

YEAR ZERO

7 LESSONS ON FUTURE OF WORK

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FOREWORD

The preparedness of organizations to start working remotely during the covid-spring varied greatly. Some had already adopted remote work at their offices as an established practice, others had close to zero experience from running work remotely. The crisis in spring 2020 equalized the different starting levels: organizations that were stuck to working at their premises in traditional ways needed to quickly transition to remote working. But what happens after the crisis is over? It seems likely that differences between organizations' work cultures will start to polarize again. For some, the possibility to develop remote work presents a strategic opportunity to increase productivity and wellbeing. Many major global organizations have declared significant changes in their company and leadership cultures that are meant to be permanent. Others view telework as a passing phenomenon and call for a quick return to the office.

Year 2020 will go down in history books as the year when work of white-collar workers changed for good. The turbulence we are currently going through will have profound impacts on every organization employing knowledge workers. Work itself is observed on more levels than ever before: mental and physical health, business continuance, combining working remotely and onsite, smooth adaptation of digital tools, remote collaboration, workspaces at home, safety at office premises, and so on. This publication is a product of collaboration between Microsoft, YIT and Miltton. As leading experts of our own fields, we wanted to create shared understanding of the change that is happening in working life and ask how that change looks to experts who are following it closely. The publication is based on 20 expert interviews and many articles, blogs and other releases written about the subject. Interviewees come from wide-ranging backgrounds, representing different parts of society from business world to academic research.

Finally, we created this publication to help you in orienting to the future and making better choices for your organization and employees. We identified seven forces of change that will transform our way of thinking about work. We strongly believe that the ones who come out of this crisis as winners are the ones who put people first, adopt ways of working that increase their wellbeing, and make this their strategic competitive edge.

Enjoy the read!

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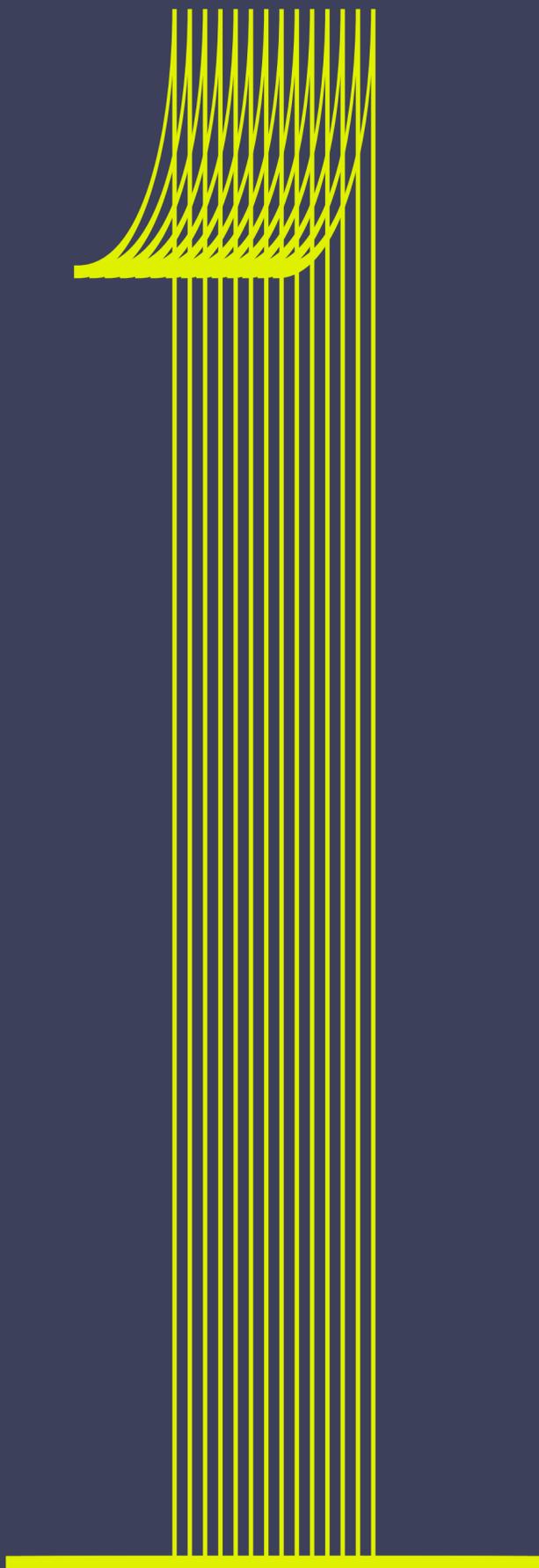
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Remote work

1. Remote work is here to stay. Regardless, people need each other. Think about what the optimal combination of remote and in-office work would look like in your team.
2. Create common guidelines for remote work.
3. Remote work is a challenge for leadership. Be present, set clear goals and trust people.

REMOTE WORK IS HERE TO STAY

None of us saw it coming. One winter morning, we all woke up to a situation where around one million Finnish employees would suddenly have to start working from home and continue to do so for months.

On March 17, 2020, a state of emergency was declared in Finland, and it just happened. There were no lengthy negotiations between labor market organizations, as is usual in Finland. There were no discussions about rules and arrangements between employers and union representatives. No questions were asked of individual employees. What had been subject to intense bargaining for years suddenly became irrelevant and pointless.

Admittedly, remote work has been done for decades, and it's a common practice in hundreds of Finnish organizations. Nonetheless, the change was drastic in March. According to the

annual working conditions barometer published by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 23 percent of Finnish salary earners telework regularly while 14 percent telework occasionally. In March 2020, one million salary earners and tens of thousands of entrepreneurs started working from home. Nearly 60 percent of all employees in Finland started working remotely due to pandemic, according to Eurofound, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. The number is the highest in EU.

At first, it was chaotic. Many organizations lacked experience in using virtual tools, not all employees had personal

computers, people disappeared behind their computer screens all across the country, workdays became an endless stream of virtual meetings, it was difficult to prioritize between tasks, and all this took a toll on concentration, productivity and psychological wellbeing.

