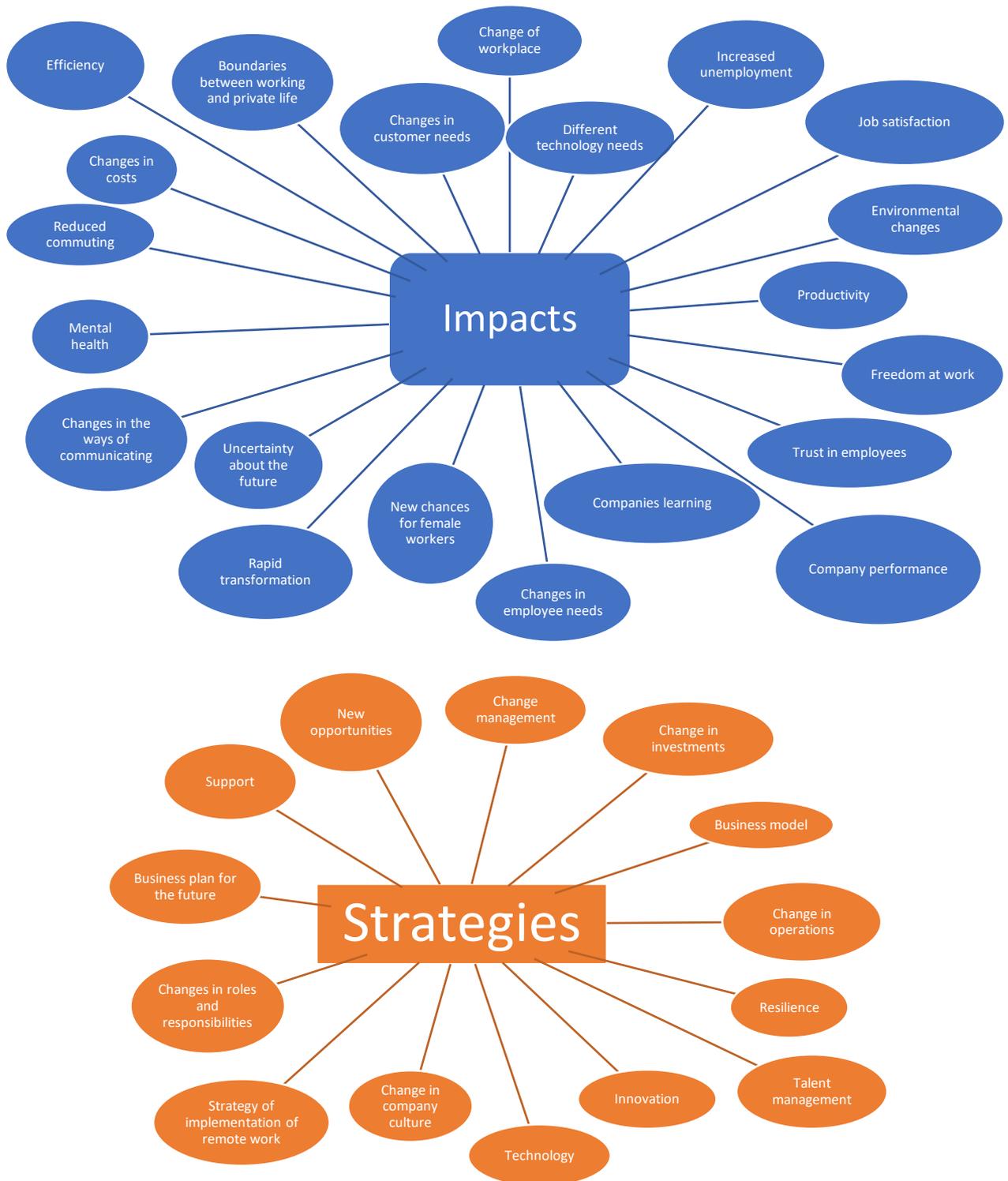
The study has been initiated by a broad literature review in order to get a greater understanding of the situation worldwide, governmental regulations, changes, and effects on the working environments. Within these first steps, the majority of literature collected came from news articles, business and professional magazines. Afterwards, the gained information has been structured into different categories, according to the objective of the case study. Firstly, remote working and the changes in the working environment were defined in detail, to give the reader a first understanding of the topic. In the next step, the effects of remote working and the implications for companies' managements have been explained in detail. Which industries

implemented remote working more easily and how the implementation should be conducted in theory was described in the following. Opinions of HR professionals, CEOs and other experts have been used to forecast the future of work theoretically. Finally, organizational resilience was defined in order to move on to the methodology of this study. As the topic has been extremely new at the time of initiation of the study, there have been only few scientific texts and previous studies to refer to. Most of the literature was collected from business and professional magazines, professional blogs and reviews.

After conducting the literature review, its findings were examined to identify the most important impacts of remote working and the strategies used to implement and manage it. To create a framework for this study, a brainstorming session was held in which the impacts and strategies identified were organized and divided into different categories. To complete this framework, an additional literature review was pursued. Once completed, the framework was used to formulate the research questions and serve as a guideline for answering them. The next step was to review data on several companies, from which a sample of four companies were chosen as case studies. Secondary data has also been used in this comparative case study.

According to the findings of the literature review, the most important impacts and strategies are summarized in the images below.

Figure 1: Brainstorming model for the literature findings

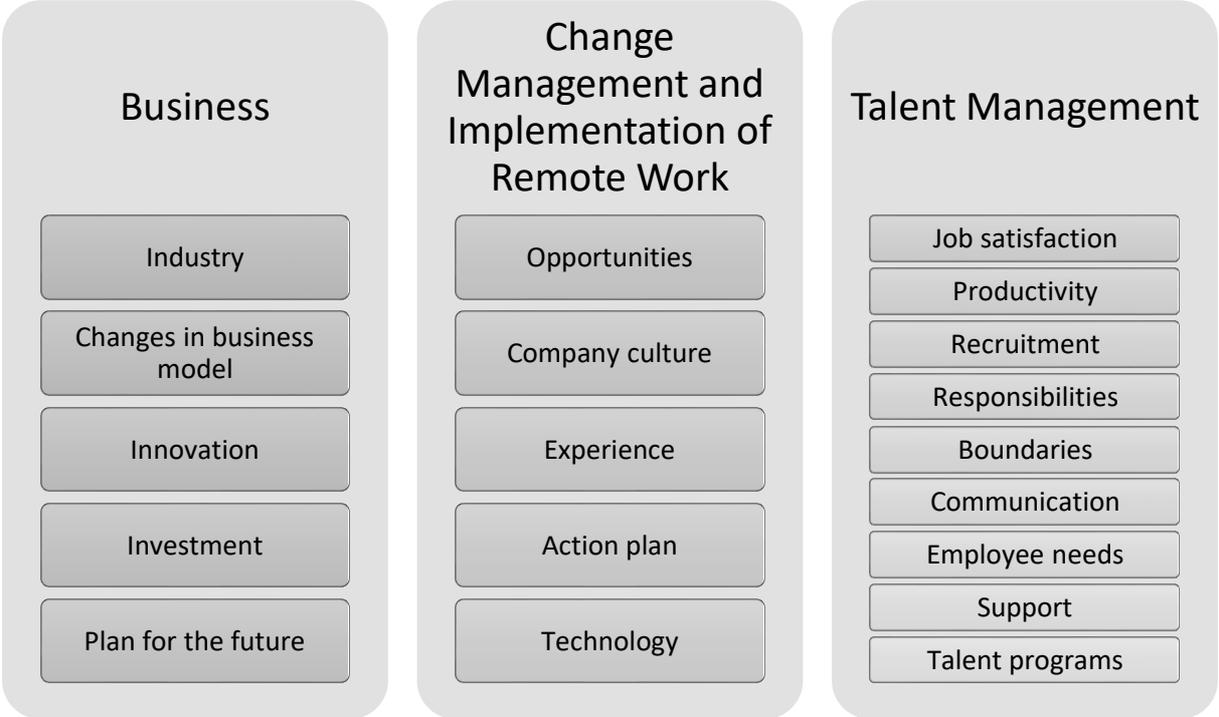


Source: by the author

These impacts and strategies have been divided into three categories: business, change management and implementation of remote work, and talent management. All three categories have different traits, which were identified during the brainstorming based on the literature

review. These were used to build the framework which will be used for the analysis of different case studies.

Figure 2: Framework of analysis



Source: by the author

After the framework was created, more research was conducted to define the traits of each category and provide further insight into how these traits are to be analyzed within the case study. The following table gives an overview of the framework and is categorized into: category, traits, definition, and questions.

Table 2: Framework of analysis: categories, traits, definitions and questions

Category	Traits	Definition	Questions
Business	Industry	An industry consists of companies which are involved in producing a particular product or product group or providing a particular service (Collins Dictionary , n.d.)	Which industry is the company operating in?
	Changes in the business model/ business model innovation	Business model innovation can be defined as “a way for general managers and entrepreneurs to create appropriate value, especially in times of economic change. (...) (it) involves designing a modified or new activity system, relies on recombining the existing resources of a firm and its partners, and it does not require significant investments in R&D”. (Amit & Zott, 2010)	Did the COVID-19 pandemic lead to business model innovation?
	Innovation	There are different definitions of innovation throughout history. It can be defined as the creation of new combination of existing resources, but also as the creation and implementation of new processes, services and methods, which lead to an improvement in outcomes, efficiency, effectiveness and/or quality. (Taylor, 2017)	Did COVID-19 lead the company to innovate? In what way?
	Investment	An investment is defined as “the act of putting money, effort, time, etc. into something to make a profit or get an advantage”. (Cambridge Dictionary , n.d.)	Did the company invest due to the COVID-19 pandemic in technology, for example? Did these investments differ from its usual investments?
	Plan for the future	A business plan is a formal statement, which includes the set of business goals and the plan for reaching these goals. It also includes why the company believes that these goals are attainable. (Ruggieri, et al., 2014)	Did the company make any changes in its business plan due to COVID-19? Did the company change its goals and strategic approach?

Framework of analysis: categories, traits, definitions and questions (cont.)

Category	Traits	Definition	Questions
Change management and implementation of remote work	Opportunities	An opportunity can be defined as a favorable juncture of circumstances and a good chance for advancement or progress (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)	Did the leadership identify opportunities for growth generated by the COVID-19 pandemic?
	Action plan	An action plan is a strategic method designed to help focus and decide what steps should be taken to achieve a certain goal (involve , n.d.)	Did the company have an action plan? If so, what did it look like?
	Company culture	“Culture is the tacit social order of an organization: It shapes attitudes and behaviors in wide-ranging and durable ways. Cultural norms define what is encouraged, discouraged, accepted, or rejected within a group. When properly aligned with personal values, drives, and needs, culture can unleash tremendous amounts of energy toward a shared purpose and foster an organization’s capacity to thrive. Culture can also evolve flexibly and autonomously in response to changing opportunities and demands“ (Groysberg, et al., 2018).	What is the company culture like? Did it support change and help to adapt? Did the company culture make the company resilient?
	Experience	Experience is the knowledge, practical wisdom or skills that are gained from what has been observed, encountered or undergone (Dictionary, n.d.).	Did the company already have experience in remote working?
	Technology	“The use of scientific knowledge or processes in business, industry, manufacturing, etc.” (Cambridge Dictionary , n.d.)	Did the company adapt new technologies successfully to offer workers the possibility of working remotely?

Framework of analysis: categories, traits, definitions and questions (cont.)

Category	Traits	Definition	Questions
Talent management	Job satisfaction	“Job satisfaction is the degree to which people like their jobs. In other words, it refers to a subjective evaluation that the worker makes of her own job, either in its entirety or with respect to its different attributes.” (Fernández-Macias & Muñoz de Bustillo Llorente , 2014)	How satisfied have workers been with the new way of working? What did the company do to keep employees satisfied?
	Productivity	“Productivity is an attitude of mind. It is a mentality of progress, of the constant improvement of that which exists. It is the certainty of being able to do better than yesterday and continuously. It is constant adaptation of the economic and social life to changing conditions. It is the continual effort to apply new techniques and method. It is the faith in human progress.” (European Productivity Council , n.d.)	Did employees manage to work productively while working from home? What did the company do to support its employees?
	Recruitment	Recruitment is the process of searching for prospective employees. Part of it is stimulating them to apply for jobs in the organization. (Chand, n.d.)	Did the company’s recruiting strategy change due to the new working models?
	Responsibilities	Tasks that it is a worker’s job or duty to deal with (Cambridge Dictionary , n.d.).	Did the company divide up responsibilities in a new way? Were there any new responsibilities?
	Boundaries	Boundaries mark the edge or limit of something. They can also refer to a limit of what is considered to be acceptable behavior (Cambridge Dictionary , n.d.).	Does the company enable their workers to draw boundaries between private and work life? Does the company respect these boundaries? Did it implement rules to ensure

			workers are able to maintain their work-life balance?
	Communication	Communication is a process by which information is exchanged within a company (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)	Which communication system did the company develop?
	Employee needs	Employee needs refer to a work environment that is free from discrimination, harassment and unsafe conditions, but it also includes job satisfaction, employee recognition, financial needs, job stability and others (Chron, n.d.).	Did the company experience changes in employee needs and did it meet these needs?
	Support	Support can be given in the form of encouragement, emotional or practical help but also the provision of the right conditions (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).	Did the company provide support for its employees during the change process?
	Talent programs	In the context of this comparative case study, talent programs refer to any kind of program that companies implement to support and encourage their employees. Examples could be programs for young talents, mothers or foreigners. They could include mentoring, special working hours or agreements.	Did the company implement any new talent programs due to the change in working models?

Source: by the author

The framework above was designed as a guide for the analysis on how organizational resilience helps companies address challenges, seize opportunities, and manage the transition to a different working model, and which characteristics made them resilient. It includes the main research questions for each category. The following questions were then identified as priorities:

- How did the company respond to the COVID-19 pandemic? What changes did it make to its working environment?
- How did the company implement changes in the working environment?
- How did it cope with challenges?
- What characteristics did the company have before the pandemic that allowed it to cope more effectively?
- Did the company adopt permanent changes to the working environment?

To find potential cases for this study, research was conducting on a total of 15 companies to determine what measures they took due to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in relation to the way work had been carried out since the beginning of the pandemic and what work model they would use in the future. Important selection criteria were: a complete shift to remote work, the availability of required information, and the industry in which the companies operate. While conducting this research, it became clear that many industries were unsuitable for this comparative study, as only a few were able to fully shift to remote work. Based on this analysis, four tech companies were chosen for the comparative case study: Microsoft, Facebook, Shopify, and Spotify. All these companies work with services and non-tangible products and thus had the possibility to shift fully to remote work.

In this analysis of the four multinational companies, strategies and policies on international work from home were examined. In some cases, a special focus was placed on their headquarters. A comparison was made between the selected companies' overall approaches to addressing the changes in the workplace caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as their plans for the future. In 2021, all four companies clearly announced that the modifications they had made to their working environment were adopted on a permanent basis.

3. Case Studies: Technology companies and their approach to remote working

Based on secondary data, Microsoft, Facebook, Shopify, and Spotify were analyzed and compared in three main categories, each with different traits: i) business; ii) change management and implementation of remote work, and iii) talent management. The findings of these cases studies are presented below. Each case study begins with a presentation of the company itself. In the business section, the company's industry is described, which is followed by a discussion of the changes it made to its business model due to the COVID-pandemic, including new investments, innovations, and the company's plans for the future. To get a better understanding of how the companies dealt with the changes and the implementation of remote work, research was done to verify if they saw opportunities in the pandemic. We then examined company culture, as it is an important trait for assessing how resilient the companies were before the pandemic and determining whether it has undergone any alterations as a result of the new working models. This is followed by a review of each company's experience with remote working, its action plan on how to approach the new situation, and the technologies adopted to support the transition to remote work. Finally, to understand how companies treated their employees during that period, the section on the talent management category looks at elements such as job satisfaction, productivity, responsibilities, and talent programs.

The results show interesting similarities and differences between the companies in the different categories.

3.1 Case A: Microsoft

Microsoft Corporation belongs to the technology sector and operates internationally in the software and tech service industry. The company develops, manufactures, sells, licenses, and supports a wide range of software products and services, designs and sells hardware devices, and delivers online advertising to global customers. Furthermore, it sells individual products and services (Microsoft , 2013) and develops apps, video game consoles, and digital music entertainment devices (Bloomberg, n.d.).

Microsoft's headquarters are based in Redmond, Washington in the US. According to data from June 2020, the company's revenues amounted to US\$143,015 million, with profits of US\$44,281 million. In July 2021, Microsoft had a market value of US\$2,155,085 million

(Fortune 500, 2021). The company operates in 190 countries and employs a total of 181,000 employees (Microsoft , n.d.).

Business

As a tech company and software developer, the conditions at Microsoft were ideal for it to shift to remote work. Already before the pandemic, the company had invested in working and learning from software and services designed to support working from home. The company managed to profit from the pandemic. Microsoft reported that its Azure cloud computing services grew by 50%, and its gaming sector expanded significantly. Microsoft was prepared for a shift to remote work and supporting people studying from home when the pandemic hit, and it was able to respond to the sudden increase in consumer demand (The Irish Times, 2021).

The pandemic confirmed that Microsoft's current business model, innovations, investments, and plans for the future were all on the right path. The company had been investing heavily in cloud-based services and was able to give its consumers exactly what they needed when the world went into lockdown mode and began working and studying remotely. CEO Satya Nadella said that "Digital capability is key to both resilience and growth. It's no longer enough to just adopt technology. Businesses need to build their own technology to compete and grow. Microsoft is powering this shift with the world's largest and most comprehensive cloud platform" (Miller, 2021). Its commercial cloud business is key for supporting companies through these changing times. However, Microsoft's CEO also argues that he doesn't see a purely digital enterprise becoming the status-quo anytime soon, as there is a need for a meaningful and flexible blend of practices which enable efficiency and productivity for companies to adapt and change. Nadella also says,

"I think the key for us is to really maintain flexibility. And that's why even going back to the conversation around Teams, it's not like the work only happens in online meetings. Work happens before meetings, during meetings, after meetings and especially in hybrid work you need that sophisticated set of tools that really track workflow irrespective of who is where and so that's what we are focused on. And in our own policies we have laid out policies which give more flexibility and it'll be different by function, different by geography, different in time. So that's how we expect essentially work to evolve."