However, things soon began to run smoothly. People adopted different technologies, learned the etiquette for online meetings, and noticed that they can work just as efficiently as before. Organizations that had been set against remote work for decades had to admit that the arguments against telework suddenly sounded ridiculous. It became obvious that the opposition to remote work was rooted in culture, not technology.

“This was the moment that finally proved to leaders that they could trust people after all,” says author and inventor **Perttu Pölönen**.

Almost six months have passed since the beginning of the most widespread spell of remote work in the post-industrial era and returning to the old ways of working seems unlikely. Remote work is here to stay. In the future, more em-

ployees will work from home than ever before in the history of working outside the home.

It took a pandemic to change the status quo of work.

“After this experience, it’s terribly difficult to justify why you can’t work from home or why you’re only allowed to do so on Wednesdays. Employers will have to think more carefully about what makes people come to the workplace,” says brain scientist **Minna Huotilainen** from University of Helsinki.

Above all, remote work got an image boost.

“The pandemic busted some myths regarding telework. In a post-COVID world, more and more people will consider remote work an equally valuable way of working and engaging with others,” says **Harri Mikkanen**, Product Marketing Manager at Microsoft.

Many global corporation giants did change their approach to remote work overnight. Information technology company Fujitsu announced that their 80 000 employees in Japan will mainly work remotely in the future and that flexibility in working hours will be in-

creased. According to the company, it is a step towards the “new normal”. As for German Siemens, they decided it is okay for their 145 000 employees to permanently work 2 to 3 days a week “wherever they want”. Simultaneously the company aligned that instead of monitoring hours spent at the office, their leadership culture will strengthen their focus on results. Twitter stated their employees can continue working remotely for as long as they want, and so on.

While the pandemic taught us the pros of remote work, it also showed us the cons. One of the most significant losses is the lack of human interaction, which is a basic need. Speech is only a fraction of interaction. To understand each other better, we need facial expressions, gestures, body language and eye contact. All these are disrupted in the world of remote work and virtual meetings.

The pandemic has planted new terminology into our language: we use concepts such as “remote work apathy” and “Zoom fatigue”. According to social and behavioral scientists, they

“The work community is vital in regard to one’s happiness. Very few of us can come up with something interesting alone.”

– Jari Hakanen, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health

are results of a massive adoption of new technology, which interferes with normal, instinctive and fine-tuned interaction – which we have relied on for thousands of years in order to stay alive.

Wall Street Journal interviewed several interaction researchers in their article published in June, 2020. According

to them, there are several pitfalls in video meeting services when it comes to interaction: there is no body language, faces move around the screen, the chat function allows for side notes and delays in transmission interfere with taking turns. In video meetings, the participants must continuously estimate how much and when they can talk. Their comments often go without reaction from others. All this is very stressful to the human brain.

Microsoft’s latest Work Trend Index from July, 2020 also indicates that virtual meeting fatigue is real. Human Factor Labs studies interaction between humans and technology, and in one of their study they monitored the brainwaves and electrocardiograms during video meetings for one month. Results reveal that people feel collaboration is significantly harder remotely than in face-to-face situations. Stress levels are also higher in video meetings and people feel more burdened compared to writing an email, for example. There are three main reasons for this. First, continuous and long-term screen watching decreases brain’s capabili-

ty to receive and process information. Second, the lack of nonverbal communication, and third, the “share screen” feature that blocks other participants’ faces so that the presenter can’t see their expressions.

These and many other reasons still unexplored lead to the experience shared by many that creativity and developing new things feel difficult while working remotely.

“The work community is vital in regard to one’s happiness. Very few of us can come up with something interesting alone. Creativity and new ideas have always been results of collaboration and exchange of thoughts between people, and I don’t think any technology can replace them,” says Research Professor **Jari Hakanen** from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health.

All interviewees for this report believe that the future of work will encompass not only remote work but a more natural combination of working at the office and from home.

Charles Héaulmé, President and CEO of Huhtamäki, thinks one to two

days of remote work per week will be the new normal for white collar workers. Joonas Tamminen, Studio General Manager at multiplatform game development studio Ubisoft RedLynx, estimates that up to 40 percent of all work will be done remotely at RedLynx.

“Nearly all technical issues have been solved, and we’re now planning on our ways of working,” Tamminen says.

Productivity is under strict scrutiny at Ubisoft RedLynx. According to Tamminen, the productivity levels dropped significantly during the first weeks of the coronavirus pandemic, but the number quickly rose back to the pre-covid time.

“Once we really get going with the holistic development of remote work and office work, we will exceed one hundred percent in productivity compared to the pre-pandemic levels. But to make remote work run smoothly, the whole organization must appreciate it. Trust must be undisputed,” Tamminen says.



Photo: Microsoft



Space

1. Value people's time and presence. Build spaces that are inviting.
2. Square meters at the office need to answer higher demands in the future.
3. Each space must have a function. A company's premises reflect its culture and ways of working.

PEOPLE WILL EXPECT MORE FROM OFFICE SPACES

Is this the end of open-plan offices? Are cubicles and private offices making a comeback? What will happen to conference rooms? What about hip co-working spaces, break rooms and lounges?

If strict rules for hygiene are here to stay and remote work increases significantly compared to the years before the coronavirus, will huge office buildings become redundant? The experts we interviewed for this publication are almost unanimous in thinking that private offices and personal desks are history, despite of corona. However, a big change may lie ahead for the use and number of office spaces, meeting rooms and open-plan offices.

Tuula Klemetti, Director and Vice President in charge of Business premises leasing services at YIT, says that although a debate on open-plan offices was initiated by the spring's events,

a major shift has been simmering for a long time.

According to Klemetti, now is a good time to think of how working spaces should be developed in the long run. Remodeling an office should always start with an examination of the company's culture and ways of working.

"When a company starts to plan an office remodeling, it should challenge its own processes and rethink both good and bad practices. What kind of work is done in the premises? What is the path that employees in different roles take every day, and what do they need to make it a smoother experience?"

New ways of working mean new challenges for leadership. As work becomes more mobile, shared goals should be defined clearly enough so that a community dispersed across remote offices, home offices and the office can work together efficiently.

The trend for the need of office square feet has been downward for a long time, but the coronavirus pandemic may speed up the fall.

“I can already tell our headquarters is too large,” says **Jaakko Eskola**, President and CEO of Wärtsilä. It was only in 2018 that the technology group moved to new premises in the Salmisaari district of Helsinki. The premises support working together, agile ways of working and self-direction.

“If even a third of our employees work remotely in the future, we won’t need this much space. I believe we’ll see an expansion in a partner model where our business partners and other players working in close collaboration with us move to our campus.”

Charles Héaulmé, CEO and President of Huhtamäki, shares Eskola’s view.

“In the long run, we will need 20-50 percent less space in our head office,” he says.

Another perspective is the health and safety aspects of space design that have been highlighted during the pandemic. Even when the number of employees working at the office is lower than before, they will need more space around them. Especially open space solutions need rethinking.

“Desks and people can’t be packed in as tightly as we have done so far. When part of the people gets used to working at the peaceful home environment, the requirements for working spaces at the office increase,” says **Esa Neuvonen**, EVP, Partnership properties segment at YIT.

“Need for office spaces will continue to decrease slowly in the long run, but the quality requirements for offices change drastically. Instead of the quantity of desks, working spaces will be approached from a point of view that supports creativity and inspiring atmosphere for the employees. It might be that instead of one large office there are multiple different ones in

different zones of the city. This allows employees more flexibility in choosing where they work from and with whom, according to what fits their current work situation best,” says **Juha Kostinen**, Director of Urban development segment at YIT.

The spaces that remain in use will go through a metamorphosis. They must support the goals of the work and inspire people to spend time in them. Therefore, working spaces should be approached from a quality point of view instead of the quantity of desks. What is the function of the space? How does the space contribute to the organization’s goals? What is the objective of working together?

“A meeting room with a table and eight chairs is a dead idea. The space must support creativity; it should be an inspiring experience. It needs to have facilitation tools, light and a good feel to it. Time has become a precious resource, and when people give each other their time and spend it in a conference room, it’s almost like a celebration,” says **Eija Hakakari**, Director of Human Resources at Yle, the Finnish

“The human brain needs transitions from one place to another to avoid work becoming a blur with no beginning and no end.”

– Timo Ritakallio, OP

Broadcasting Company.

What’s more, virtual meeting platforms present a challenge to office architecture and interior design. In the future, open-plan offices need to feature the kind of spaces they rarely have now.

“Current open-plan offices have received a lot of critique because they are not perceived safe. In the future, these offices might be replaced by dozens of working cubicles meant for one person, where you can smoothly concentrate on

Photo: YIT



your work or video meetings. Or the open-plan office may be readjusted to work as a collaboration space that enables social encounters and creative interaction without compromising on the safety requirements. A need for studios that allow both internal and external webinars and online-events is also apparent. Finally interior design, electricity, ventilation and solutions that promote health and safety from customer-centric approach merit consideration as well," says Esa Neuvonen.

"Bringing nature to the working environment has been a growing trend long before COVID. For instance, new buildings are designed to feature nature paths. We may see more of this after the pandemic," says **Salla Eckhardt**, Director of Transformation Services at Microsoft. She works at the Microsoft campus in Redmond, Washington.

Research professor Jari Hakanen from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health points out that comfortable premises have a remarkable impact on the wellbeing, energy and

creativity of employees. Hakanen also finds it important that an individual employee is not surrounded by different people every day. New encounters are valuable, but people are most creative when they trust the people around them.

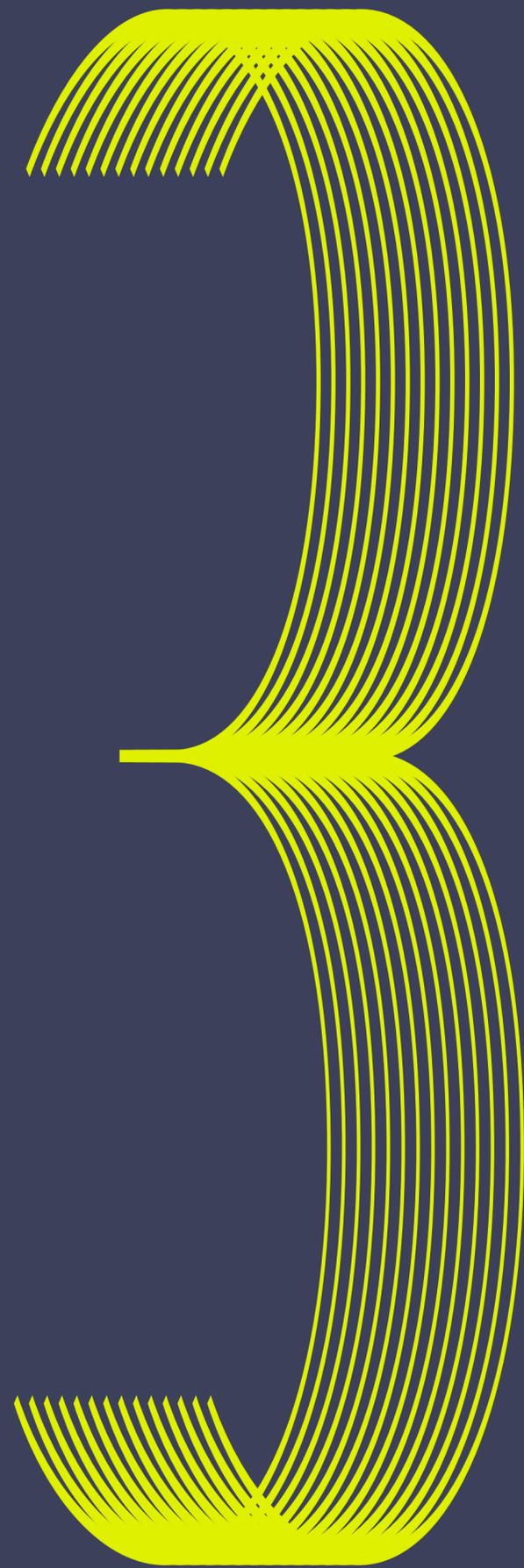
"Remote work brings an increase in flexibility and freedom in one's life, which is a good thing. Nevertheless, a total eradication of offices is rather a dystopian idea. If multipurpose spaces and open-plan offices feel uncomfortable and lack functionality, people simply won't show up at the workplace. It's a grim vision where the fact that people enjoy remote work leads to companies minimizing the amount of office space and turning offices into anonymous places where nobody knows each other."