Microsoft sees clear opportunities in what the company will invest in the future, as it feels it is in a strong position to further develop digital technologies and services to support other companies' remote work (Preez, 2021).

On Microsoft's Innovation Stories blog, the COVID-19 pandemic quickly became a big topic where the urgent need for collaboration, innovation, and creativity has been continuously emphasized. The blog created a "Resilience Series" in which it highlights research projects, ideas, and technologies that have emerged due to the pandemic.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Microsoft researchers prioritized support for the process of handling the effects of COVID-19. More than 1,100 workers launched a special hackathon to develop technologies that are useful to those affected by Covid-19. Together with government officials and health sector professionals, they assessed the situation and concluded that there is still a lack of important machine learning and data science tools. One of the main challenges was (and still is) the speed of global developments and the pressure of finding solutions as fast as possible. To support scientists, Microsoft created the COVID-19 Open Research Dataset (CORD-19) to make data from scientific research and the papers written about the pandemics available at an incredibly high speed. In addition, Microsoft launched the Microsoft Biomedical Search, a tool that "allows searchers to use natural language queries" when searching for information in biomedical literature (Culler, 2021). The company also took part in the "The Fight is in Us" initiative which involved healthcare institutions, tech companies, nonprofit blood centers, and pharmaceutical and medical companies.

Furthermore, Microsoft innovated, researched, and invested heavily in supporting the shift to remote work and studying. As this research has become more than a "summer project" and the company sees development in this direction as a more permanent trend, it has created new jobs, roles, and organizational structures around the idea of societal resilience (Culler, 2021).

As mentioned before, Microsoft has been working intensively with the health and medical sector. During the first wave of COVID-19 cases, hospitals did not have a centralized way to share important information, especially when it came to tracking available resources. The Washington State Department therefore approached Microsoft about expanding a cloud-based "Hospital Emergency Response Solution" powered by Azure. The Washington Healthcare Emergency and Logistics Tracking Hub was also launched, which runs on Azure. Furthermore,

Microsoft Teams became an important tool for companies and schools to keep working. The company worked hard to improve the supply and the service, which was so urgently needed, especially at the beginning of the pandemic:

“Datacenter employees began working in round-the-clock shifts to install new servers while staying at least six feet apart. Microsoft product teams worked to find any further efficiencies to free up Azure resources for other customers. The company doubled capacity on one of its own undersea cables carrying data across the Atlantic and negotiated with owners of another to open up additional capacity. Network engineers installed new hardware and tripled the deployed capacity on the America Europe Connect cable in just two weeks” (Langston, 2020).

Microsoft worked continuously on using and developing its technology to help the health and medical sector, while responding to the demand for other services such as Teams, Office, and Xbox (Langston, 2020).

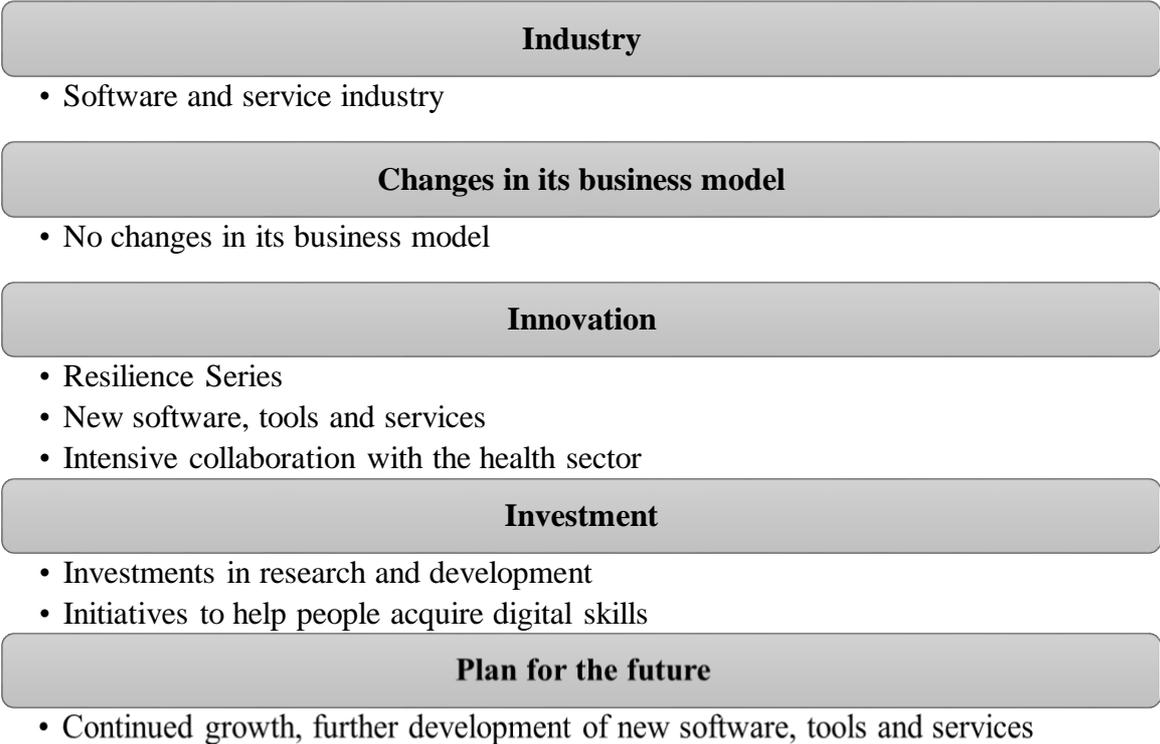
Remote working and home office had already been a hot topic for years, and for a minority of workers, it was a reality, at least for a few days a week. When the first lockdown was imposed, the shift was drastic. Even so, companies had at least some findings and experiences to inform them on how to make the transition. However, for educational systems, especially schools, switching to this new way of learning was even more challenging. UNICEF estimated that the lockdowns have impacted the education of more than 110 million young people in the Middle East and Africa alone. This represents the biggest disruption to the education system in recent history.

To address these disruptions, education ministries have collaborated with Microsoft and donors (such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and the Global Partnership for Education) to provide solutions for remote learning. Worldwide, the education sector has developed immensely due to the pandemic and the resulting tech-driven innovation. Tools like Reading Progress, built-in auto-detect features, the Education Insights dashboard, and several other enhancements added to Microsoft Teams to enrich student engagement helped make online learning and teaching more attractive. They may have opened the door to change in the education sector (Microsoft News Center, 2021).

As part of its corporate social responsibility program, Microsoft launched an initiative to help 25 million people acquire digital skills. LinkedIn shares economic graphs and labor market trends to help people understand and identify the key job and horizontal skills for which there is more demand. Furthermore, the company provided free access to learning paths and comprehensive resources designed to help candidates develop skills for in-demand jobs. Lastly, Microsoft connected skills to opportunities by offering free exams for industry-recognized certification (Smith, 2021).

To summarize, in 2020 and 2021, Microsoft experienced immense growth thanks to rapid, tech-driven innovation and an increase in demands. It has not only acted effectively in the area of corporate social responsibility by offering free programs and working intensively together with the health sector, but it also innovated quickly to meet new consumer and economic needs.

Figure 3: **Business Analysis: Microsoft**



Source: by the author

Change management and implementation of remote work

Microsoft has a strongly embedded company culture. The company states that it only achieves its mission by living its culture: “We start with becoming learners in all things – having a growth

mindset. Then, we apply that mindset to learning about our customers, being diverse and inclusive, working together as one, and – ultimately – making a difference in the world“ (Microsoft , n.d.). With its “growth mindset”, it believes that everyone within the company can grow and develop, potential is unlimited, and anyone’s mindset can change. A desire to learn, curiosity, open-mindedness, taking risks, and moving quickly when mistakes are made are all part of this mindset. The company is always eager to find the best possible solutions for its customers and calls itself “customer obsessed”. Diversity and inclusion play a big role in the company culture, as do teamwork and collaboration. The company’s mission is to “empower others to do more and achieve more through our technology and innovation” (Microsoft , n.d.).

The inability to predict how the pandemic would progress and the lack of communication affected all companies at the beginning of the pandemic – even Microsoft. When the first lockdown began, work was immediately shifted to home offices until further notice. As the pandemic spread, it became mandatory for all Microsoft workers to work from home. In July 2020, the company announced that its US offices would not reopen until January 2021 at the earliest (Warren, 2020). In October 2020, the company decided to allow more employees to work from home permanently, but it also spoke about adopting flexible work plans in the future. Once the US office reopened, it was going to allow employees to decide if they wanted to work remotely for less than 50% of their work week, or even permanently, with their manager’s approval. Employees who opted for permanent remote work had to give up their assigned office space, but would still have the option of using touchdown space available at Microsoft’s offices. The company’s aim was to support individual workstyles by giving workers as much flexibility as possible, while “balancing business needs, and ensuring we live our culture” (Hogan, 2020). Nonetheless, a few positions within the company still require access to the company’s office and therefore, these employees would probably not be able to make a permanent transition to working from home, such as those who require access to hardware labs, data centers, or in-person training. The company also announced that it was going to allow workers to relocate within the country and even internationally, provided that their managers approved the move. In these cases, the salaries and benefits would be adjusted according to the company’s geotax scale. While Microsoft was going to cover the home office expenses for permanent remote workers, employees would need to pay for their own relocation costs. The company then implemented flexible working hours , without the need for prior manager approval, and workers could request to work remotely part-time (Warren, 2020).

In March 2021, Microsoft revealed more about the philosophy and practice of its hybrid workplace on the company's blog. Under the difficult circumstances of the pandemic, the company had observed and learned more about the future of its work and how and where its employees work best. Therefore, the company has developed its hybrid workplace and built new capabilities to help its employees, customers, and its business to succeed. Microsoft has ensured that its offices are in compliance with pandemic-related government requirements and often go further to accommodate workers who want or need to return to the office, while many others continue to work remotely. The company reports that the well-being and safety of its employees has been its main priority since the beginning of the pandemic. To ensure this, it has monitored local health data and tracked government requirements.

The hybrid work model increased employee flexibility by giving them the choice to work at the office, from home, elsewhere, or even to combine these options. Microsoft states that it wants to allow its employees to choose to work where they feel most productive and comfortable, while encouraging remote work as long as the virus and related variants remain a concern. As some uncertainty regarding the upcoming months remains, Microsoft affirms that it will maintain a "growth mindset – learning, reevaluation, updating", as needed. On the official Microsoft blog, Executive Vice President Kurt DelBene confirms that the previous year was hard to predict. The company initially tried to provide guidance on the timeline and phases through which the pandemic might progress, but making accurate predictions was impossible. Microsoft tried to develop a return-to-work site strategy that could be adjusted to rapidly changing public health conditions and government guidance and promote a consistent approach across geographies by creating a unified COVID-19 response effort for the entire company.

The hybrid workplace strategy therefore includes different stages, rather than a specific timeline, which allows the company to make quick adjustments at every work site, as well as data-driven decisions. Each work site can implement the strategy individually and, depending on the local situation at the time, it can move backwards and forwards through the stages, as necessary. Each stage is defined by data-driven criteria and site readiness assessments and includes prescribed policies and actions. The stages are:

1. Closed
2. Mandatory work from home
3. Work from home strongly encouraged
4. Soft open

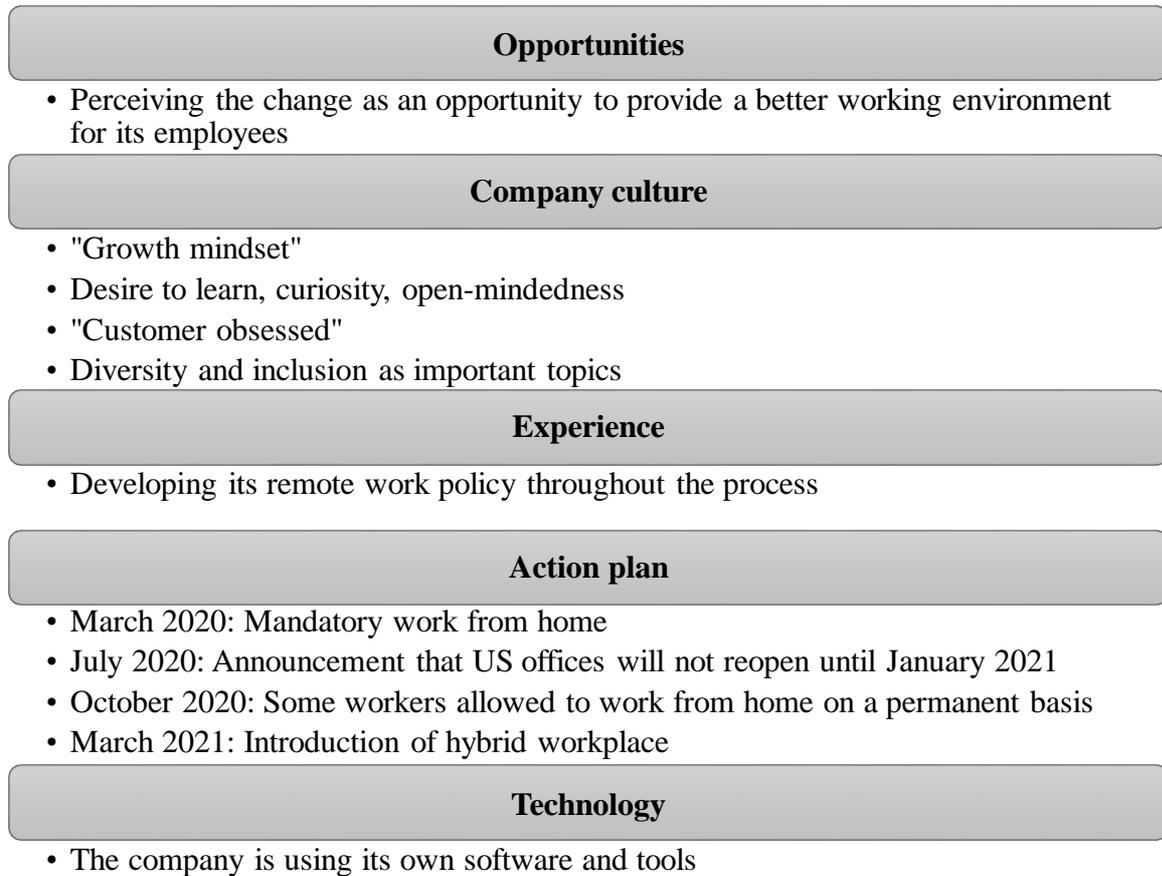
5. Open with restrictions
6. Open

All work sites in stages 1 to 5 have to take a cautious approach, which includes social distancing, face coverings, cleaning procedures, daily health attestations, attendance strategies, and other measures. In all stages, the company applies its core principles, which take into consideration its employees' physical, mental, and emotional well-being and the support they need, and gives them the flexibility to choose to work remotely or not, as conditions allow. The approach considers the need to serve customers, keep critical business operations running, and meet local, government and/or health regulations or even do more than they require.

One concern for Microsoft management is that a new, modern, hybrid work model will require a flexible work policy, inclusive space design, and innovative technology to meet new employee expectations, connect to a more diffusely distributed workforce, and provide tools to create, innovate, and work together. Wherever people are working from, the company wants to create a feeling of belonging and wants to keep teams connected. To support this, the company has put together a group of researchers, engineers, and real estate and facilities experts to prototype new meeting spaces around its Redmond and UK campuses to support hybrid work. To ensure remote productivity and increase it further, Microsoft is using new collaboration tools and a robust infrastructure, and working on new developments in the area of network security. DelBene mentions the known challenges of making sure everyone feels included, no matter where they work, which is why space for inclusive conversations and new ways of working together are of great importance. Innovations to Microsoft's technology tools to help navigate remote and hybrid work environments – such as Together Mode, Microsoft Whiteboard in Teams or Microsoft Teams rooms – will enable the company to overcome these challenges more effectively (DelBene, 2021).

Microsoft has perceived the opportunities of this drastic change to remote work and has been doing impressive work in this area. One week after the lockdown announcement, on March 18th, the company started a diary study on 435 employees working in a major software department. Conducted over a period of 10 weeks, this study aimed to understand the daily challenges, sources of gratitude, and impacts on work satisfaction, work habits, goal setting, and productivity. The company used the outcomes of this study, together with other studies on working from home, to elaborate guidelines for its employees in this area (Butler & Jaffe, 2020).

Figure 4: **Change management and implementation of remote work analysis: Microsoft**



Source: by the author

Talent management

The diary study helped Microsoft's management to understand its employees' needs and draft working from home guidelines to encourage workers to adopt this new working environment. After the study was completed, the company adopted several practices such as "No Meeting Friday" and "starting 30-minute-meetings 5 minutes late and 60-minute-meetings 10 minutes late", as well as creating more time for sharing difficulties experienced during the pandemic. Another positive side effect of the study was that a majority of the participants felt like the company cared about them. It also helped them improve their work-life balance because the act of writing the diary at the end of the work day became a signal for them that they had finished work for the day. Most participants (68%) liked this daily reflection, and 62% said they would like to continue doing them. It is interesting to note that employees had to send in their daily entry to the reflection diary every day at 4:30 p.m., which meant their work day ended early.

The challenges reported in the diaries were: dealing with children, collaboration/communication, distractions, focus, human connection, motivation, being overworked, physical movement, physical/mental health, internet/remote connection, too many meetings, work-life balance, work, and work space. Reports on physical and mental health issues increased over time, whereas too many meetings have been a constant issue for many workers. Problems with internet and remote connection were identified early on, but the company took early measures to create quick solutions to resolve them. Mental health, workload, and motivation are the factors that are most closely correlated to satisfaction. Factors correlated to gratitude are comfort, not having to commute, connection, exercise, family, flexibility, focus, health and safety, leadership, sun/window, team, ability to work from home, work and mental health; family and flexibility were mentioned the most. It is interesting to note that mental health and thankfulness for work have increased over time. The overall feedback from employees to this study was very positive. In addition to it, a forum was created to receive feedback from the employees, and pilot changes were tested and implemented as early as possible. Microsoft managed to not only get important information for the company itself, but also to make its employees feel more valued and heard (Butler & Jaffe, 2020).