Outi Sivonen, Director of Culture and Employee experience at Finnish technology, strategy and design company Solita, notes that after all, people don't show up at the office because of the premises but because of other people. We are experiencing a shift in thinking: in the past, you would go to the work-

place to work, whereas now, you go to a place to work and meet other people.

For years already, **Timo Ritakallio**, President and Group CEO of OP Financial Group, has observed the downward trend in the need for office space. He thinks the increase in remote work is a challenge especially for designing homes. At the moment, very few homes have been designed with teleworking in mind.

"This era is teaching us to pay more attention to the rhythm of the workday. Our daily routines require different spaces and transitions between them. You do some of the work at the office, some of it at home, and some in a third location. The human brain needs transitions from one place to another to avoid work becoming a blur with no beginning and no end. It also means that homes must be designed in an entirely different way. This is something that construction companies haven't paid attention to yet," says Ritakallio.



Digitalization

1. Thanks to technology, a networked way of working is becoming more common. Nurture collaboration across siloes and organizational boundaries, even with competitors, to increase understanding and diversity.
2. Almost anything can be done online. Give careful consideration to when physical attendance is really necessary.
3. Invest in people and their wellbeing.

DIGITALIZATION TOOK A 5-YEAR LEAP FORWARD IN TWO MONTHS

On Wednesday, March 18, 2020, decades' worth of attempts to digitalize schools and other institutions of education succeeded overnight. The brevity of the time to prepare the transition meant that it was a harsh one: 1.3 million students from the first grade to vocational school and universities, and their 80,000 teachers, had to start remote learning abruptly.

Remote learning affected the lives of not only students and teachers but a multiple number of people. It meant extra work for parents and therefore had a strong impact on everyday life in companies. Hundreds of thousands of parents had to juggle between paid work, remote school and household work all at the same time.

The abrupt change is also reflected by a sudden spike in Microsoft Teams' growth. One day after the WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic, Teams was used globally for 560 million minutes per day. Four days later, the number had grown to 900 million minutes. Two weeks lat-

er, on the last day of March, the use of Teams had multiplied to 2.3 billion minutes per day.

"Organizations that had already adopted tools for knowledge work on the basis of a carefully considered strategy were able to start remote work in an agile manner and work according to their strategy after the official national recommendation on extensive remote work was given in Finland. However, many organizations and schools in particular adopted many different tools simultaneously, which made it chaotic and even stressful to transition to remote working or learning. Teamwork is more than just video calls,

“When technology comes this close to us, it means that professional identities will expand, and a more networked way of working will proliferate”

– Eija Hakakari, YLE

and it would benefit organizations to consider how they share and work on information, discuss and genuinely work together across teams,” says Harri Mikkanen, Product Marketing Manager at Microsoft.

Innovativeness and agility were also shown in companies – out of necessity. At OP Financial Group, a robot was created in just a couple of weeks to handle applications for loan repayment holiday, the number of which grew twentyfold due to the coronavirus.

“This was an epiphany for me, too: we can build a robot in two weeks! In the old world, this would not have been recognized as a priority. The starting point for our thinking would have been finding large volumes, and we would have missed the fact that the volume is large here,” says Group CEO Timo Ritakallio.

“In a couple of months, we saw developments in connections and ways of working that would normally have taken 3-4 years. The use of Teams grew exponentially, and we implemented a 3D remote desktop system designed especially for game development,” says Joonas Tamminen, Studio General Manager at Ubisoft Red-Lynx.

The Finnish Broadcasting Company’s Director of Human Resources Eija Hakakari believes the exceptional situation speeds up the development that had been discernible in ripples for a long time. The siloes between various professional roles are bound to break.

“When technology comes this close to us, it means that professional iden-

tities will expand, and a more networked way of working will proliferate. It’s no longer about who pays your salary – it’s about which project you’re working on.”

A giant leap in the adoption of digital technology – or a harsh and abrupt transition – taught companies at least the following:

1. Virtual working disrupted the familiar social structures of the workplace. Remote work revealed some ways of yielding power and making decisions that were difficult to see at the office. People have shown new sides of themselves. For example, the quiet types that usually stay silent in the conference room have begun to shine.

2. With the exception of human interaction and its fine nuances, almost anything can be done online. Even large conferences, stakeholder meetings and sales trips work out virtually and can be very efficient as long as the event has been prepared carefully.

3. In a digital world, it’s very important to define the organizations goals and what matters. What is the basic

task of the organization, and what are the things that should at least be done?

4. Virtual meetings are cognitively straining. The more digital the work, the more important it is to pay attention to human-oriented leadership and psychological wellbeing.