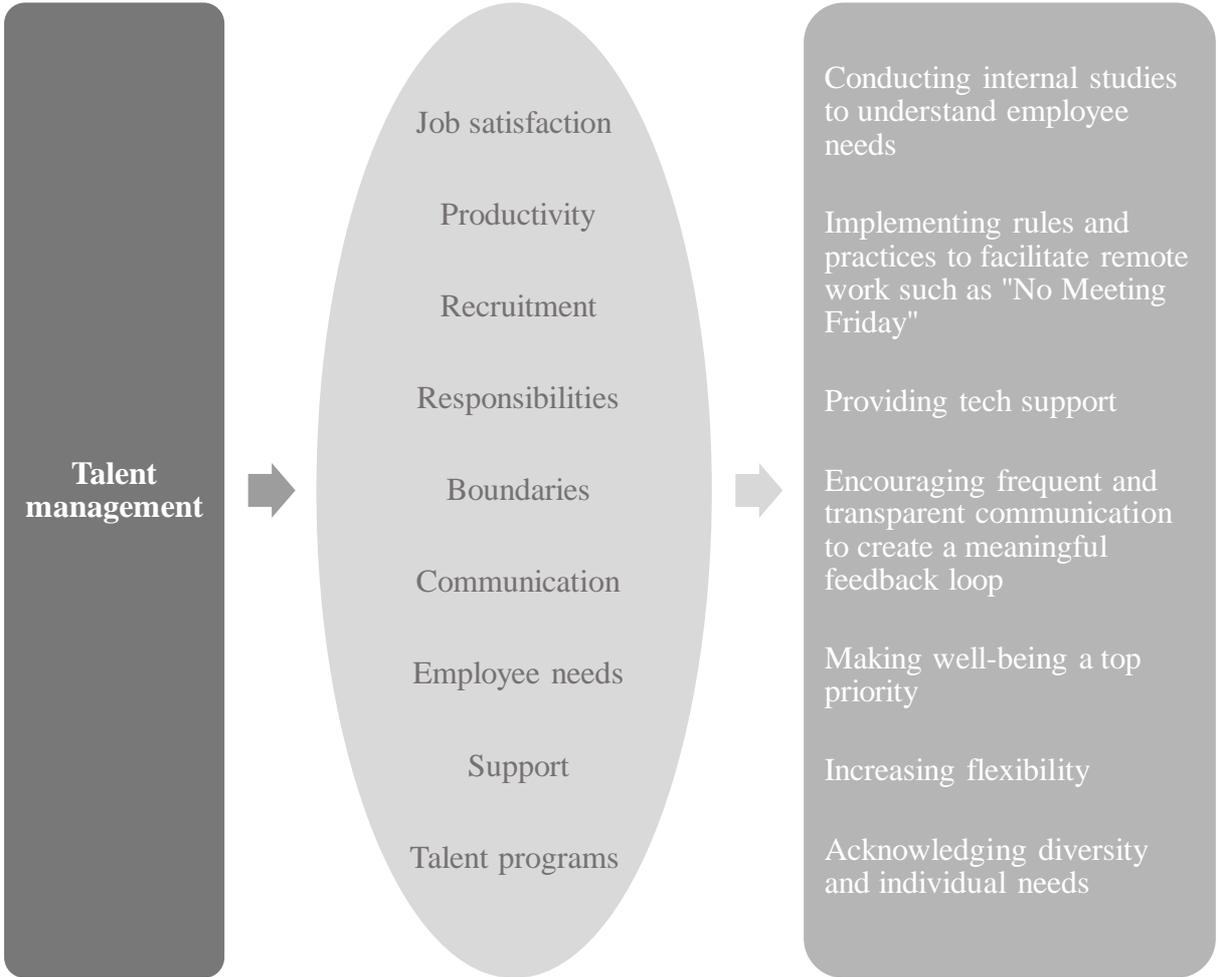
To improve productivity and job satisfaction, DelBene emphasizes the importance of frequent and transparent communication, as it creates a meaningful feedback loop that allows the company to learn and iterate. Microsoft's goal was to support individual working styles (DelBene, 2021).

Another relevant change is in the area of infrastructure and support services. The company has set up a team of technicians to whom employees can reach out to 24 hours a day, from Monday to Friday, to get help rebooting their machine, if needed. Conference rooms are being converted into Teams Rooms, which use technology for high-quality video and audio for employees who decide to continue to work remotely. Additionally, the cloud service would be used to manage employees' PCs, tablets, and phones instead of the management software used in on-premise data centers, as it offers even more flexibility.

The company has also altered its hiring processes. With the new possibilities of remote work, managers are allowed to hire people from anywhere in the world for more positions (Novet, 2021).

Possibly the most important sentence Microsoft included in its previously mentioned policy on its hybrid work model is “offer as much flexibility as possible”. Microsoft is acknowledging the diversity of its employees and is living up to its culture. Every person has a different working style, taste, and preferences. While some employees prefer to work from home because they can spend more time with their family or manage their work-life balance better, others prefer to work on-site so they can get away from the chaos at home. This is just one example. Realizing this, Microsoft leaves this decision up to its employees as much as possible. Kathleen Hogan (Chief People Officer) states that “[f]lexibility can mean different things to each of us, and we recognize there is no one-size-fits-all solution given the variety of roles, work requirements, and business needs we have at Microsoft”. Giving employees a choice is empowering and motivating, which will automatically lead to more satisfaction and more productivity (Barison, 2020).

Figure 5: Talent management analysis: Microsoft



Source: by the author

3.2 Case B: Facebook

Facebook operates worldwide as a social networking company. The company develops social media applications to connect people through mobile devices, computers, and other surfaces. Facebook's services and products include Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, WhatsApp, and Oculus (CNN Business , n.d.).

Facebook's headquarters are based in Menlo Parks, California in the United States. In July 2021, the company's revenues were estimated at US\$85,965 million, and its profits, US\$29,146 million. Its market share at that time amounted to US\$995,787 million (Fortune, 2021). In December 2020, the social networking company had 58,604 full-time employees (Statista Research Department , 2021). Facebook has 93 office locations across 37 countries (Craft, n.d.).

Business

As mentioned before, Facebook is a social networking company that offering services such as Facebook, Facebook View, Messenger, Instagram, Oculus-Products, and Spark AR (Facebook , n.d.). Although the company has not introduced major changes to its business model because of the COVID-19 pandemic, its model has evolved and developed.

When companies shifted to remote work in the first quarter of 2020, Facebook perceived the potential in products and services that support remote work. Facebook products such as Workplace, Portal, and Oculus were “built for a time when economic opportunity might no longer depend on geography, a time when what you do could matter more than where you are“ (Facebook , 2020). Workplace grew by two million paid users from October 2019 to May 2020. Facebook added a “work groups” option to help people connect with their co-workers, which offers video features. Additionally, Facebook released Oculus for Business, which can be used for virtual reality-powered trainings and collaboration (Facebook , 2020).

With the introduction of Facebook and Instagram Shops, the company further developed its platforms to help especially small shops, considering that retail stores were forced to close during the pandemic. This new function represents an important opportunity for many businesses. Facebook's goal was to facilitate online buying and selling (Facebook , 2020).

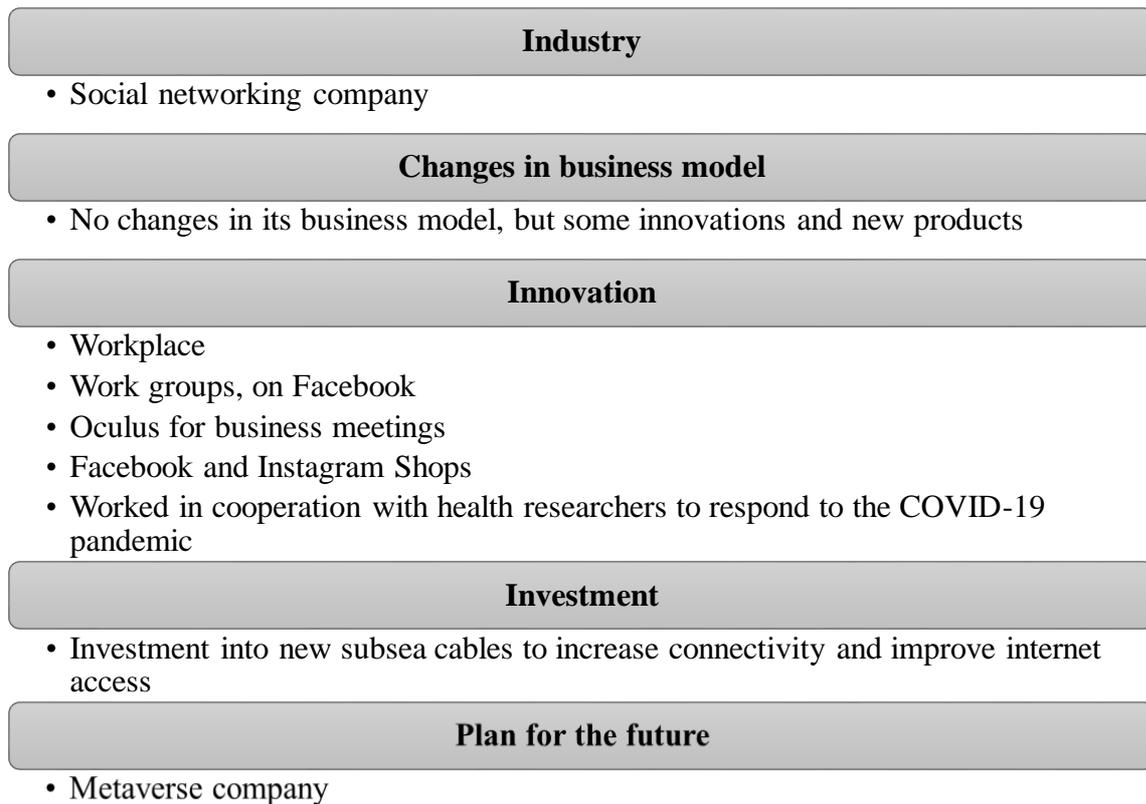
Facebook also developed features to gather data to help fight the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The company's approach was to assist researchers and health authorities in obtaining important information to respond to the outbreak and plan. An opt-in symptom survey run by health

researchers at Carnegie Mellon University asked users if they had any symptoms. The data gathered was used to forecast how many cases hospitals might see in the following days. Another helpful use of data was several disease-prevention maps, which have been used by health researchers across the globe (Zuckerberg, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the demand for critical internet access further, and people who are unable to connect have been left behind. In the first quarter of 2021, Facebook announced it would invest in improving connectivity between the Asia-Pacific region and North America. It plans to install two new, vital subsea cables to connect Singapore, Indonesia, and North America, which will increase overall transpacific capacity by 70 percent. Facebook has partnered with leading regional and global partners to boost internet accessibility for millions of people and businesses (Salvadori & Roehrich, 2021).

In the middle of 2021, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg spoke more about his plans for the company's future as a metaverse company. The term "metaverse" describes immersive, shared spaces that can be accessed across different platforms and where digital and physical reality converge. The company has been investing heavily in virtual and augmented reality. Its new Horizon Workrooms remote-working app gives us "a good sense" of how elements of its metaverse will work, according to Andrew "Boz" Bosworths, Vice President of Facebook's Reality Labs group (Culliford, 2021). In 2021, Facebook launched the "metaverse". The Facebook group is now called "Meta", under which Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp operate. According to Meta, the metaverse is a 3D space to socialize, learn, collaborate, and play in, all within a collective project that goes beyond one single company (Facebook, n.d.).

Figure 6: **Business Analysis: Facebook**



Source: by the author

Change management and implementation of remote work

Besides the opportunities for investment in a new company model, Facebook sees many opportunities in developing new products and services for remote work. According to Facebook, important benefits of remote work include enhanced productivity, positive environmental impacts, and the improved ability to develop technology. This is why Zuckerberg announced already in May 2020 that remote work would be the future of working for the company (Wilson, 2020).

Facebook worships the individuality and diversity of its workers. The company's five core values are: "be bold, focus on impact, move fast, be open, and build social value". It should be noted that Facebook explicitly mentions flexibility on the company's career website and includes the words "wherever you work" in the very first sentence of the description of its company culture. One can conclude, then, that from March 2020 to August 2021, Facebook worked to integrate remote working and the correlated flexibility in its company culture, giving another clear hint that remote work will be part of the future for Facebook employees (Facebook, n.d.). However, in a Facebook post in May 2020, Mark Zuckerberg said, "Products

can get built in months, but culture is built over years, so we're taking a long-term approach.”
(Zuckerberg, 2020)

On March 6th, 2020, Facebook implemented remote work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. From that point on, it instructed its almost 50.000 employees to start working from home. More than ten weeks later, the company shared a status update where CEO Mark Zuckerberg explained how well employees have adopted, and what the company's long-term plans, goals, and challenges were. In May 2020, Zuckerberg announced that 95% of the employees would be allowed to work from home until the end of the year. The company planned to keep existing real estate and wanted to open offices as soon as possible, at least at partial capacity. The company announced that the priority was to do what is best for the company, and not for the individual.

Since the beginning of 2021, Facebook has offered experienced workers the possibility of working remotely on a permanent basis, provided that their performance reviews were strong. However, recent college graduates, new hires, and anyone who is required to be on-site, such as data center technicians and content reviewers, were expected to return to the office. At that time, the company's plan was to have half of its workforce working remotely within the next five to ten years. Through a company-wide survey, Facebook found out that 40% of its staff wanted to work remotely full-time, whereas another 50% wanted to return to the office “as soon as possible”. Flexibility to choose when to work from the office was requested by most employees. Of the workers who wanted to working remotely full-time, 75% were interested in moving. In May 2020, 30% of the company's managers said they would “definitely” support fully-remote teams, whereas 10% answered “definitely not”. At the time, Zuckerberg was optimistic about a transition to a more remote working model, but he also mentioned that there were still uncertainties and that the company would have a steep learning curve (Wilson, 2020). Zuckerberg said in a Facebook post in May 2020 that there are still a lot of open questions that will need time to figure out. The company focused on remote hiring, as it sought to recruit experienced engineers living within four hours of cities where Facebook has an engineering office (Zuckerberg, 2020).

On June 15th, 2021, Facebook announced that it would allow all workers to request to work remotely full-time after the pandemic, regardless of their job and level of seniority. Workers would also be allowed to move to new locations, though their pay will be adjusted based on

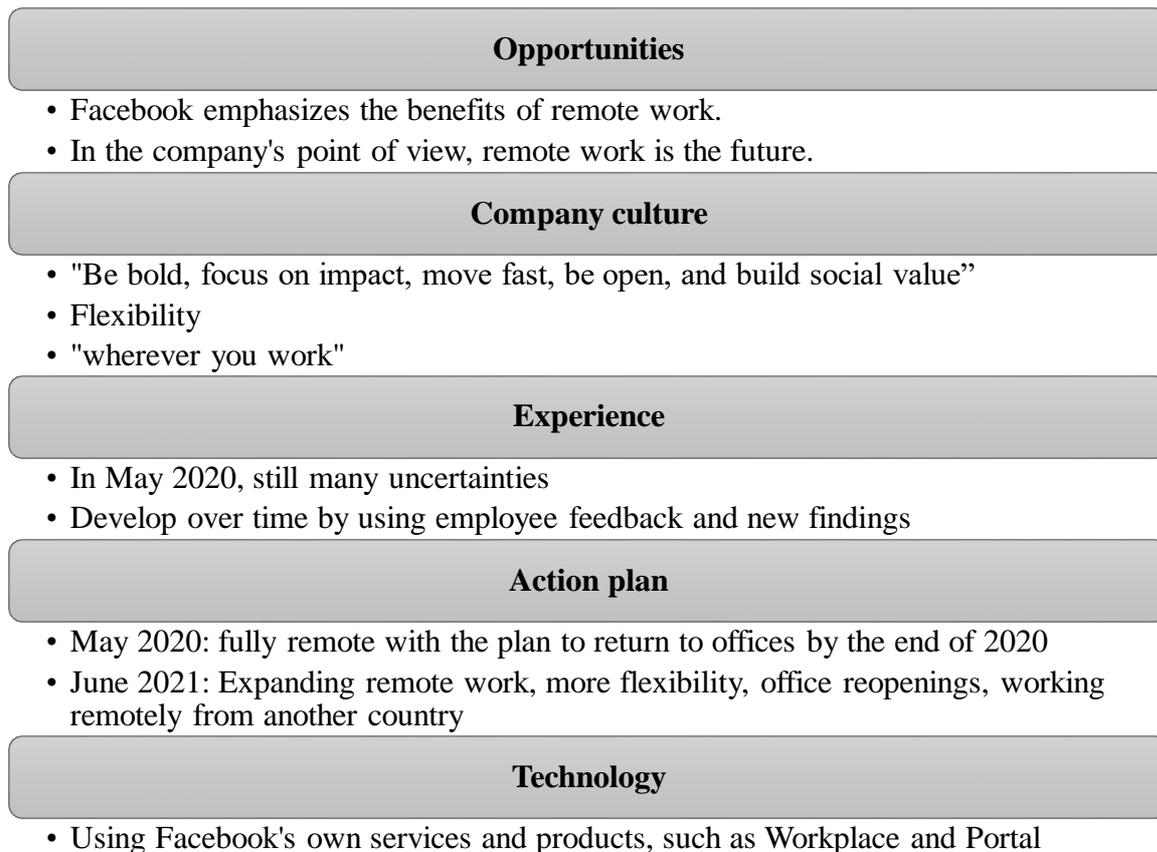
market rates. The company recommended that employees whose work requires them to be in an office be on-site for at least half of the time and they would therefore be allowed to work on a hybrid schedule. Facebook was planning to open its US offices at 50% capacity, with a full return for those who wish to do so, by September 2021. However, this was delayed until January 2022 (Speakman, 2021). Workers who wish to live and work abroad will have the possibility to do so in the future, as the company will expand remote work across international borders over time. Facebook wants to offer the same flexibility to all workers worldwide over time (Liu, 2021).

On June 10th, 2021, Facebook posted an update on the company website on what the future of work will look like for its workers (Facebook , 2021). It mentioned the following:

- Expansion of remote work
- More flexibility for its workers
- Office reopening: “The company is on track to open most of its US offices at 50% capacity by early September, and likely reopening fully in October. The company has several offices already open in our Europe, Middle East and Africa region and our Asia-Pacific region, and we hope to open more in those regions at 50% capacity towards the end of 2021—we’ll continue to track our Latin America region. If you’re working with a Facebook recruiter, they will keep you up to date on the format and schedule of your interviews.”
- 2021 Global Travel Days: “Through the rest of 2021, for personal travel, Facebook employees can use a total of 20 business days to work from another location where they have work authorization.”
- Working remotely from another country: “Facebook will support remote work opportunities in the Americas moving from the US to Canada, and in our Europe, Middle East, and Africa region (EMEA) moving from anywhere to the UK. In January 2022, employees will have the opportunity to permanently move between seven more countries in EMEA where Facebook has the highest employee demand and is able to operate.

As a tech company that has its own services and products to support remote working, Facebook employees use tools like Workplace and Portal to communicate and connect (Facebook , n.d.).

Figure 7: **Change management and implementation of remote work analysis: Facebook**



Source: by the author

Talent management

Already in May 2020, Mark Zuckerberg referred to some of the main benefits of remote work. For one, productivity in the remote work mode has been at least as high as it was before. Better quality of life for employees is another, as it affords them more time to invest in their personal life and overall well-being. Working remotely is supposed to give engineers at Facebook new insights into how virtual and augmented reality technology needs to advance. Additionally, Facebook employees have reported feeling more “egalitarian” than before. The opportunity to work from everywhere in the world could increase workplace diversity in the company. Through a company-wide survey, Facebook found that the biggest challenges for employees have been working from home with children, setting boundaries between work and personal life, difficulties to onboard new employees, and loneliness (Wilson, 2020).

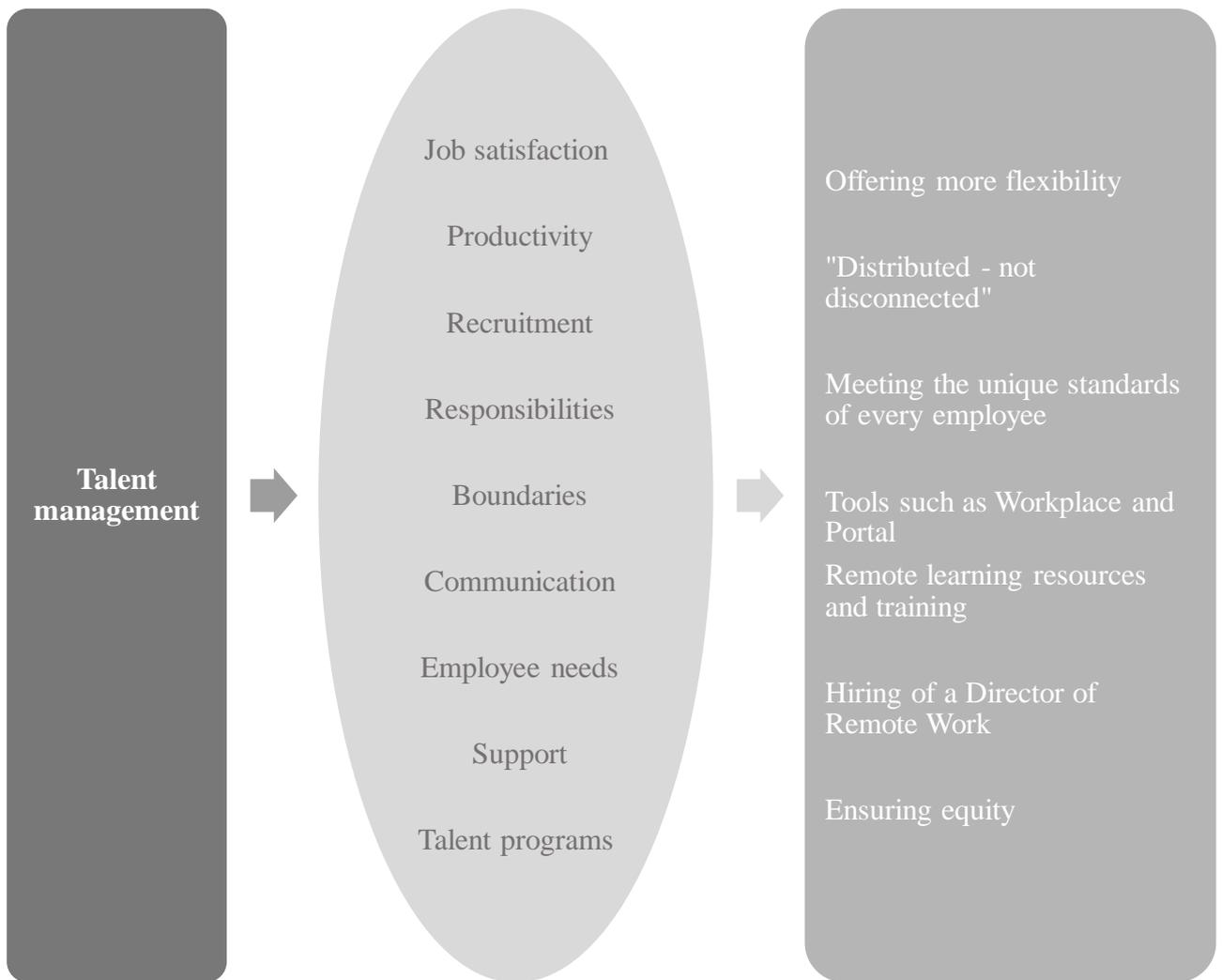
Facebook uses the slogan “distributed – not disconnected” to promote remote work. It is important for the company to keep evolving and meet the unique standards of every employee. Through tools such as Workplace and Portal, employees are able to communicate, connect, and

collaborate with teammates across time zones and geographies. Facebook also helps workers establish a relationship with colleagues by providing structured opportunities “to formalize moments of informal connection”. Remote learning resources and training activities help employees acquire skills from anywhere they want. Facebook is currently actively recruiting for full-time remote jobs in the US, Canada and the UK (Facebook , n.d.).

In November 2020, Facebook content moderators openly accused the company of forcing them to go back to working in the office. Facebook responded to the accusation by letting these workers continue working remotely for the duration of the pandemic (BBC, 2020). However, the company has since reviewed this decision and issued a new remote work policy released in June 2021, which has been discussed above.

To manage its employees in the best possible way, Facebook invested in a better approach to remote working, which consisted of everything from employee surveys, new policies, tech adaptations, and even a new management position. Annie Dean became the Director of Remote Work at Facebook in late 2020. Her tasks were to develop foundation principles for remote work and embed them into a strategy. A lot of her work has been focused on the whole employee journey, from onboarding to the development of new relationships. Ensuring equity was another important focus: every employee, no matter where they are working, should be able to participate in the same way. Dean has established a common language and developed a glossary of 20 terms related to remote work. Furthermore, she identified different team partners who should be involved in the drafting of a remote strategy, which included not only individual managers, but also teams responsible for training or diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). An internal remote request tool has been developed to allow employees to access information, such as benefits, work setup, and other elements, and it automates request approvals. Building an enabling environment for working remotely internationally, improving employees’ experience with remote working, and conducting more research on how to maximize the value of remote meetings has also been her priority. Reciting one of Facebook’s mantras “everything is 1% finished”, Dean openly communicated that the company does not have all the answers yet. Experimentation, iteration, and learning, for all employees, are used to extensively develop the company’s remote strategy (Colletta, 2021).

Figure 8: **Talent management analysis: Facebook**



Source: by the author

3.3 Case C: Shopify

Shopify operates in the IT software and services industry. It is a cloud-based commerce platform, which was designed for small and medium-sized businesses. Its software enables these businesses to use different sales channels, including web, tablet, and mobile storefronts, social media storefronts, brick-and-mortar, and pop-up stores. Shopify focuses on merchant and subscription solutions and allows businesses to manage products and inventory, process orders and payments, and build customer relations (CNN Business , n.d.).

The company's headquarters are based in Ottawa, Canada. In the second quarter of 2021, Shopify generated revenues of US\$1.12 billion and US\$879.1 million in GAAP net income

(Wilhelm, 2021). In 2020, Shopify reported having around 7,000 employees (Macrotrends, n.d.). The company has ten offices in North America, Europe, and North Zealand (Glassdoor, n.d.).

Business

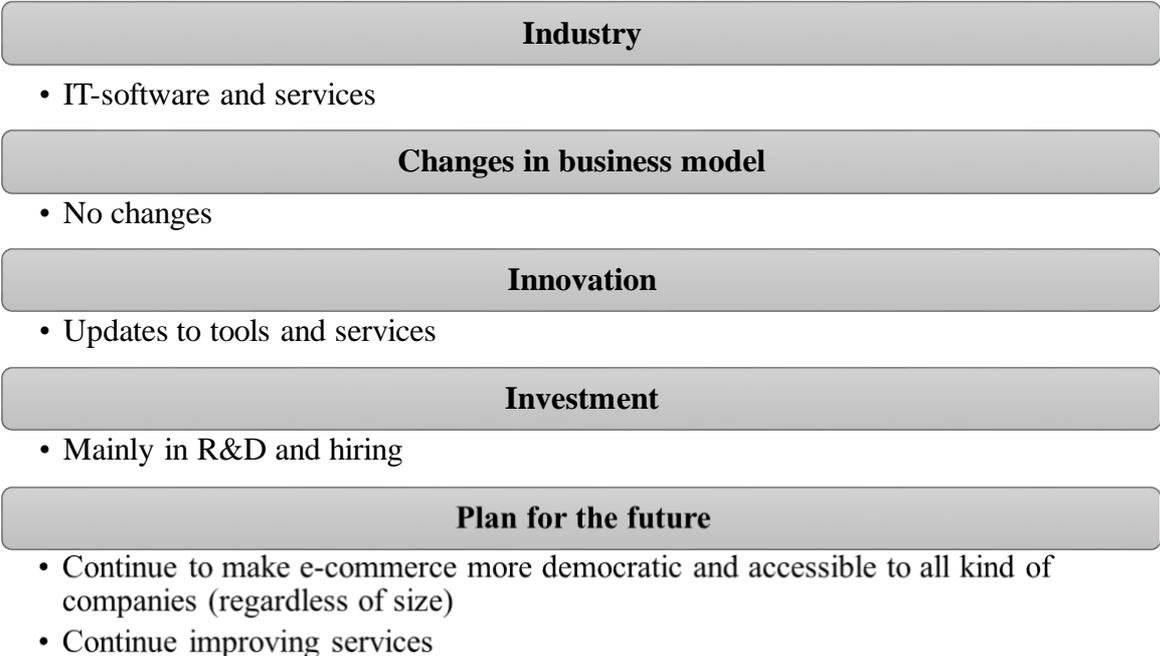
As mentioned above, Shopify operates in the IT software and services industry and provides a cloud-based platform for doing business. The onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 marked the beginning of a disruptive year for the retail sector. Thousands of businesses migrated to e-commerce due to lockdowns and social distancing. Shopify's highly diverse and easy-to-use online and offline retail platforms attracted many new customers during the pandemic, generating a 96% increase in revenues in the third quarter of 2020, compared to the same period in 2019. The company provides an all-in-one e-commerce platform that aims to help businesses set up their online stores so they can sell directly to customers around the world (Sularia, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Shopify has developed several new features and applications to make the transition to e-commerce easier for retailers. The company's philosophy is to make the e-commerce environment more democratic, where small and medium-sized businesses can also be competitive, even in a marketplace that is predominantly run by retail giants such as Amazon, eBay, or Walmart (Sularia, 2021). Shopify's business model did not change throughout the pandemic; the company has rather experienced growth thanks to it.

Shopify is known for being highly innovative. During the first months of the pandemic, it helped companies make a fast transition to e-commerce. The tools available allowed the conversion of point-of-sale terminals into e-commerce stores and made it possible for retailers to launch online operations overnight. Local stores were highlighted in its Shop app. The company formed new partnerships that allow its customers to accept payments through Alipay, and a plugin enabled shoppable ads on TikTok (Fast Company, 2021). On the Shopify website, the company offers several guides, presents and explains its tools, offers webinars, provides more information on new features, and gives useful advice to its users on how to optimize their business. In 2021, Shopify invested mainly in research and development, but also in hiring (Dignan, 2021).

Shopify experienced enormous growth during the COVID-pandemic, in both 2020 and 2021. In mid-2021, the company’s plans were to expand further and offer even more opportunities to its users. Shopify’s Liquid platform was upgraded to allow businesses to get even more from developer features, without the need for coding. Furthermore, there is a new editor experience and theme app extensions. Upgrades are in the pipeline for Checkouts as well (Clymo, 2021). Shopify’s mission is to “help people achieve independence by making it easier to start, run, and grow a business. We believe the future of commerce has more voices, not fewer, so we’re reducing the barriers to business ownership to make commerce better for everyone“ (Shopify , n.d.).

Figure 9: **Business analysis: Shopify**



Source: by the author

Change management and implementation of remote work

Shopify’s company culture focuses on creativity and the individuality of its employees. This can be observed by its self-directed development budgets to support learning, freedom, and flexibility in its employees’ work and other benefits to help them and their families. Diversity is considered a driver of creativity and productivity.

Culture is of great importance to Shopify, which is why the company has a Chief Culture Officer in place. In its opinion, only happy and healthy employees will be truly engaged and productive. Shopify cares about its employees’ health, which is why it is not just offering to

cover health insurance, but also gym memberships and equipment for their health, such as bicycles, yoga classes and stand-up desks. Other benefits Shopify offers include providing all its workers with the latest Apple gear, full health and dental insurance, daily catered lunches, and maternity and parental leave, and it encourages employees to participate in conferences by paying the fees. The company offers its employees the possibility of buying its shares as a way to motivate them to be more invested in their work. Furthermore, the company gets its employees involved in helping local charities to make the team feel more connected. Overall, employee mental and physical wellness is important to the company. For the company, it is important to free employees of the fear of taking time to care for their private life. Shopify CCO Daniel Weinand states, “If I wouldn’t take any vacation, many people from the team would do the same. It’s a very conscious decision for me to take some time off — not only because I love travelling, but also because I want other employees to feel that it’s important” (Officevibe, 2021).

Shopify aims to only hire the best fitted and most promising applicants. Only 0.9% of its applicants, who go through a multi-step hiring process, are actually hired. Its “unicorn” peer-review system is a tool that allows employees to praise and give continuous feedback (Officevibe, 2021).

For the company, every project is important, which is coherent with the company’s mission to provide a more democratic e-commerce environment (Shopify, n.d.).

Even before the pandemic, most employees of the e-commerce platform developer had already been working remotely. Tobias Lütke, the CEO of Shopify, sees benefits in the remote work model and states that it connects employees to the merchants it serves. Many of the company’s users power their online stores remotely as well.

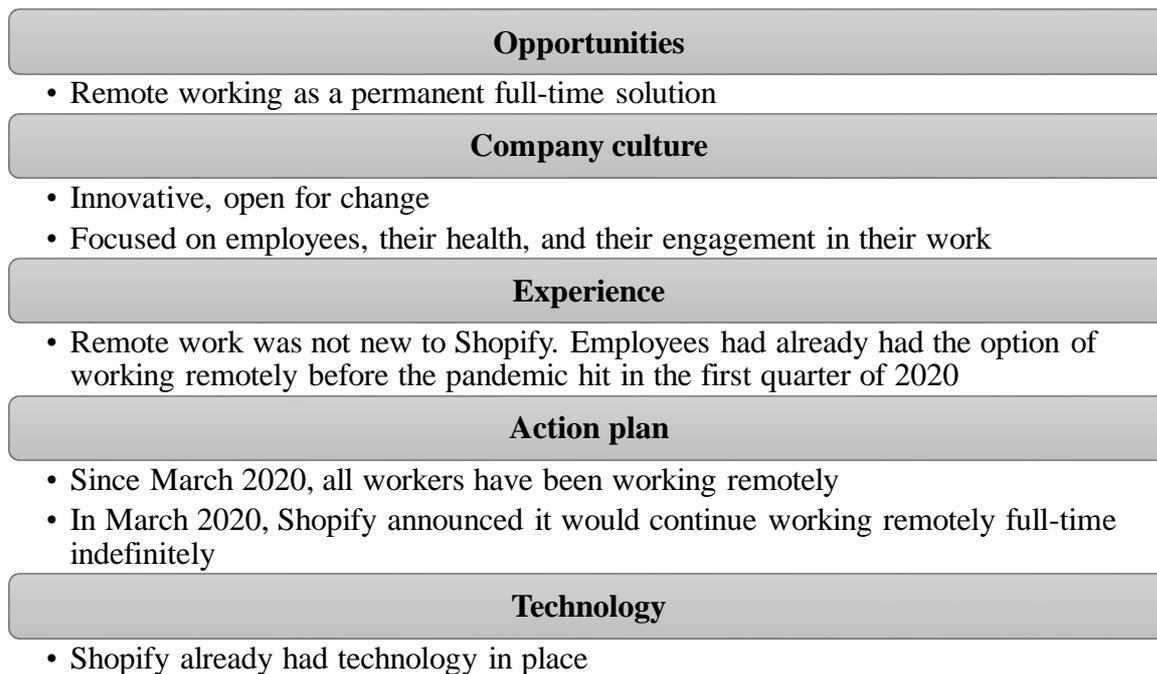
In May 2020, Shopify announced that most of its employees would not be returning to its offices, even after the pandemic. The company decided to make remote work permanent. Lütke explained that the company has not figured out all the details of its remote work policy yet. However, he believes the company is capable of adapting well in moments of change. On his Twitter account, he wrote:

“COVID is challenging us all to work together in new ways. We choose to jump in the driver’s seat, instead of being passengers to the changes ahead. We cannot go back to the way things were. This isn’t a choice; this is the future. A common misconception about company culture is that if you have a good one, you have to hold on to it. I believe this to be wrong. If you want to have a great culture, the trick is to evolve it forward with your environment. Take the best things with you from version to version” (Lütke, 2020).