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– Joonas Tamminen,
UbiSoft RedLynx

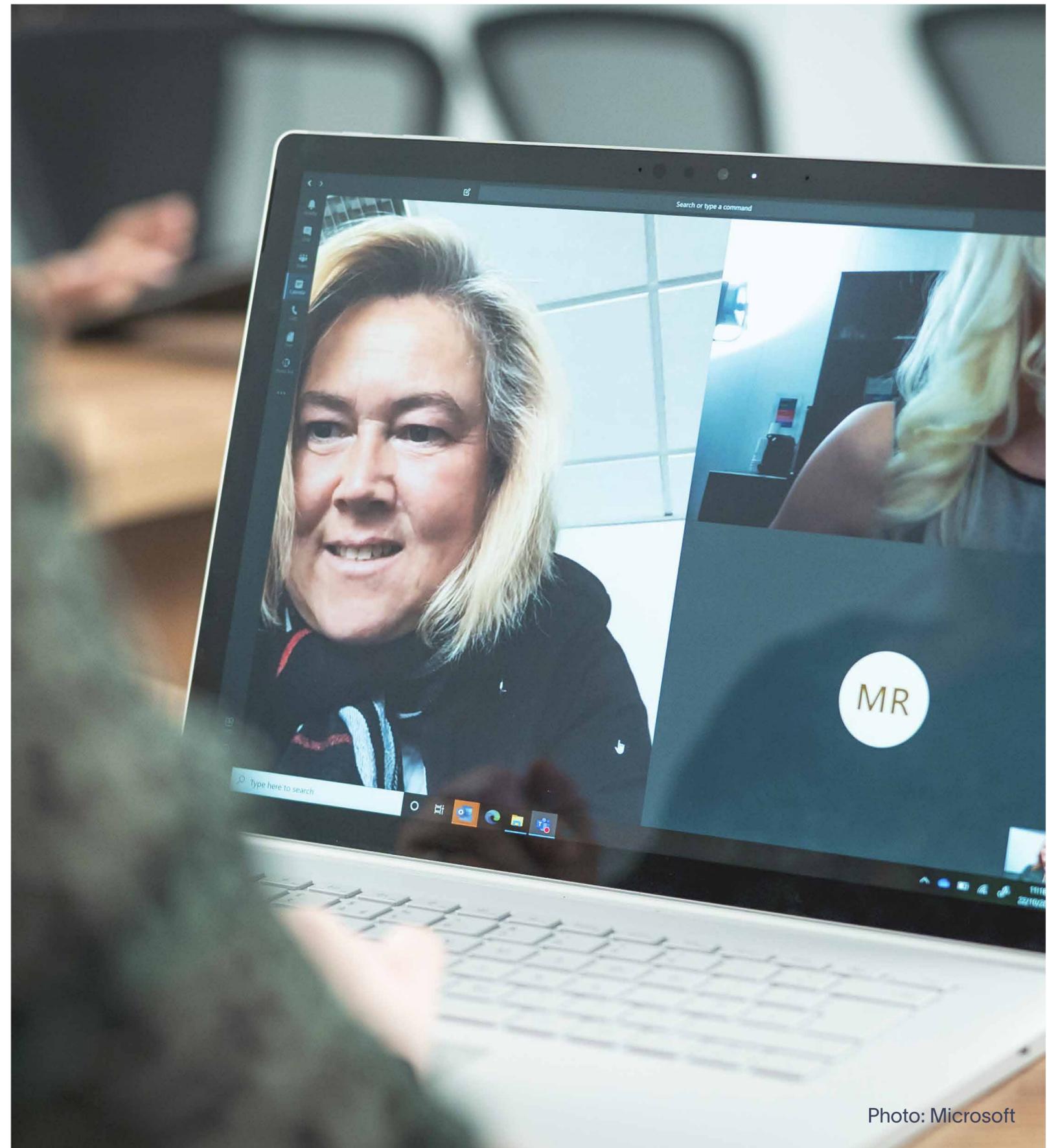
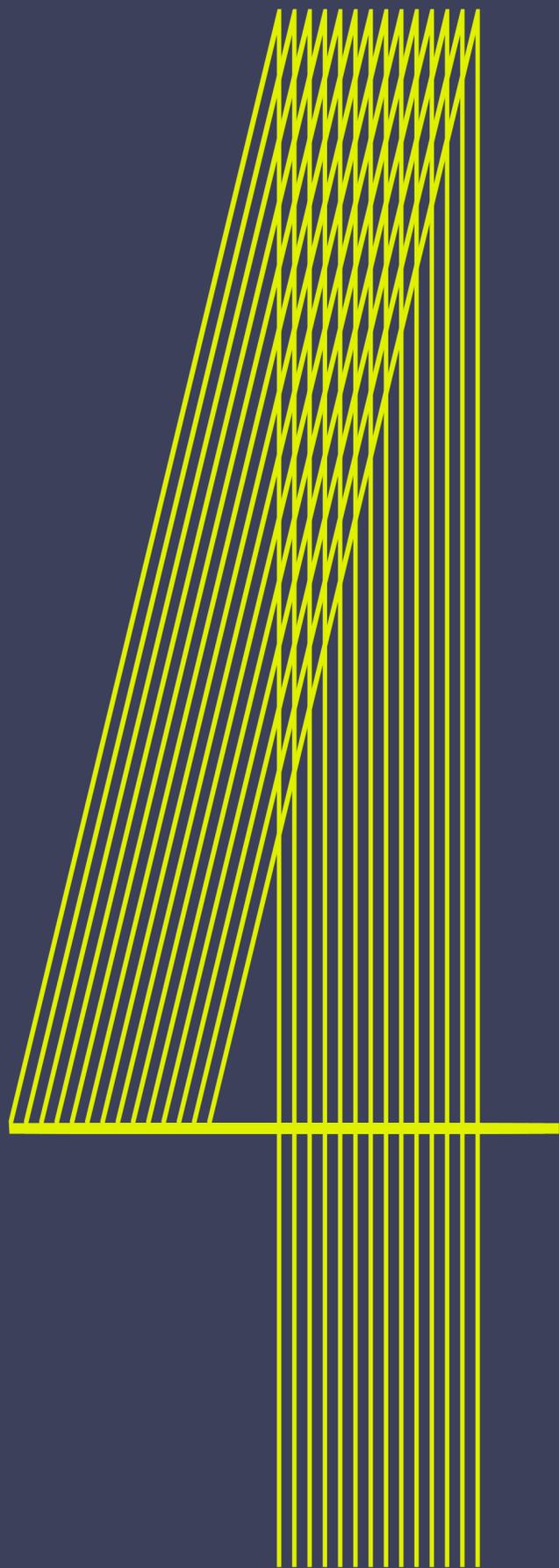


Photo: Microsoft



Wellbeing

1. A sense of control is the essential element of wellbeing at work.
2. Dare to trust the invisible.
3. Invest in knowing your people. Everyone is an individual.

FUTURE LEADERS LEAD EMOTIONS

According to an old wisdom, a crisis will bring to surface the internal turmoil in a company. The bigger the crisis, the more problems will become visible, and the harder it will be to clean up the mess afterwards.

For **Karoliina Mellanen**, a Finnish business psychologist, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed some strongly polarized workplace phenomena. Superiors have either excelled or disappeared from sight. Communications have been either ample and able to create a sense of security, or they have been lacking or nonexistent.

In corporate cultures that believe in trust and people, the transition to remote work has been mind-blowingly smooth, while organizations that are focused on extreme performance and internal competitiveness and ridden with distrust have struggled. Self-direction has gone well for those who

were already used to it, while others have been horrified at the change.

“Primarily the increased flexibility of work is a good thing. I’ve been following the discussion around telework, worried about people raving over their increased productivity at the home office. I’m sure it’s true for some, but in the long run, missing lunch breaks, commuting and random encounters is not good for you. This has been tough especially for people who tend to overachieve and have had problems in limiting and controlling their workload,” says Mellanen.

The lack of a sense of community is another risk. Being together and do-

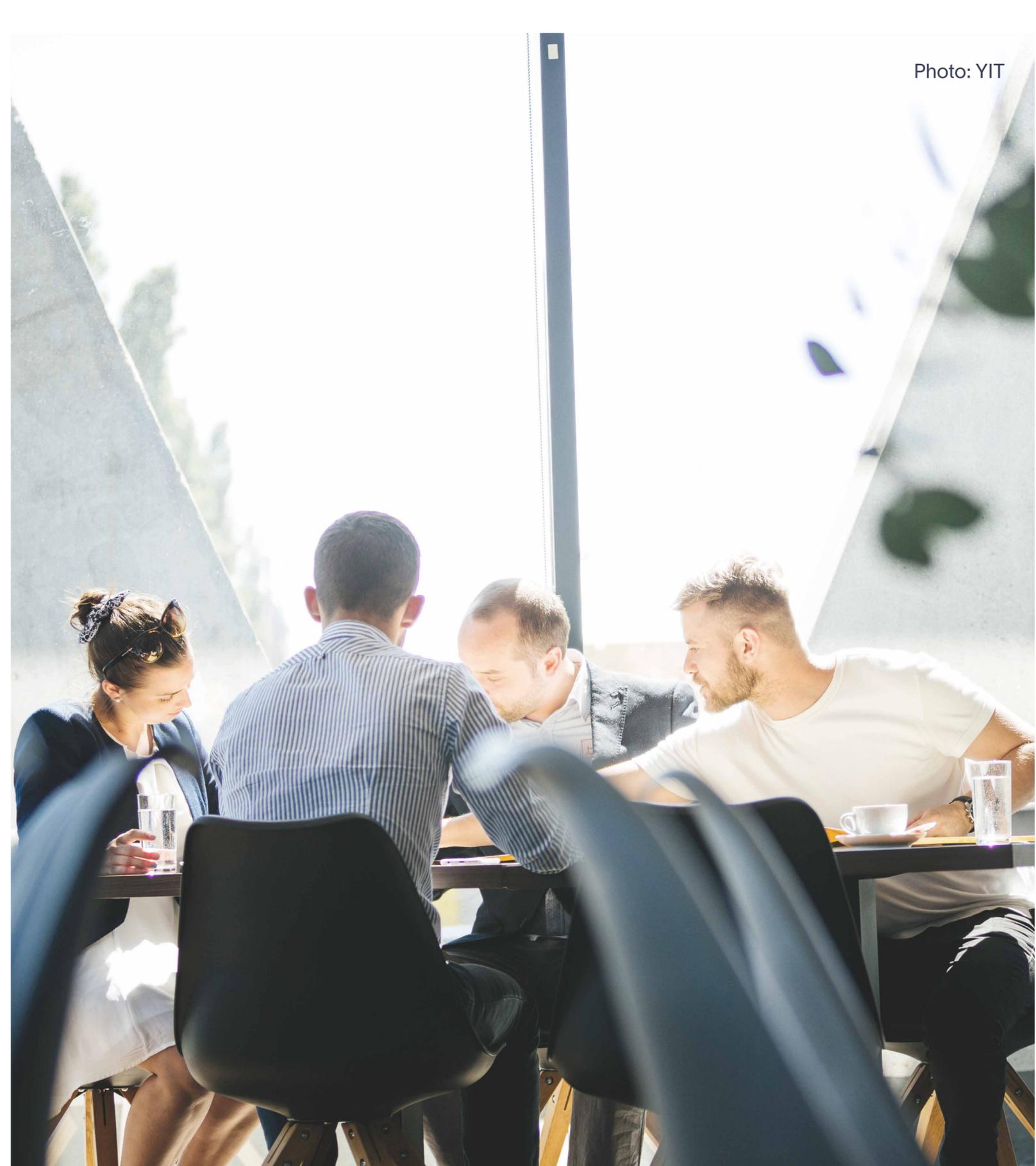
ing things together is very important to people, and young people in particular.