The technology needed to enable fully remote work was already in place prior to the pandemic. After it began, the company’s plan was to redesign its existing offices to be an “on-ramp” to the digital workplace, which will be accessible from home (Lord, 2020). It is important to note that Shopify made its decision to shift to full-time remote working early on, in comparison to many other companies, due to its commitment to become carbon neutral. The company has focused on exploring the effects of a long-term remote working policy on the environment (Digital Nomads , 2021). In 2019, Shopify created a sustainability fund and invested US\$5 million in technologies designed to improve sustainability.

Although Shopify has experienced immense growth during the pandemic, it has faced challenges as well. Since April 2020, Shopify has lost almost half of its C-suite, including the chief technology officer. At least 23 executives have left the company. Tobias Lütke’s temper and “robotic” personality is said to be at least part of the reason. However, it is worth pondering to what extent the shift to full remote work can be correlated (Stone, 2021).

Figure 10: **Change management and implementation of remote work analysis: Shopify**



Source: by the author

Talent management

The company clearly sees benefits in the flexibility that remote working brings, not just in terms of location, but also in setting tailored working hours. Shopify explains that remote working has its own challenges, which requires the right tools and a system that builds a high-trust, distributed team culture. One of the most important aspects was to prioritize mental and physical health and set boundaries to ensure a healthy work-life balance, while staying connected to the team. The company has been listening to the experience of workers who had already been working remotely as a basis for the advice and guidance it offers to the whole staff (Elliot, 2020).

Shopify encouraged its employees to set up a productive and comfortable workspace. This includes keeping the workspace separated from recreation areas. Designating certain areas of the home for specific activities can help to separate work from free time. Having an area specifically dedicated to work can help workers disconnect from work in their free time so that they do not feel like they are still working while they are taking time to relax on the couch or having a family dinner. To help its employees create a home office space, Shopify offered them a \$1,000 stipend. In addition to this, the company provides equipment such as laptops and advises workers on how to take their ergonomic needs into account. The adjustment of the

camera and background setting are also addressed by the company to ensure that employees feel comfortable (Elliot, 2020).

Workers are encouraged to set boundaries to guarantee a healthy work-life balance. The company recommends establishing morning and evening rituals. This structure helps to separate work from free time. Taking breaks is another important component, according to Shopify, as it contributes to productivity. One of the risks of working at home is that employees stay “glued to the screen” all day, as they do not need to move around to go to another meeting, have lunch, or speak to their team. Therefore, employees are even encouraged to track their breaks. Shopify communicates that it can be helpful to work 25 minutes, then take a 5-minute break. This is also why 25-minute meetings are recommended. Shopify has its own coach to help employees deal with emotions and has been creating podcasts, videos, and worksheets and facilitating workshops, webinars and one-on-one meetings. Self-reflection and awareness are said to be of great importance to managing emotions and navigating uncertainty. Employees also get taught centering exercises to cope with overwhelming situations. Shopify lets its employees know that it is acceptable for interruptions occur during the workday, as they are sometimes inevitable. That said, it encourages employees to inform their colleagues about potential interruptions at the beginning of a call or meeting (Elliot, 2020).

The company thinks that there are two types of communication to focus on: collaboration to move projects forward and connectivity to build trust, empathy, and understanding. A mix between formal and informal communication is recommended to establish and sustain human connection and build trust. Teams are encouraged to have daily 15-minute virtual hangouts or chats to bond and engage informally, which can help overcome challenges, come up with new ideas, and decrease isolation. Shopify recommends using Slack channels for day-to-day discussions, ideas, inspiration, and updates, but also fun. Examples are “#remote-life”, where employees can chat about personal wins and challenges, and “#remote-food”, where workers share their homemade lunch photos and recipes. They are all meant to keep teams and peers connected. Controlling the calendar with the help of appointment-scheduling software can also help avoid back-and-forth emailing or Slacking (Elliot, 2020).

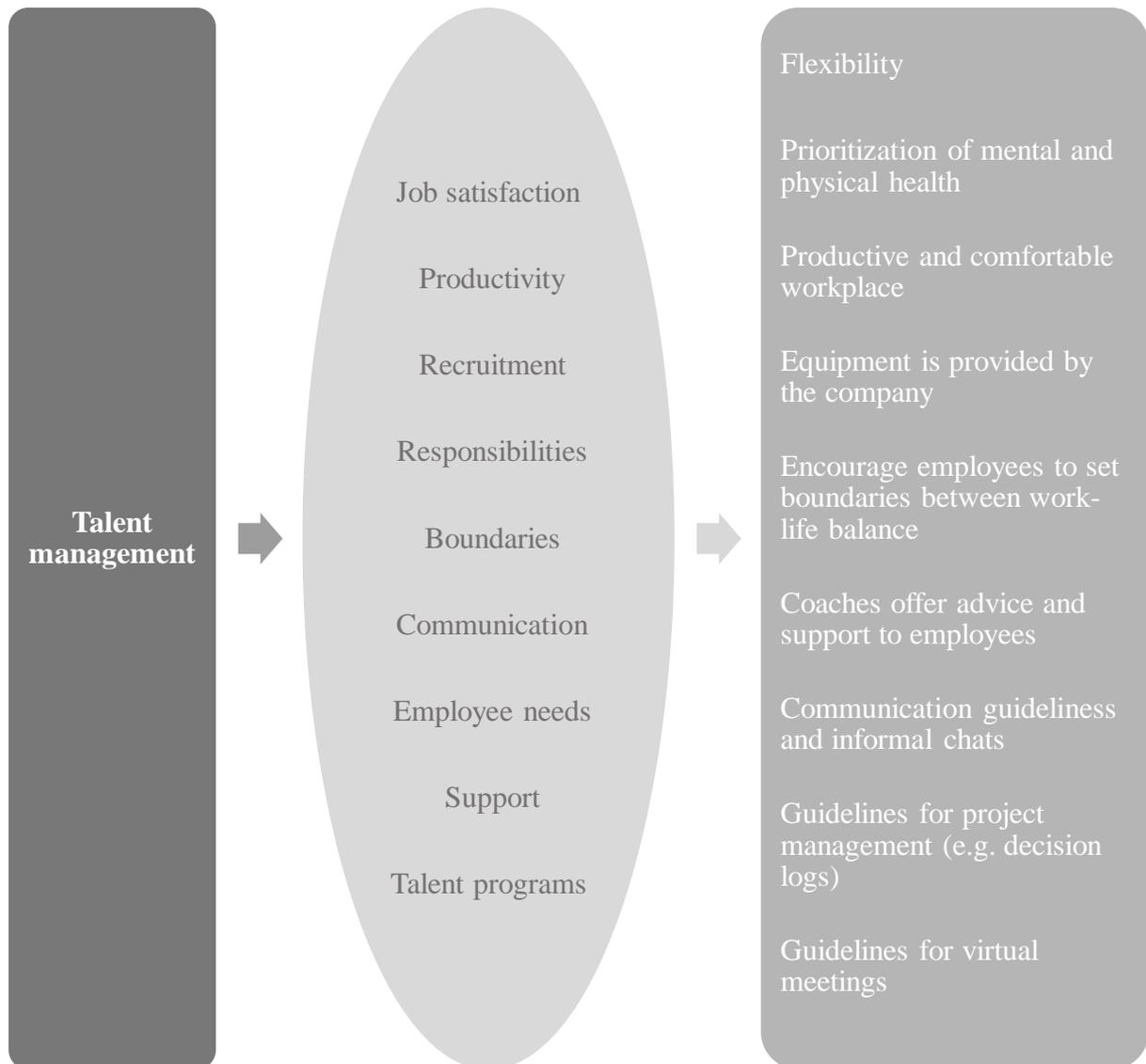
Prioritization and effective time management are important for planning work effectively. With employees in different time zones, it is more important than ever to plan to stay connected (Elliot, 2020).

Furthermore, new communication structures are in place to help teams at Shopify. Teams use decision logs to keep all members updated on their projects, including information on the project status, dates, decision(s) made, rationale for each decision, and the names of the employees involved. Shopify implemented an “in case you missed it” Slack channel for international teams. Shopify creates a “source of truth” for every project, which documents all updates and content in a “Project brief” – a short document that explains the project, its rationale, timeline, and key stakeholders. By keeping it constantly updated, everyone is always informed and aware of the project’s status, and all employees involved can constantly work effectively (Elliot, 2020).

Additionally, Shopify created guidelines on what communication channels to use in different cases. Employees are furthermore encouraged to inform via e-mail if something takes more than 10 minutes to read. Guidelines for Slack channels have been established to prevent spam. To embrace virtual collaboration, Shopify uses different tools, such as Google Jamboards, Tuple, or Trello. Virtual meetings are held via Google Meet, with some clear rules. At Shopify, every meeting with multiple participants has a moderator. Participants are to mute their microphone when they are not speaking, and cameras should be turned on, when possible. Fellow is a tool used to create an agenda, and meetings are recorded for missing team members. People use Grid View to see all participants and easily identify who is speaking. The caption function is used so that everyone can follow the meeting, even when experiencing sudden technical difficulties (Elliot, 2020).

Shopify promotes its company with the words “digital by default” and is hiring new employees from all around the world, while striving to recognize the unique needs of every employee (Shopify, n.d.).

Figure 11: **Talent management analysis: Shopify**



Source: by the author

3.4 Case D: Spotify

Spotify is a tech company that provides digital music services. Its services are divided in two segments: premium and ad-supported. Spotify users can stream music and podcasts (CNN Business, n.d.).

The company's headquarters are based in Stockholm, Sweden. In total, the company has 50 office locations in 25 different countries (Craft, n.d.). In 2021, Spotify had 6,550 employees around the world (Rodriguez, 2021). Spotify ended the first quarter of 2021 with 158 million premium subscribers and 14 million euros in profit; its annual revenues had grown to 2.15 billion euros (musically , 2021).

Business

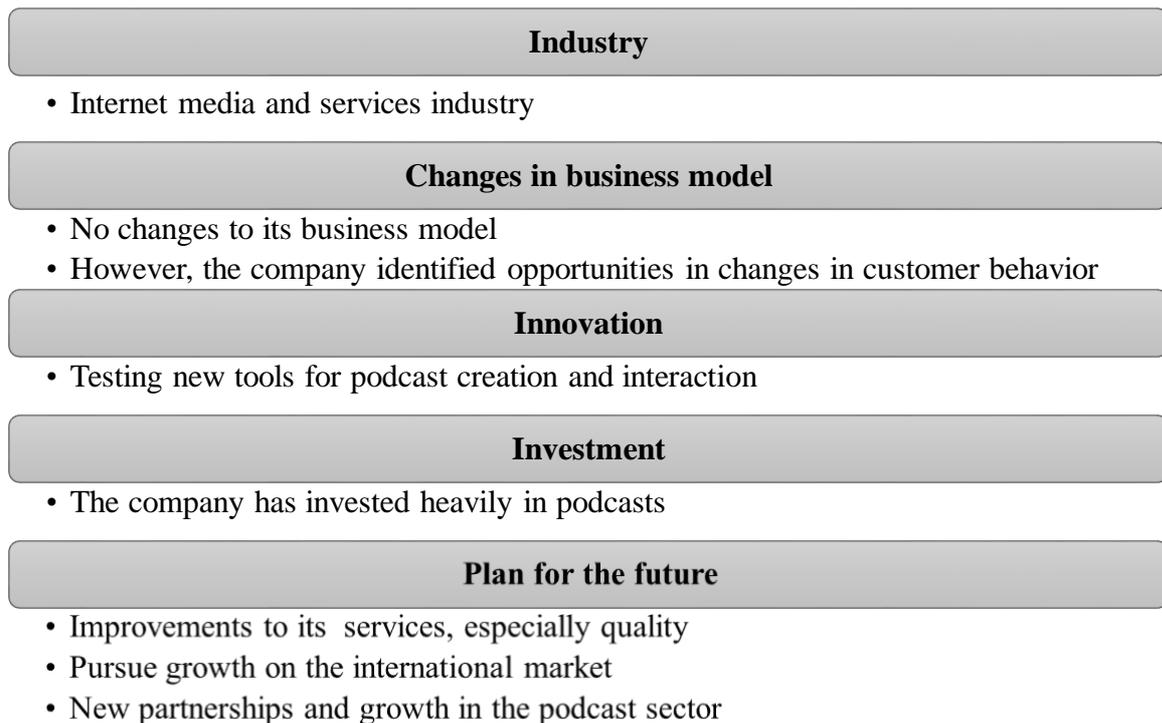
Spotify operates in the internet media and services industry (Bloomberg, n.d.). In 2020 and 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the company did not change its business model. From March 2020 until April 2020, Spotify saw an increase in the streaming of new podcasts in general, podcasts and music for children, and live concerts (Spotify , 2020). The company was able to detect changes in consumers behaviors by the way they were streaming. The usage of car, wearable, and web platforms dropped, while streaming via TV and game consoles increased significantly. According to data analyzed by Spotify, users have changed their morning routines as well. That said, overall, the industry in which Spotify operates experienced very little disruption due to the pandemic (Flynn, 2020).

In March 2020, listening hours decreased, especially in countries that were hit harder by the pandemic. However, by July 2020, listening hours had returned to the same level as it before the global health crisis began, and overall podcast consumption had more than doubled. This led the company to invest heavily in podcasts (Porter, 2020). Spotify made it easier for users to create podcasts with its podcast creation app Anchor. Additionally, Spotify has been testing new tools such as Pools and Q&As to allow for more interaction and direct feedback for podcasts. The company is also working on combining audio and visual storytelling in the form of video podcasts (Spotify , 2021).

Spotify's future plans are to improve its services, expand content, and capture more of the global market. The company predicts that the number of music and podcast creators will jump to 50 million by 2025. As mentioned earlier, Spotify is investing heavily in podcasts. Offering content creators the possibility of monetizing their work increases the network's growth potential. The company also plans to further develop streaming ad insertion (SAI) for Anchor-hosted podcasts and its Ad Studio platform, which advertisers can use to reach listeners of both Spotify Originals and third-party podcasts. Making podcasts available only to paying subscribers will increase overall subscriptions even further. Spotify is working to develop new

partnerships – such as the one with AGBO, Anthony and Joe Russo’s entertainment company, for example – as part of its strategy for growth in the podcast sector. It has also recently introduced its new Spotify HiFi service to offer its users improved audio quality (Inside Radio , 2021).

Figure 12: **Business analysis: Spotify**



Source: by the author

Change management and implementation of remote work

In early March 2020, Spotify decided to let all its employees work from home. The company mentioned the uncertainty and unpredictability at that time, calling it an “ultimate test of everyone’s solidarity (...) at Spotify” and “the time when our company values of collaboration, playfulness, sincerity, passion, and innovation are shining more than ever”. Spotify decided to over-communicate and provide constant updates on the pandemic to mitigate fear and anxiety, while using prudence and scientific facts to avoid panic. The challenges of moving an entire workforce to remote working were also openly addressed on Spotify’s HR Blog. Three weeks after implementing remote working, many employees began expressing difficulties in adjusting to the new work setup, especially ones who are parents or were dealing with the impact of the virus on extended family members (Kim, 2020).

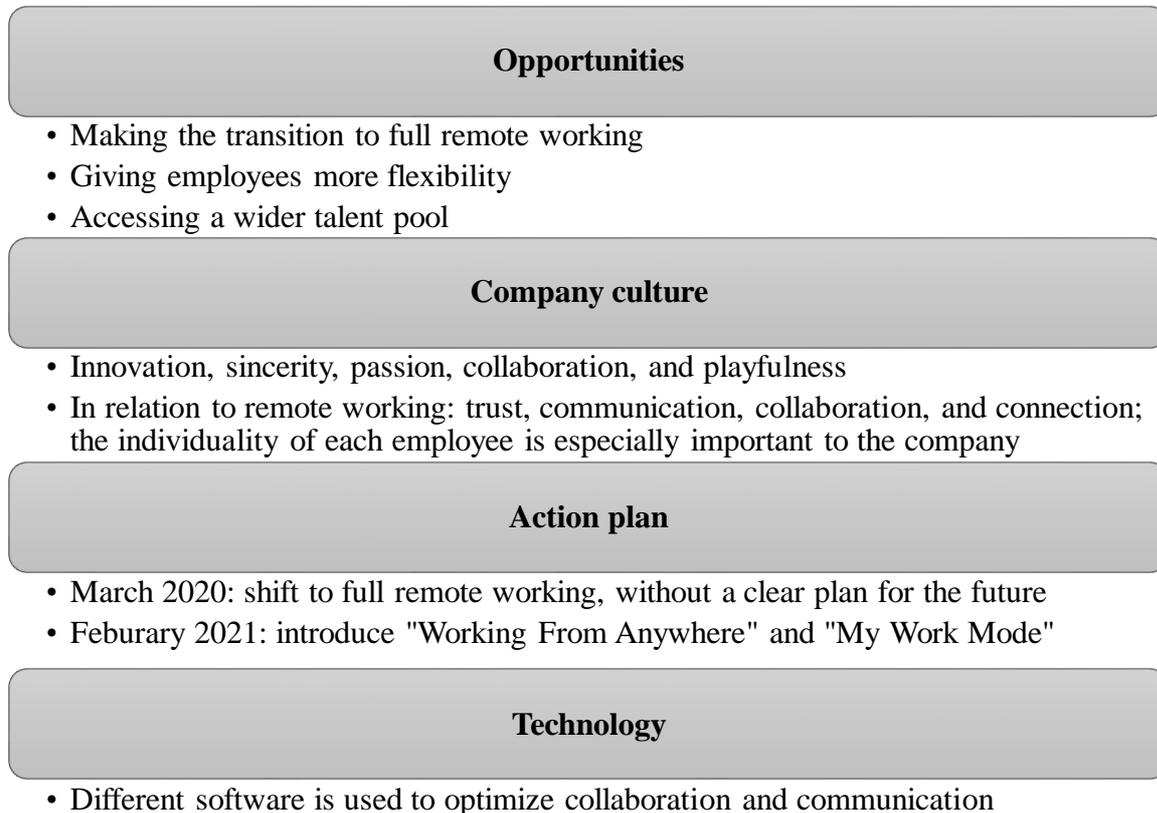
In February 2021, Spotify announced its “Working From Anywhere” remote work policy. The company had already discussed more flexible workplaces before the pandemic, especially considering globalization and digitalization. After a year of working remotely due to the pandemic, Spotify decided to make the shift to a flexible and distributed-first company and offer the Working From Anywhere program to all employees. It did, however, acknowledge that the challenges of the pandemic still existed, including those related to racial and social issues. Spotify believes that as work is something its employees do, not something they come to the office for, effectiveness will increase if it gives them more freedom, and it cannot be measured by the number of hours spent in the office. Since mid-2021, Spotify has offered its employees the “My Work Mode”, which allows them to choose how they want to work: fully remote, at the office, or in a hybrid model. The exact mix is decided by each employee and their manager. Employees are also allowed to choose their location freely, with some limitations to address time zone difficulties and regional entity laws. If an employee wants to work at a location far from a Spotify office but not out of their home, the company offers them financial support for a co-working space membership (Lundström & Westerdahl, 2020).