For some, the work community may be the only community where they feel like they belong. Identifying the risk of loneliness and isolation and finding solutions to mitigate it are some of the biggest challenges for companies.

According to Mellanen, the pandemic has proved to business leaders that people are individuals with unique conditions, capabilities, hopes and dreams.

“Replacing lunch breaks, commuting and random encounters with extra work is not good for you.”

– Karoliina Mellanen, psychologist



“Raise your hand if you can say you’ve laughed until you cry in a virtual meeting.”

– **Marja-Liisa Manka,**
University of Tampere

“Many organizations have this idea that once they’ve reached the point of maximum efficiency in their processes, their people can finally start to develop themselves. I would encourage everyone to be honest in estimating if that point can ever be reached. Is there a single business executive in the world who can honestly say that their business is productive enough

and now is the time to focus on people? I don’t think so,” she says.

Research professor Jari Hakanen from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health shares this view. According to him, a lack of understanding of how people are really doing is one of the weakest spots for many organizations.

“I’m not familiar with a single organization that would systematically ask its people how they are really doing.”

Hakanen points out that insecurity and a sense of control are very strongly tied to occupational wellbeing.

“Insecurity is like quicksand with no solid ground underneath your feet. For many organizations, it will be tough to manage employees’ motivation, productivity and flow amid such great insecurity.”

On the other hand, many people share the experience of having more hours in the day when commuting and interruptions have been eliminated and they can work in a more focused and efficient way. Remote work has increased flexibility and given people the opportunity to follow a daily cycle that suits them best.

At the same time, it has become clearer that face-to-face encounters are crucial to fostering innovation and new ideas, creating team spirit, increasing a sense of affinity and passing on tacit knowledge. We’ve all had the experience that it’s difficult to reach a shared flow state remotely. This is due to the simple fact that we are at our most creative and most energetic when we are having fun.

“Raise your hand if you can say you’ve laughed until you cry in a virtual meeting,” urges **Marja-Liisa Manka**, docent in leading wellbeing at work, and laughs.

“We find this idea amusing as it’s so absurd. We all know it is difficult to create a genuine connection remotely. Working is less joyful when we can’t see people, talk to them and ask them questions spontaneously. There’s an important level of humanity that’s missing there,” she states.

This great disruption is a fundamental challenge to leadership and wellbeing at work. What matters is that the organization has good structures and fosters a sense of control.

“I’m not familiar with a single organization that would systematically ask its people how they are really doing.”

– Jari Hakanen, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health

“People need to know what is expected of them. From an individual’s point of view, it’s essential to have a sense of control. If you collapse under a workload that’s too heavy, it’s not a personal problem in self-direction but a leadership problem,” Manka says.

Manka has studied Finnish working life for over 40 years. The coronavirus pandemic brought about some changes that she had been looking forward to for a long time.

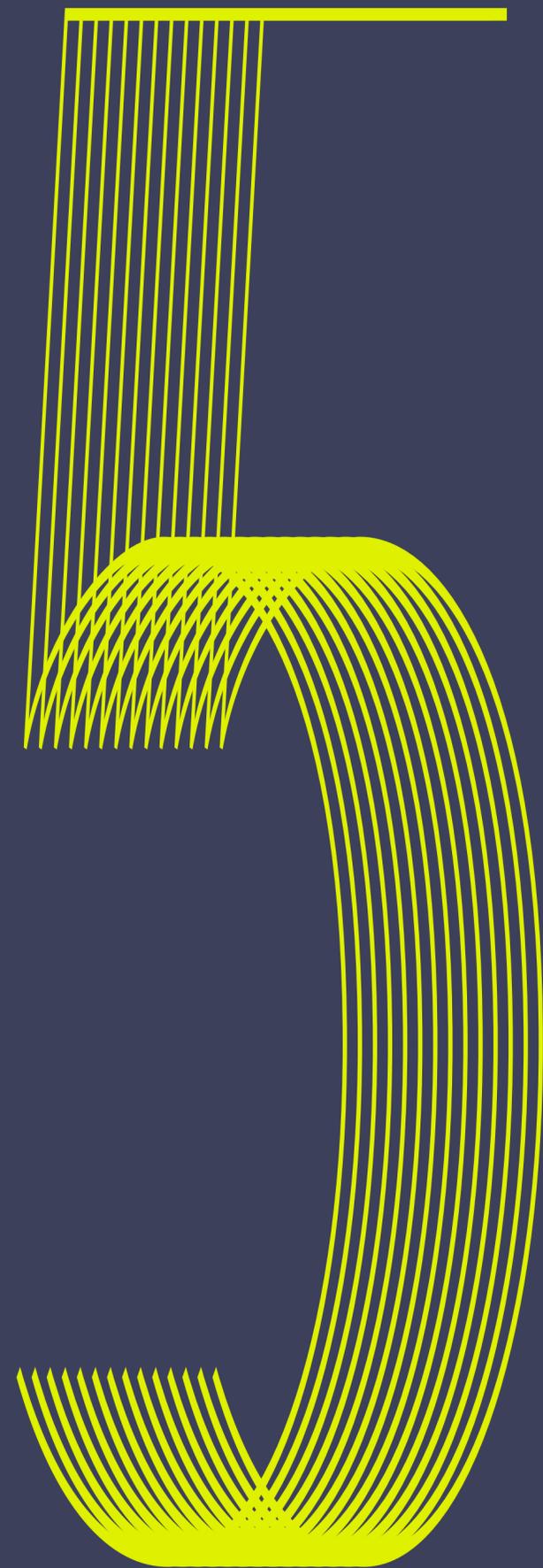
“For years I’ve waited for working life to change. Suddenly, a window of opportunity appeared, and we saw things we thought would never happen. The time has come to create new

norms and practices for leadership and ways of working. In this new regime, organizing your own work, recovery, creating and building trust, strategic goals and guiding the way, a sense of community and personal responsibility are essential.”