As a tech company, Spotify was in a good position to go remote. However, the abrupt shift brought some unique struggles with it. The company relied heavily on technology to maintain highly collaborative and social teams. Facebook Workplace was used to share company updates and keep a sense of community. Slacks provided a space for employees to communicate. Spotify mentioned that it was trying to find out which software providers could provide what the company needs. Zoom and Google Hangouts were considered, but the company was trying to find ways to make these platforms more engaging and personal. For Spotify, it was also important to use the right technology for HR management (Bell, 2021).

Spotify’s mission is to “unlock the potential of human creativity by giving a million creators the opportunity to live off their art and billions of fans the opportunity to enjoy and be inspired by it“. Its five key values are: innovation, sincerity, passion, collaboration, and playfulness. The company wants to support its employees to do their best while enjoying their day-to-day work. It knows that to grow, employees need to learn, and it embraces this idea. The company promotes an inclusive culture, racial equity, and mental health initiatives (Spotify, n.d.). For Spotify’s management, changes in the work environment are likely to have an impact on its in-office culture and so, listening to its employees’ needs to make necessary adaptations is important for the evolution of the work culture in the long run. The new flexibility regarding

the way of working requires a work culture built on trust, communication, collaboration, connection, and the acknowledgement that all individuals have different needs and rituals (Lundström & Westerdahl, 2020).

Figure 13: **Change management and implementation of remote work analysis: Spotify**



Source: by the author

Talent management

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated Spotify's process of defining the kind of workplace and opportunities it wants to offer its employees. Even before the pandemic, the company was considering moving towards remote work, but the global outbreak of COVID-19 forced the company to adopt this change much faster than unexpected. The company has since discovered that this kind of flexibility – that is, allowing workers to choose their work space (from home, in-office, or a hybrid model) and location (country and region) – works even better than they had anticipated. Spotify has been listening to its employees' individual wants and needs, which inspired it to offer these choices to its employees. This flexibility and the correlated trust can help it retain talented staff members, who may want to relocate, and widen its talent pool. This is especially important to companies working in the talent-short tech market.

Ensuring that every worker can choose the working environment in which they work most productively is another important goal. The company believes that talents will become even more mobile in the future, which is why it was important to make this major change. Spotify wants to use its offices as a more collaborative space, equipped with conference rooms that can be accessed in person and online. It also wants to prevent employees from falling into two subclasses depending on their location. In-person events will continue to be organized as an opportunity to connect. For example, activities that are part of its leadership journey, including the three-day onboarding program held at the company's headquarters in Stockholm, will continue to be face-to-face (Bell, 2021).

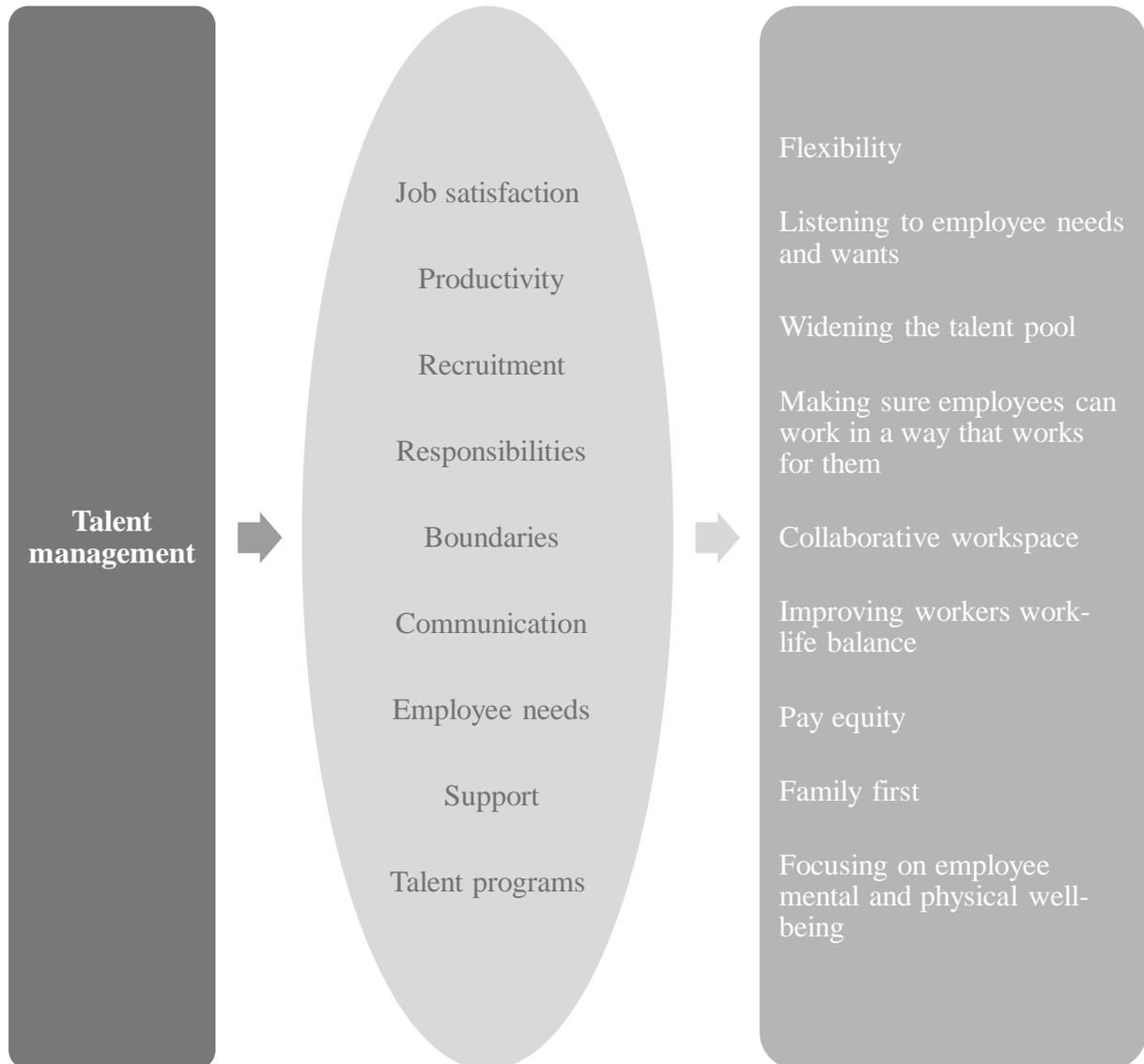
The company believes that this new flexibility boosts effectiveness and supports a better work-life balance. Operating as a distributed organization will produce more efficient and better ways of working due to the increased use of international communication and collaborative practices, tools, and processes (Lundström & Westerdahl, 2020).

In addition, the company's "Working From Anywhere" policy will also help it attract talents regardless of their location. Most of Spotify's offices are based in large cities, but the company recognizes that moving or staying in one of these cities is not always realistic, nor attractive, to potential employees. The company wants to move away from the idea that meaningful work can be done only in big cities. In its view, it can be done from anywhere. Another important issue is pay equity, which the new program will also promote. Global Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Travis Robinson explains that "Black employees historically have been discriminated against when it comes to pay and growth opportunity, and it is likely the local market pay is lower than a comparable city with a large white population". The program will thus ensure that local market rates will no longer be a disadvantage for employees who are living in non-major markets by determining pay regardless of location (Ward, 2021).

When switching to remote work in March 2020, Spotify clearly communicated the importance of family and the well-being of its employees and that it would strive to empower its workers to manage their own work-family balance better. Spotify insisted on flexible working hours, especially for parents. It allowed its workers to work when it is best for them, which includes earlier morning or later evening hours in order to have more time during the day to focus on their childcare and other family needs. Employees were encouraged to set boundaries on when

they would be on and offline with their teams and managers, while managers were encouraged to be extremely supportive, empathetic, and mindful. Taking breaks and even days of vacation to recharge, if needed, was also recommended. Spotify realized the negative psychological effects of the pandemic and wanted to make sure that its employees stay mentally healthy. Everyone in the company was advised that while working from home, it is normal for children, pets, partners, or roommates to appear in the background during virtual meetings and that everyone should be comfortable with this fact and accept it. The company tried to embrace this, as sometimes, “it can make meetings much more entertaining”. Employees were motivated to share their experiences and problems with their peers to support each other. Effective time management can allow its employees to have more time for their family or their own well-being. The company started to offer its People Experience activities online in form of daily exercise, relaxation techniques, yoga, and meditation sessions to support the mental health of its employees. The company also started to organize social events online, such as virtual house parties with some of its in-house DJs, Friday Fun events, or Daily Challenges. The Employee Assistance Program provided employees access to professional counseling online or by phone and covered the subscription fee to the Headspace meditation app (Kim, 2020).

Figure 14: Talent management analysis: Spotify



Source: by the author

4. Results

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- How did the companies respond to the COVID-19 pandemic? What changes did they make to their working environment?
- How did companies go about implementing changes to their working environment?
- How did they cope with challenges?

- What elements already in place before the pandemic enabled the companies to cope successfully?
- Did the companies make permanent changes to their working environment?

Microsoft, Facebook, Shopify, and Spotify were chosen as case studies. Their actions and policies in three categories – business, change management and implementation of remote work, and talent management – were analyzed and compared to understand their different approaches. All four companies operate in the tech industry.

The results of this comparative analysis show that while none of the companies overhauled their business model, they have made different investments in and innovations to their products and services. All companies used their strengths to further develop and grow. In the area of change management and the implementation of remote work, many similarities were found, including many uncertainties about what the future of work would look like. The companies' action plans, however, differed significantly. Shopify was the only company that made the decision to switch to permanent full-time remote work only a few months after the onset of the pandemic. Flexibility and concern for employee mental and physical health have been keystones for all companies when it comes to talent management.

The pandemic steered the way the companies work in a completely new direction by making remote work mandatory in the beginning. As a result, the working environment has changed tremendously, and it is highly likely that it will not go back to the way it was before. This analysis clearly shows that all four companies do not plan to return to their old working models. New policies and new developments in their way of working have influenced the company culture. A key change has been the increase in flexibility for employees. New guidelines and rules have been extremely useful for helping the companies adapt properly. One of the biggest advantages for all of the companies was that they were easily able to quickly provide the tech support needed for the transition to remote work.

The following tables summarize the results of the comparative analysis of the four cases.

Business

The first step of the analysis was to examine the companies' business operations. The industry's traits, changes in their business model, innovation, investments, and plan for the future were studied and compared.

Facebook has probably been the most innovative company, as it developed new services that provided itself the technology it required for remote working. Microsoft developed its existing services and software further, or created new ones. Shopify has been mainly adding new tools and extended services, while Spotify has been focusing on offering more products that satisfy their users' interests. While all companies are investing in research and development, Microsoft is investing in peoples' digital skills as well. Facebook made large investments to improve internet access, whereas Spotify's investments were mainly channeled into the development of its own products. The four companies did not make major changes to their plans for the future as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important to recognize the resilience of all the four companies, even before the beginning of the pandemic. All of them have had an important advantage, as they operate in the tech industry. The services offered experienced higher demands to some extent due to the pandemic.

Table 3: Summary of results of the business analysis

	Microsoft	Facebook	Shopify	Spotify
Industry	IT-software and services	Social networking	IT-software and services	Internet media and services
Changes to business model	None	None	None	None
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience series • New software, tools, and services • Intensive collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace • Work groups option on Facebook • Oculus for business meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates on tools and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing new tools for podcast creation and interaction

	with health sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook and Instagram Shops • Cooperation with health research 		
Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and development • Initiatives to help people gain digital skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New subsea cables to increase connectivity and provide better internet access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly research and development and hiring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Podcasts
Plan for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued growth, further development of new software, tools, and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metaverse company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue making e-commerce more democratic and accessible for all kind of companies (regardless of size) • Continuous improvements to services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to services, especially quality • Further growth on the international market • New partnerships and pursue growth in the podcast sector

Source: by the author

Change management and implementation of remote working

The traits of the change management and implementation of remote working category analyzed in this study were: opportunities, company culture, experience, the action-plan, and the technology used.

All four companies have identified opportunities in the shift to remote work. In relation to company culture, it is worth noting that all companies describe themselves as innovative and open to change. While remote working has not been something entirely new to most of the analyzed companies, they all changed their approach between March 2020 and the first quarter of 2021. Microsoft, Facebook, Shopify, and Spotify implemented full-time remote work as a mandatory measure to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020. Shopify was the only company to shift to full-time remote work permanently, and it made this decision in May 2020. The other three companies mainly focus on flexibility and want to provide their employees the freedom to choose how and where they want to work. While Microsoft and Facebook are using their own technology to support remote work, Shopify and Spotify rely on tools provided by other companies. According to the characteristics and definition of organizational resilience within this study, all four companies can be therefore described as resilient.

Table 4: Summary of the results of change management and implementation of remote work analysis

	Microsoft	Facebook	Shopify	Spotify
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceives the opportunity to adopt changes to provide a better working environment for employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasized the benefits of remote work Described remote work as the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chose remote working as a permanent full-time solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Made the transition to full remote working Gives employees more flexibility Accesses a wider talent pool
Company culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Growth mindset” Desire to learn, curiosity, open-mindedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Be bold, focus on impact, move fast, be open, and build social value” Flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation, open to change Focused on employees, their health, and engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation, sincerity, passion, collaboration, and playfulness In relation to remote work: trust,

	Microsoft	Facebook	Shopify	Spotify
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Customer obsessed” • Diversity and inclusion are important issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “wherever you work” 		<p>communication, and collaboration; the individuality of each employee is especially important</p>
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing their remote work policy throughout the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In May 2020 still many uncertainties • Developing over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote work was not new; employees had already had the opportunity to work remotely before the pandemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing remote work policy gradually throughout the process
Action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2020: work from home became mandatory • July 2020: Announced that US offices will not reopen until January 2021 • March 2021: Introduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2020: fully remote, with plan to return to offices by the end of 2020 • June 2021: Expanding remote work, more flexibility, office re-openings, remote work from other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2020: all workers are working remotely • May 2020: announcement that everyone would continue working remotely full-time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2020: shifting to full remote work, without clear plan for the future • February 2021: Introducing “Working From Anywhere” and “My Work Mode”

	Microsoft	Facebook	Shopify	Spotify
	of hybrid workplace	countries possible		
Technology	Uses its own software and tools	Uses its own services and products	Technology already in place	Different software used to ensure effective collaboration and communication

Source: by the author

Talent management

For the talent management category, different traits were analyzed to understand how each of the companies supported and managed its talents during the shift to remote work at the beginning of the pandemic and how working models evolved over time. These traits include: job satisfaction, productivity, recruitment, responsibilities, boundaries communication, employee needs, support, and talent programs.

It is interesting to note that all four companies repeatedly mention the increased flexibility that remote work makes possible. Furthermore, they all expressed strong interest in supporting their employees’ mental and physical health, which strengthens their company culture. All four companies put rules on forms of communication in place, as well as tools and ways to keep up social interaction high, even in times of social distancing. It is worth highlighting that Microsoft tried to find out more about its employees’ needs right in the beginning of the shift to remote working by conduction internal surveys.

Figure 15: Summary of the results of the talent management analysis

Microsoft	Facebook	Shopify	Spotify
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting internal studies to understand employee needs • Implementing rules and practices to facilitate remote work (e.g. No Meeting Friday) • Offering tech support • Encouraging frequent and transparent communication to create a meaningful feedback loop • Making well-being a top priority • Increasing flexibility • Acknowledging diversity and individual needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering more flexibility • "Distributed - not disconnected" • Meeting every employee's unique standards • Developing tools such as Workplace and Portal • Providing remote learning resources and training • Hiring a Director of Remote Work • Ensuring equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility • Prioritizing mental and physical health • Productive and comfortable workplace • Providing equipment • Encouraging employees to set boundaries between work and private life • Coaches advising and supporting employees • Developing communication guidelines and informal chats • Guidelines for project management • Guidelines for virtual meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering more flexibility • Listening to employees' needs and wants • Widening the talent pool • Making sure employees can work in a way that works for them • Organizing collaborative workspace • Improving workers work-life balance • Ensuring pay equity • Family first policy • Focusing on employees mental and physical well-being

Source: by the author

Q1: How did the companies respond to the COVID-19 pandemic? What changes did they make to their working environment?

At the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, all companies shifted to mandatory remote work. While Microsoft, Facebook, and Spotify were not sure in the early stages of the pandemic how their working models would develop over time, Shopify made the announcement that it would become a full-time remote working company as early as May 2020.

All companies had to make abrupt changes to their working environment. Although most had already offered some employees the remote work option before, most work was still done on-site. Because of this, prior to the pandemic, in 2020, the companies were investing heavily in

their office spaces to ensure they offer a more productive working environment. In the case of remote work, all tasks and communication are carried out from home.

Q2: How did the companies implement the changes to their working environment?

When the pandemic hit, none of the companies had a clear action plan on hand, just waiting to be implemented. It is interesting to note that all the companies were developing these plans as they go to be able to adjust to the unpredictable and constantly changing context while basing themselves on their experience in recent years. Microsoft, Facebook, and Spotify made changes to their remote work policies several times between March 2020 and the first quarter of 2021. Only Shopify clearly stated early on, in May 2020, what the company's future would look like. All companies have worked continuously to create and implement new tools and services to make remote working function as smoothly and efficiently as possible, which is one of the factors, why all companies can be described as resilient.

Q3: How did they cope with challenges?

Challenges identified in relation to remote work were its potential negative impacts on company culture, productivity, and workers' work-life balance and mental well-being, and difficulties with online collaboration between and within teams, communication in general, finding the right software to support remote work, and integrating this work mode into a long-standing company culture. All four companies addressed these challenges extremely well, and have therefore proven themselves to be resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most have already added their new work policies to their company culture webpage and even found ways for remote work to strengthen their company culture. They have all experienced a decrease in collaboration, which is why they have been trying to find software and tools that can keep collaboration high. Work-life balance and employee well-being have been a top priority for all four companies. Besides the impacts of the shift to remote work, the context of the pandemic in general has been especially hard on many employees' mental and physical well-being. The companies have been implementing rules and providing counseling and mental health support to their employees. Through open communication tools, the companies have been trying to address their employees' needs so they can keep working productively, while staying healthy. A big advantage these four tech companies had was that it was easy for them to provide the required software. Facebook and Microsoft have a particular advantage in this area, as they were able to use their own software. A positive side effect of this was that it enabled them to help improve products and services for not only themselves, but also their customers.

Q4: What elements did the companies already have in place before the pandemic that helped them cope successfully?

As mentioned above, company culture is one of the key elements for the successful implementation of remote work. All companies are highly innovative and open to change and describe themselves as employee-oriented. Open mindedness, which they also expect from their employees, was particularly helpful in a situation of drastic change. The four companies were resilient not only during the COVID-19 pandemic, but before it started. The companies also described this shift to remote work as something that they could see coming, but they did not expect it to happen so rapidly. The fact that all companies embraced the situation and developed with it, while giving constant consideration to employee well-being, speaks of their good change management capacity – something companies do not build in one day. Another key to their success is that all company operate in the tech sector. Therefore, the shift to remote work was likely to be easier for them than for companies operating in different sectors. Furthermore, their employees’ tasks can be more easily executed from home.

Q5: Did the companies make permanent changes to their working environment?

Microsoft, Facebook, Shopify, and Spotify made permanent changes to their working environment. All four perceived opportunities in the abrupt change to remote work, welcomed it, and decided to give more flexibility to their employees on a permanent basis. Microsoft, Facebook, and Spotify are now offering their workers hybrid models, while Shopify has changed permanently to a full-time remote company. Spotify and Facebook are taking flexibility even further by allowing their employees to also work from abroad, while Shopify uses the new opportunities of remote work to hire new staff from all over the world.

5. Conclusion

This comparative case study analyzed the ways companies have addressed the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on the changes to their work models, in order to understand which characteristics made companies resilient in terms of preparedness and adaptation. Resilience was defined before as *preparedness to react flexibly to a crisis, awareness of risks and opportunities, and the ability to respond effectively and rapidly to the changing situation*. All four case studies – Microsoft, Facebook, Shopify and Spotify – are tech companies, which have been resilient to the changes in the working environment brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. All four companies managed to react flexibly and quickly to the crisis and the abrupt

changes, while being aware of the risks and opportunities. The key elements for the successful adaptation to the new situation were their open-minded and innovative company culture and employee-oriented behavior. The four companies worked to develop and reassess their remote work policies from March 2020 until the first quarter of 2021 to address the challenges, making significant changes to their work models, which would remain in place in the long run due to the opportunities and benefits they identified in remote working. Overall, the increased flexibility for employees has been one of the most emphasized reasons for their resilience, which was why companies decided to offer their workers the possibility of choosing to work remotely beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are, however, some limitations to this case study. As all the companies work in the tech industry, the shift to remote work might have been easier for them compared to other industries. In addition, only four companies have been analyzed, all of which have been able to react to the changes successfully. One recommendation for future studies would be to analyze which factors have been responsible for companies' failure to effectively implement remote working, and how remote working was implemented in other industries.

References

Alexander, A., De Smet, A., Langstaff, M. & Ravid, D., 2021. *What employees are saying about the future of remote work*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/what-employees-are-saying-about-the-future-of-remote-work>

[Accessed 11 July 2021].

Amit, R. H. & Zott, C., 2010. *Business Model Innovation: Creating Value in Times of Change*. [Online]

Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1701660

[Accessed 2021 July 19].

Arruda, W., 2020. *6 Ways COVID-19 Will Change The Workplace Forever*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/williamarruda/2020/05/07/6-ways-covid-19-will-change-the-workplace-forever/?sh=404d20e3323e>

[Accessed 02 April 2021].

Baig, A. et al., 2020. *The COVID-19 recovery will be digital: A plan for the first 90 days*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/the-covid-19-recovery-will-be-digital-a-plan-for-the-first-90-days>

[Accessed 11 Juli 2021].

Barison, J., 2020. *Microsoft's New 6-Word Remote Work Policy Is Brilliant. Here's Why Your Company Should Steal It*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.inc.com/justin-bariso/microsofts-new-6-word-remote-work-policy-is-brilliant-heres-why-your-company-should-steal-it.html>

[Accessed 19 September 2021].

BBC, 2020. *Coronavirus: Facebook accused of forcing staff back to offices*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-54995797>

[Accessed 26 September 2021].

BBC, 2020. *Coronavirus: How the world of work may change forever*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20201023-coronavirus-how-will-the-pandemic-change-the-way-we-work>
[Accessed 15 March 2021].

Bell, J., 2021. *Spotify HRD on reinventing HR for a digital workforce*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.hcamag.com/nz/news/general/spotify-hrd-on-reinventing-hr-for-a-digital-workforce/259838>
[Accessed 11 October 2021].

Bell, J., 2021. *Spotify's Working From Anywhere policy takes flexibility to new heights*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.hcamag.com/au/specialisation/employee-engagement/spotifys-working-from-anywhere-policy-takes-flexibility-to-new-heights/248618>
[Accessed 11 October 2021].

Bhamra, R. (., 2015. *Organisational Resilience: Concepts, integration, and practice*. [Online]
Available at:
https://books.google.com.br/books?hl=de&lr=&id=INiYCgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=organisational+resilience+definitions&ots=zRrGXbbg1L&sig=BbFSrE0CSj6x-tUBWiXkae4uU7g&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=organisational%20resilience%20definitions&f=false
[Accessed 26 July 2021].

Bloomberg, n.d. *Microsoft Corp*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/profile/company/MSFT:US>
[Accessed 16 September 2021].

Bloomberg, n.d. *Spotify Ltd - Company Profile and News*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/profile/company/3333774Z:LN>
[Accessed 06 October 2021].

Boland, B., De Smet, A., Palter, R. & Sanghvi, A., 2020. *Reimagining the office and work life after COVID-19*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/reimagining-the-office-and-work-life-after-covid-19>

[Accessed 15 March 2021].

Boston College - Center for Work & Family - Carroll School of Management , n.d. *Remote Work and COVID-19*. [Online]

Available at:

<https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/cwf/research/Remote%20Work%20and%20COVID-19.pdf>

[Accessed 02 April 2021].

Burki, T., 2020. *The indirect impact of COVID-19 on women*. [Online]

Available at: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(20\)30568-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(20)30568-5/fulltext)

[Accessed 02 April 2021].

Butler, J. L. & Jaffe, S., 2020. *Challenges and Gratitude: A Diary Study of Software Engineers Working From Home During Covid-19 Pandemic*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/research/uploads/prod/2020/07/NFW-Butler-Jaffe.pdf>

[Accessed 19 September 2021].

Cambridge Dictionary , n.d. *Boundary*. [Online]

Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/boundary>

[Accessed 15 August 2021].

Cambridge Dictionary , n.d. *Investment*. [Online]

Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/investment>

[Accessed 22 July 2021].

Cambridge Dictionary , n.d. *Responsibility*. [Online]

Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/responsibility>

[Accessed 15 August 2021].

Cambridge Dictionary , n.d. *Support*. [Online]

Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/support>

[Accessed 15 August 2021].

Cambridge Dictionary , n.d. *technology*. [Online]

Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/technology>

[Accessed 9 August 2021].

Chand, S., n.d. *Recruitment: Meaning, Definition, Process and Factors influencing Recruitment*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/recruitment/recruitment-meaning-definition-process-and-factors-influencing-recruitment/25950>

[Accessed 15 August 2021].

Chron , n.d. *How to Meet Employee Needs in an Organization*. [Online]

Available at: <https://work.chron.com/meet-employee-needs-organization-9244.html>

[Accessed 15 August 2021].

Clymo, R., 2021. *Shopify unveils its vision for the future of ecommerce*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.techradar.com/news/shopify-unveils-its-vision-for-the-future-of-e-commerce>

[Accessed 03 October 2021].

CNN Business , n.d. *Facebook Inc*. [Online]

Available at: <https://money.cnn.com/quote/profile/profile.html?symb=FB>

[Accessed 22 September 2021].

CNN Business , n.d. *Shopify Inc*. [Online]

Available at: <https://money.cnn.com/quote/profile/profile.html?symb=SHOP>

[Accessed 03 October 2021].

CNN Business, n.d. *Spotify Technology SA*. [Online]

Available at: <https://money.cnn.com/quote/profile/profile.html?symb=SPOT>

[Accessed 06 October 2021].

Cohn, D., 2021. *As the pandemic persisted, financial pressures became a bigger factor in why Americans decided to move.* [Online]

Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/02/04/as-the-pandemic-persisted-financial-pressures-became-a-bigger-factor-in-why-americans-decided-to-move/>

[Accessed 02 April 2021].

Colletta, J., 2021. *Are you hiring a director of remote work? Here's why Facebook did.*

[Online]

Available at: <https://hrexecutive.com/are-you-hiring-a-director-of-remote-work-heres-why-facebook-did/>

[Accessed 26 September 2021].

Colletta, J., 2021. *Number of the Day: barriers to virtual work.* [Online]

Available at: <https://hrexecutive.com/number-of-the-day-barriers-to-virtual-work/>

[Accessed 11 July 2021].

Collins Dictionary , n.d. *Definition of 'industry'.* [Online]

Available at: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/industry>

[Accessed 26 July 2021].

Craft, n.d. *Facebook headquarters and office locations.* [Online]

[Accessed 22 September 2021].

Craft, n.d. *Spotify headquarters and office locations.* [Online]

Available at: <https://craft.co/spotify/locations>

[Accessed 06 October 2021].

Culler, L., 2021. *Q&A: Peter Lee on the COVID-19 pandemic, societal resilience and crisis-response science.* [Online]

Available at: <https://news.microsoft.com/innovation-stories/peter-lee-resilience/>

[Accessed 19 September 2021].

Culliford, E., 2021. *Facebook launches VR remote work app, calling it a step to the 'metaverse'.* [Online]

Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/technology/facebook-launches-vr-remote-work-app->

[calling-it-step-metaverse-2021-08-19/](#)

[Accessed 26 September 2021].

Curran, E., 2021. *Work From Home to Lift Productivity by 5% in Post-Pandemic U.S.*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-22/yes-working-from-home-makes-you-more-productive-study-finds>

[Accessed 11 July 2021].

DelBene, K., 2021. *The philosophy and practice of our hybrid workplace*. [Online]

Available at: <https://blogs.microsoft.com/blog/2021/03/22/the-philosophy-and-practice-of-our-hybrid-workplace/>

[Accessed 19 September 2021].

Deloitte, n.d. *Working remotely: setting your team up for success*. [Online]

Available at:

https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ie/Documents/Consulting/deloitte_working_remotely_success.pdf

[Accessed 11 July 2021].

DeVerter, J., 2020. *In Defense Of Remote Work*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2020/12/02/in-defense-of-remote-work/?sh=72ccfd4f144a>

[Accessed 11 July 2021].

Dictionary, n.d. *Experience*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/experience>

[Accessed 9 August 2021].

Diedrich, D., Northcote, N., Röder, T. & Sauer-Sidor, K., 2021. *Strategic resilience during the COVID-19 crisis*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/strategic-resilience-during-the-covid-19-crisis>

[Accessed 11 Juli 2021].

Digital Nomads , 2021. *Best Remote Companies to Work For*. [Online]
Available at: <https://digitalnomads.world/tips/best-remote-companies-to-work-for/#Shopify>
[Accessed 04 October 2021].

Dignan, L., 2021. *Shopify preps 2021 investments, sees more normalized growth amid COVID-19 vaccinations*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.zdnet.com/article/shopify-preps-2021-investments-sees-more-normalized-growth-amid-covid-19-vaccinations/>
[Accessed 03 October 2021].

Elliot, M., 2020. *Scoop Our Strategies: Shopify's Remote Work Systems*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.shopify.com/partners/blog/remote-work>
[Accessed 04 October 2021].

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2020. *Estonia – Changes in the working environment due to Covid-19: new risks and preventive measures*. [Online]
Available at: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/oshevents/estonia-changes-working-environment-due-covid-19-new-risks-and-preventative-measures>
[Accessed 15 March 2021].

European Productivity Council , n.d. *Employee Productivity*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.businessmanagementideas.com/employee-management/employee-productivity/20859>
[Accessed 9 August 2021].

Evans, M. L., Lindauer, M. & Farrell, M., 2020. *A Pandemic within a Pandemic — Intimate Partner Violence during Covid-19*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2024046>
[Accessed 12 July 2021].

Facebook , 2020. *Building the Tools to Power the Future of Work*. [Online]
Available at: <https://about.fb.com/news/2020/05/the-future-of-work/>
[Accessed 26 September 2021].

Facebook , 2020. *Introducing Facebook Shops: Helping Small Businesses Sell Online*. [Online]
Available at: <https://about.fb.com/news/2020/05/introducing-facebook-shops/>
[Accessed 26 September 2021].

Facebook , 2021. *What Remote and Flexible Work Will Look Like at Facebook*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/careers/life/what-remote-and-flexible-work-will-look-like-at-facebook>
[Accessed 26 September 2021].

Facebook , n.d. *Build for the World, From Where You Are*. [Online]
Available at: [https://www.facebook.com/careers/facebook-life/remote/?p\[offices\]\[0\]=Remote%2C%20US&p\[offices\]\[1\]=Remote%2C%20Canada&p\[offices\]\[2\]=UK%20-%20Remote&offices\[0\]=Remote%2C%20US&offices\[1\]=Remote%2C%20Canada&offices\[2\]=UK%20-%20Remote&no_rdr=0](https://www.facebook.com/careers/facebook-life/remote/?p[offices][0]=Remote%2C%20US&p[offices][1]=Remote%2C%20Canada&p[offices][2]=UK%20-%20Remote&offices[0]=Remote%2C%20US&offices[1]=Remote%2C%20Canada&offices[2]=UK%20-%20Remote&no_rdr=0)
[Accessed 26 September 2021].

Facebook , n.d. *Welche Facebook-Produkte gibt es?*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/help/1561485474074139>
[Accessed 26 September 2021].

Facebook, n.d. [Online]
Available at: <https://about.facebook.com/meta/>
[Accessed 20 March 2022].

Facebook, n.d. *Our Culture - Move Fast. Be Bold. Be Yourself.*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/careers/facebook-life/>
[Accessed 26 September 2021].

Fast Company , 2021. *The 10 most innovative retail companies of 2021*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.fastcompany.com/90600263/retail-most-innovative-companies-2021>
[Accessed 03 October 2021].

Fernández-Macias, E. & Muñoz de Bustillo Llorente , R., 2014. *Job Satisfaction*. [Online]
Available at: https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-94-007-0753-5_1568

[Accessed 9 August 2021].

Flynn, K., 2020. *How Spotify consumption has changed during the pandemic*. [Online]
Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/04/29/media/spotify-earnings/index.html>

[Accessed 06 October 2021].

Fortune 500, 2021. *Microsoft*. [Online]

Available at: <https://fortune.com/company/microsoft/fortune500/>

[Accessed 22 September 2021].

Fortune, 2021. *Facebook*. [Online]

Available at: <https://fortune.com/company/facebook/fortune500/>

[Accessed 22 September 2021].

Gartner, n.d. *Gartner Glossary - Remote Work*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/glossary/remote-work>

[Accessed 15 March 2021].

Glassdoor, n.d. *Locais dos escritórios da Shopify*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.glassdoor.com.br/Location/All-Shopify-Office-Locations-E675933.htm?countryRedirect=true>

[Accessed 03 October 2021].

Global Workplace Analytics, 2020. *Work-At-Home After Covid-19 - Our Forecast*. [Online]

Available at: <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/work-at-home-after-covid-19-our-forecast>

[Accessed 15 March 2021].

Goodrick, D., 2014. *Comparative Case Studies*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/754-comparative-case-studies-methodological-briefs-impact-evaluation-no-9.html>

[Accessed 05 January 2022].

Goodrick, D., 2014. *Comparative Case Studies: Methodological Briefs-Impact Evaluation No. 9 (No. innpub754)*. s.l.:s.n.

Groysberg, B., Lee, J., Price, J. & Cheng, J. Y.-J., 2018. *The Leader's Guide to Corporate Culture*. [Online]

Available at: <https://hbr.org/2018/01/the-leaders-guide-to-corporate-culture>

[Accessed 9 August 2021].

Harris-Briggs, N., 2019. *19 Benefits of Remote Working for Employers*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.avocor.com/uk/blog/19-benefits-of-remote-working-for-employers-skyrocket-profits/>

[Accessed 2021 03 20].

Heathfield, S. M., 2020. *6 Change Management Stages*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/know-the-stages-in-change-management-1917802>

[Accessed 25 April 2022].

HireAHelper , n.d. *Moving in the Year of Pandemic: The 2020-2021 HireAHelper American Migration Report*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.hireahelper.com/moving-statistics/migration-report/>

[Accessed 02 April 2021].

Hogan, K., 2020. *Embracing a flexible workplace*. [Online]

Available at: <https://blogs.microsoft.com/blog/2020/10/09/embracing-a-flexible-workplace/>

[Accessed 21 December 2021].

Holder, S., 2021. *The Environmental Implications of the Return to the Office*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-03-29/is-telecommuting-really-greener-it-depends>

[Accessed 11 July 2021].

Huzar, T., 2021. *Has the pandemic shifted traditional gender roles in childcare?*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/has-the-pandemic-shifted->

traditional-gender-roles-in-childcare

[Accessed 02 April 2021].

IBM Institute for Business Value, n.d. *COVID-19 and the future of business*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/institute-business-value/report/covid-19-future-business>

[Accessed 11 July 2021].

ILO, 2021. *Slow jobs recovery and increased inequality risk long-term COVID-19 scarring*.

[Online]

Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_794834/lang--en/index.htm

[Accessed 11 July 2021].

Inside Radio , 2021. *Spotify Releases A Swarm Of New Products, Services And Growth Plans..*

[Online]

Available at: http://www.insideradio.com/free/spotify-releases-a-swarm-of-new-products-services-and-growth-plans/article_4d451352-755a-11eb-a74c-eb93d1a9b1b1.html

[Accessed 10 October 2021].

International Association of Independent Accounting Firms, 2020. *Benefits of Working in an Office vs. Remote Work*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.inaa.org/benefits-of-working-in-an-office-vs-remote-work/>

[Accessed 15 March 2021].

International Labour Organization, July, 2020. *Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond - A Practical Guide* , Geneva : International Labour Organization .

involve , n.d. *Action Planning*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/methods/action-planning>

[Accessed 9 August 2021].

ISGlobal, 2020. *What Do We Know About the Impact of Gender on the COVID-19 Pandemic?*.

[Online]

Available at: https://www.isglobal.org/en_GB/-/que-sabemos-del-impacto-de-genero-en-la

pandemia-de-la-covid-19-

[Accessed 02 April 2021].

Jobillico , 2020. *5 Signs the Traditional Office is Over*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.jobillico.com/blog/en/5-signs-the-traditional-office-is-over/>

[Accessed 15 March 2021].

Kim, M., 2020. *Hard Times Defines Who You are as a Company*. [Online]

Available at: <https://hrblog.spotify.com/2020/03/31/hard-times-defines-who-you-are-as-a-company/>

[Accessed 10 October 2021].

Kirby, S., 2020. *5 ways COVID-19 has changed workforce management*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/covid-homeworking-symptom-of-changing-face-of-workforce-management/>

[Accessed 15 March 2021].

Langston, J., 2020. *Growing Azure's capacity to help customers, Microsoft during the COVID-19 pandemic*. [Online]

Available at: <https://news.microsoft.com/innovation-stories/azure-covid-19/>

[Accessed 19 September 2021].

Larson, B. Z., Vroman, S. R. & Makarius, E. E., 2020. *A Guide to Managing Your (Newly) Remote Workers*. [Online]

Available at: <https://hbr.org/2020/03/a-guide-to-managing-your-newly-remote-workers>

[Accessed 11 July 2021].

Liu, J., 2021. *Facebook says employees at all levels can request permanent, full-time remote work*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/09/facebook-says-all-employees-can-request-permanent-remote-work.html>

[Accessed 26 September 2021].

Lord, C., 2020. *Most Shopify employees won't return to office after coronavirus pandemic, CEO says*. [Online]

Available at: <https://globalnews.ca/news/6968772/shopify-coronavirus-remote-only/>
[Accessed 03 October 2021].

Lundström, A. & Westerdahl, A., 2020. *Introducing Working From Anywhere*. [Online]
Available at: <https://hrblog.spotify.com/2021/02/12/introducing-working-from-anywhere/>
[Accessed 10 October 2021].

Macrotrends, n.d. *Shopify: Number of Employees 2013-2021 | SHOP*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.macrotrends.net/stocks/charts/SHOP/shopify/number-of-employees>
[Accessed 03 October 2021].

Market Business News , n.d. *What is efficiency? Definition and meaning*. [Online]
Available at: <https://marketbusinessnews.com/financial-glossary/efficiency-definition-meaning/>
[Accessed 9 August 2021].

McManus, S., Seville, E., Vargo, J. & Brunsdon, D., 2008. *Facilitated Process for Improving Organizational Resilience*. [Online]
Available at: [https://ascelibrary.org/doi/abs/10.1061/\(ASCE\)1527-6988\(2008\)9:2\(81\)](https://ascelibrary.org/doi/abs/10.1061/(ASCE)1527-6988(2008)9:2(81))
[Accessed 26 July 2021].

Merriam-Webster, n.d. *Communication*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communication>
[Accessed 15 August 2021].

Merriam-Webster, n.d. *Opportunity*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/opportunity>
[Accessed 26 July 2021].

Microsoft , 2013. *Financial Review - Business Description*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.microsoft.com/investor/reports/ar13/financial-review/business-description/index.html>

Microsoft , n.d. *Microsoft*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/microsoft/>

[Accessed 22 September 2021].

Microsoft , n.d. *Our cultural attributes*. [Online]

Available at: <https://careers.microsoft.com/us/en/culture>

[Accessed 19 September 2021].

Microsoft News Center, 2021. *Despite the upheaval of the past year, innovation in education is accelerating*. [Online]

Available at: <https://news.microsoft.com/en-xm/features/despite-the-upheaval-of-the-past-year-innovation-in-education-is-accelerating/>

[Accessed 19 September 2021].

Miller, R., 2021. *Cloud Platforms Building 'The World's Computer' to Drive Digital Change*.

[Online]

Available at: <https://datacenterfrontier.com/cloud-platforms-building-the-worlds-computer-to-drive-digital-change/>

[Accessed 15 December 2021].

Mizen, P., Bloom, N. & Taneja, S., 2021. *What is the future of commuting to work?*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.economicsobservatory.com/what-is-the-future-of-commuting-to-work>

[Accessed 11 July 2021].

musically , 2021. *Spotify ended Q1 2021 with 158m subscribers (and a profit)*. [Online]

Available at: <https://musically.com/2021/04/28/spotify-ended-q1-2021-with-158m-subscribers-and-a-profit/>

[Accessed 06 October 2021].

Novet, J., 2021. *Microsoft reveals changes it's made to enable its employees to work both at home and in the office*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/05/24/microsoft-reveals-changes-to-enable->

[hybrid-work.html](#)

[Accessed 19 September 2021].

Officevibe, 2021. *How Shopify created an incredible company culture*. [Online]

Available at: <https://officevibe.com/blog/shopify-company-culture>

[Accessed 04 October 2021].

Olson, M. H., 1983. Remote office work: changing work patterns in space and time..

Communications of the ACM. Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 182-187.

Olson, M. H., 1987. *An Investigation of the Impact of Remote Work Environments and Supporting Technology*, New York : Department of Information Systems, NYU Stern School of Business.

Pacific Workplaces , 2021. *Impact of Remote Work on Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction*. [Online]

Available at: <https://pacificworkplaces.com/blog/impact-of-remote-work-on-work-life-balance-and-job-satisfaction/>

[Accessed 05 January 2022].

Paez Bowman, C., 2021. *Coronavirus Moving Study: People Left Big Cities, Temporary Moves Spiked In First 6 Months of COVID-19 Pandemic*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.mymove.com/moving/covid-19/coronavirus-moving-trends/>

[Accessed 02 April 2021].

Parker, K., Menasce Horowitz, J. & Minkin, R., 2020. *How the Coronavirus Outbreak Has – and Hasn't – Changed the Way Americans Work*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/12/09/how-the-coronavirus-outbreak-has-and-hasnt-changed-the-way-americans-work/>

[Accessed 03 January 2022].

Plan International , n.d. *How Will COVID-19 Affect Girls And Young Women?*. [Online]

Available at: <https://plan-international.org/emergencies/covid-19-faqs-girls-women#Girls>

[Accessed 02 April 2021].

Porter, J., 2020. *Spotify podcast consumption doubles as overall listening recovers*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.theverge.com/2020/7/29/21346339/spotify-q2-2020-earnings-podcasts-coronavirus-covid-19-consumption-recovery>

[Accessed 06 October 2021].

Preez, D. d., 2021. *Microsoft rides COVID-19 wave as Q2 revenues soar*. [Online]

Available at: <https://diginomica.com/microsoft-rides-covid-19-wave-q2-revenues-soar>

[Accessed 16 September 2021].

Qualtrics, 2020. *The other COVID-19 crisis: Mental health*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/confronting-mental-health/>

[Accessed 05 January 2022].

Rodriguez, A., 2021. *How much Spotify pays employees in the US in 2021*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-much-spotify-pays-employees-in-us-salary-levels-2021-7>

[Accessed 06 October 2021].

Rose, A. Z., 2009. *Economic Resilience to Disasters*. [Online]

Available at: <http://text2fa.ir/wp-content/uploads/Text2fa.ir-Economic-Resilience-to-Disasters-1.pdf>

[Accessed 22 July 2021].

Ruggieri, A., Silvestri, C. & Piccarozzi, M., 2014. *Consumerism, Market Analysis and Impact on Business Plan Definition*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/consumerism-market-analysis-and-impact-on-business-plan-definition/105847>

[Accessed 22 July 2021].

Salvadori, K. & Roehrich, N., 2021. *Advancing connectivity between the Asia-Pacific region and North America*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/connectivity/news/echo-bifrost/>

[Accessed 26 September 2021].

Sarkis, S., 2021. *Remote Work: The Blurring Of Business And Personal Life*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stephaniesarkis/2021/03/27/remote-work-the-blurring-of-business-and-personal-life/?sh=53441ef36ad3>

[Accessed 11 July 2021].

Schache, K., 2020. *The Relevance of Organizational Resilience in Times of Crisis and Beyond*.

[Online]

Available at: <https://ccecosystems.news/en/the-relevance-of-organizational-resilience-in-times-of-crisis-and-beyond/>

[Accessed 25 April 2022].

Schwabel, D., 2021. *The balancing act: what we've learned from one year of working from home*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/04/working-from-home-what-we-learned/>

[Accessed 12 July 2021].

Seville, E. et al., 2006. *Building Organisational Resilience: A New Zealand Approach*. [Online]

Available at:

https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10092/649/12604297_Main.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

[Accessed 26 July 2021].

Shopify, n.d. *About us*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.shopify.com/about>

[Accessed 03 October 2021].

Shopify, n.d. *Life at Shopify*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.shopify.com/careers/culture>

[Accessed 03 October 2021].

Shopify, n.d. *Wherever you are, your next journey starts here*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.shopify.com/careers/work-anywhere>

[Accessed 04 October 2021].

Slack, 2020. *Report: Remote work in the age of Covid-19*. [Online]

Available at: <https://slack.com/intl/pt-br/blog/collaboration/report-remote-work-during-coronavirus>

[Accessed 02 April 2021].

Smith, B., 2021. *Microsoft launches initiative to help 25 million people worldwide acquire the digital skills needed in a COVID-19 economy*. [Online]

Available at: <https://blogs.microsoft.com/blog/2020/06/30/microsoft-launches-initiative-to-help-25-million-people-worldwide-acquire-the-digital-skills-needed-in-a-covid-19-economy/>

[Accessed 19 September 2021].

Speakman, K., 2021. *Facebook Will Let Employees Delay Returning To Office By A Few Months*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kimberleespeakman/2021/12/07/facebook-will-let-employees-delay-returning-to-office-by-a-few-months/?sh=4a217acf39b2>

[Accessed 20 March 2022].

Spiggle, T., 2020. *Coronavirus Silver Lining: A Better Work-Life Balance?*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomspiggle/2020/10/14/coronavirus-silver-lining-a-better-work-life-balance/?sh=c261ce51fc29>

[Accessed 11 July 2021].

Spotify , 2020. *How Social Distancing Has Shifted Spotify Streaming*. [Online]

Available at: <https://newsroom.spotify.com/2020-03-30/how-social-distancing-has-shifted-spotify-streaming/>

[Accessed 06 October 2021].

Spotify , 2021. *Spotify's Anchor Innovations Are Bringing the Future of Audio to the Present*.

[Online]

Available at: <https://newsroom.spotify.com/2021-02-22/spotify-s-anchor-innovations-are-bringing-the-future-of-audio-to-the-present/>

[Accessed 06 October 2021].

Spotify, n.d. *We're many different voices, sharing the same stage*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.lifeatspotify.com/being-here>

[Accessed 10 October 2021].

Standardization, I. O. f., 2017. *ISO 22316:2017: Security and resilience – Organizational resilience – Principles and attributes*. Geneva : ISO.

Statista Research Department , 2021. *Number of Facebook employees 2004-2020 Published by Statista Research Department, Feb 5, 2021 How many employees does Facebook have? Facebook has come a long way since its humble beginnings in a Harvard dorm room. The social network had 58,604 full-time e*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/273563/number-of-facebook-employees/>

[Accessed 22 September 2021].

Statista, 2020. *Change in remote work trends due to COVID-19 in the United States in 2020*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1122987/change-in-remote-work-trends-after-covid-in-usa/>

[Accessed 03 January 2022].

Stone, M., 2021. *Shopify has witnessed both stellar growth and cultural challenges during the pandemic. Insiders reveal what it's like to work at the e-commerce company..* [Online]

Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/everything-you-need-to-know-shopify-culture-and-exec-exodus-2021-6>

[Accessed 03 October 2021].

Sularia, S., 2021. *How Shopify Is Shifting The E-Commerce Landscape*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2021/01/22/how-shopify-is-shifting-the-e-commerce-landscape/?sh=4565c4313ce9>

[Accessed 03 October 2021].

Taylor, S. P., 2017. *What Is Innovation? A Study of the Definitions, Academic Models and Applicability of Innovation to an Example of Social Housing in England*. [Online]

Available at: http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/3475/1/Taylor_WhatIsInnovation.pdf
[Accessed 22 July 2021].

The European Commission's science and knowledge service , 2020. *Teleworking in the EU before and after the COVID-19: where we were, where we head to*. [Online]
Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/sites/default/files/jrc120945_policy_brief_-_covid_and_telework_final.pdf
[Accessed 03 January 2022].

The Irish Times, 2021. *Microsoft earnings rise as pandemic boosts cloud computing and Xbox sales*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/technology/microsoft-earnings-rise-as-pandemic-boosts-cloud-computing-and-xbox-sales-1.4469046>
[Accessed 16 September 2021].

UN Women , n.d. *COVID-19 And Women's Leadership: From An Effective Response To Building Back Better*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-covid-19-and-womens-leadership-en.pdf?la=en&vs=409>
[Accessed 02 April 2021].

United Nations, 2020. *Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Woman*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>
[Accessed 02 April 2021].

United Nations, 2021. *COVID crisis to push global unemployment over 200 million mark in 2022*. [Online]
Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/06/1093182>
[Accessed 11 July 2021].

Walk-Morris, T., 2020. *These Industries Are Thriving With A Remote Workforce*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/crowe/2020/08/27/these-industries-are-thriving-with-a-remote-workforce/?sh=676053d46587>

[Accessed 02 April 2021].

Ward, M., 2021. *Spotify says it's letting employees work from anywhere, while still paying San Francisco and New York salaries*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/spotify-unveils-new-remote-work-option-for-all-employees-2021-2>

[Accessed 11 October 2021].

Warren, T., 2020. *Microsoft is letting more employees work from home permanently*.

[Online]

Available at: <https://www.theverge.com/2020/10/9/21508964/microsoft-remote-work-from-home-covid-19-coronavirus>

[Accessed 19 September 2021].

Warren, T., 2020. *Microsoft's US offices won't reopen until January 2021 at the earliest*.

[Online]

Available at: <https://www.theverge.com/2020/7/31/21349969/microsoft-offices-reopen-january-2021-workplace-dial>

[Accessed 19 September 2021].

Wiest, B., 2020. *Remote Work Shown To Significantly Improve Mental Health, 80% Prefer Flex Options Post-Pandemic*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/briannawiest/2020/09/11/remote-work-shown-to-significantly-improve-mental-health-80-prefer-flex-options-post-pandemic/?sh=420143645d47>

[Accessed 11 July 2021].

Wilhelm, A., 2021. *Shopify's Q2 results beat estimates as e-commerce shines*. [Online]

Available at: <https://techcrunch.com/2021/07/28/shopifys-q2-results-beat-estimates-as-e-commerce-shines/>

[Accessed 03 October 2021].

Wilson, K., 2020. *Facebook's Remote Work Strategy for 2020 and Beyond*. [Online]
Available at: <https://medium.com/@kristinmwilson/facebooks-remote-work-strategy-for-2020-and-beyond-58b99e2ee3d>
[Accessed 26 September 2021].

Wu, J., 2020. *A Deep Dive Into Remote Work For Our Future Of Work*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/cognitiveworld/2020/03/09/a-deep-dive-into-remote-work-for-our-future-of-work/?sh=78634fea1843>
[Accessed 15 March 2021].

Zuckerberg, M., 2020. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/zuck/posts/10111936543502931>
[Accessed 21 September 2021].

Zuckerberg, M., 2020. *How Data Can Aid the Fight Against COVID-19*. [Online]
Available at: <https://about.fb.com/news/2020/04/symptom-surveys/>
[Accessed 26 September 2021].