Inventor and author Perttu Pölönen thinks the greatest leadership challenge of the future is trusting the invisible. Things that are difficult to grasp in your everyday life are also difficult to develop in a results-oriented way. Such things include curiosity, creativity, trust and compassion.

“Leaders need to trust that these invisible things are worth investing of,

and it is challenging. But for me, that is true leadership – prioritizing and focusing on right things,” says Pölönen.



Time

1. Self-direction and remote work easily bring about ambiguity and chaos. Create some common guidelines and clear goals.
2. Make space for breaks. The brain needs them.
3. Creativity and productivity are nurtured by the opportunity to work in a place and at a time that are optimal for the employee.

GOODBYE TO NINE-TO-FIVE THINKING

Much like attitudes towards going to work to a physical workplace, attitudes towards working hours have been very puritan and conservative for decades.

Most salary earners go to the office between seven and nine in the morning and leave about eight hours later. We keep doing so despite knowing that especially knowledge work can be done basically anywhere, anytime. We also know that different people have different circadian rhythms and situations in life. From the perspective of efficiency, motivation and commitment, it might be smarter to adapt our work to our personal lives and not the other way around.

At the beginning of 2020, the new Working Hours Act entered into force in Finland. Legislation was adjusted to accommodate some changes that

had happened in the labor market and in working life, such as the increasing share of work that is independent of time and place. The Act gives employers tools for creating tailored solutions in terms of working hours, such as a wider time frame for flexible working hours, flexitime and the use of a working hours bank. The Act introduced the opportunity for employees to pause their work for a while in the middle of the day. They can now choose to work, for example, four hours in the morning, do sports for a couple of hours at noon and continue to work for three to four hours in the afternoon.

Nonetheless, the Act still defines a

maximum of eight hours per day and 40 hours per week for regular working hours.

Regarding white collar and knowledge work, the Act has its upsides and downsides. On the one hand, it protects employees from working in excess. When there is a law dictating the number of weekly working hours, employers will strive to organize work in a way that allows the work to be done in the hours available to avoid extra costs.

“When does the workday start and when does it end? It takes a whole lot of discipline to define this for yourself.”

– Anni Vepsäläinen, Messukeskus Helsinki, Expo and Convention Centre



On the other hand, work that requires creativity and focus can seldom be done efficiently and meaningfully from nine to five, Monday to Friday. What if you come up with a good idea or a solution to a problem in the middle of the night, on a Saturday evening while sitting in the sauna or while you're on a Sunday stroll – are you off work or should you mark down the hours it took to do the thinking?

“When does the workday start and when does it end? It takes a whole lot of discipline to define this for yourself,” says **Anni Vepsäläinen**, Managing Director of Messukeskus Helsinki, Expo and Convention Centre, which is the largest event venue in Finland.

The experts who were interviewed for this publication are unanimous in thinking the COVID-19 pandemic will result in the waning of nine-to-five thinking. As the arguments against remote work have been refuted, the idea that everyone should show up at the office at the same time and leave in a synchronized manner is also beginning to feel odd, to say the least.

Same conclusion was reached in a survey jointly conducted by LinkedIn and Marie Claire magazine where they researched the opinion of over 2,000 British white-collar workers. According to the results, over 60 percent of both directors and employees felt that there is no going back to the old 9-to-5 model. The purpose of time-consuming commuting in urban traffic was questioned strongly. On the other hand flexible working hours and being able to plan your own day cycle were seen to create positive effects on both work efficiency and general wellbeing.

Brain scientist Minna Huotilainen calls for more active discussion about flexible ways of working in Finland. She points out that, for example, a midday outdoors exercise boosts wellbeing and productivity.

“We're stuck in the idea that you should do your hobbies in the evening, although there's no rationale for that. It's much better for your circadian rhythm if you exercise outdoors during daylight,” she says.

Huotilainen wishes the COVID era would inspire people to see their well-

being in a more holistic way. For instance, the extra minutes of sleep in the morning awarded to many by the absence of commuting have yielded us more energy and productivity. Some prefer to take a break from work when the children come home from school and go spend some time outside with them. When the children start doing their homework, the parents continue with their work.

“Insights like this are very important as they teach us more about ourselves and help us find a way of working that suits us best. I hope the lockdown will result in people and organizations starting to develop ways of working that support a holistic wellbeing,” says Huotilainen.

Researchers studying wellbeing at work have been talking about the significance of breaks for a long time. As working life requires more and more self-direction, people must take more responsibility for drawing up their daily schedule, creating a rhythm and prioritizing their tasks. This is difficult for many, especially if there are plenty of digital communication channels and

“Agreement-based models and best practices for remote work must be developed based on the learnings from covid-crisis.”

-Jaakko Eskola, Wärtsilä

schedules that are made by others. In addition, remote work entails a big risk of workdays dragging on for too long, because it's more difficult to create boundaries that mark the beginning and the end of the day.

“At the office, breaks are spontaneous. You spend half an hour together standing by the printer and wondering why it won't work. If you spend half an hour standing next to the dishwasher, you'll start to feel guilty,” Huottilainen explains.

Researchers **Ari Väänänen** and **Minna Toivanen** at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health have launched

the concept of tied autonomy which refers to a paradox often experienced by people who are employed in knowledge-intensive jobs: they have great autonomy over the substance of their work and their way of working, but it is very difficult for them to control their own time. Digital channels and platforms have freed knowledge workers from the chains of time and place but also rendered them more dependent on others' schedules and messages. They are drowning in a flood of messages that requires continuous monitoring and reactivity.

Therefore, workplaces, and large organizations in particular, would do well to agree on a more specific set of rules or guidelines for working together. Soon after the coronavirus outbreak, OP Financial Group agreed on leaving a gap of at least fifteen minutes between each meeting. Charles Héaulmé, President and CEO of Huhtamäki, says he only accepts meetings of 45 or 90 minutes in order to give himself a 15 to 30-minute break between meetings.

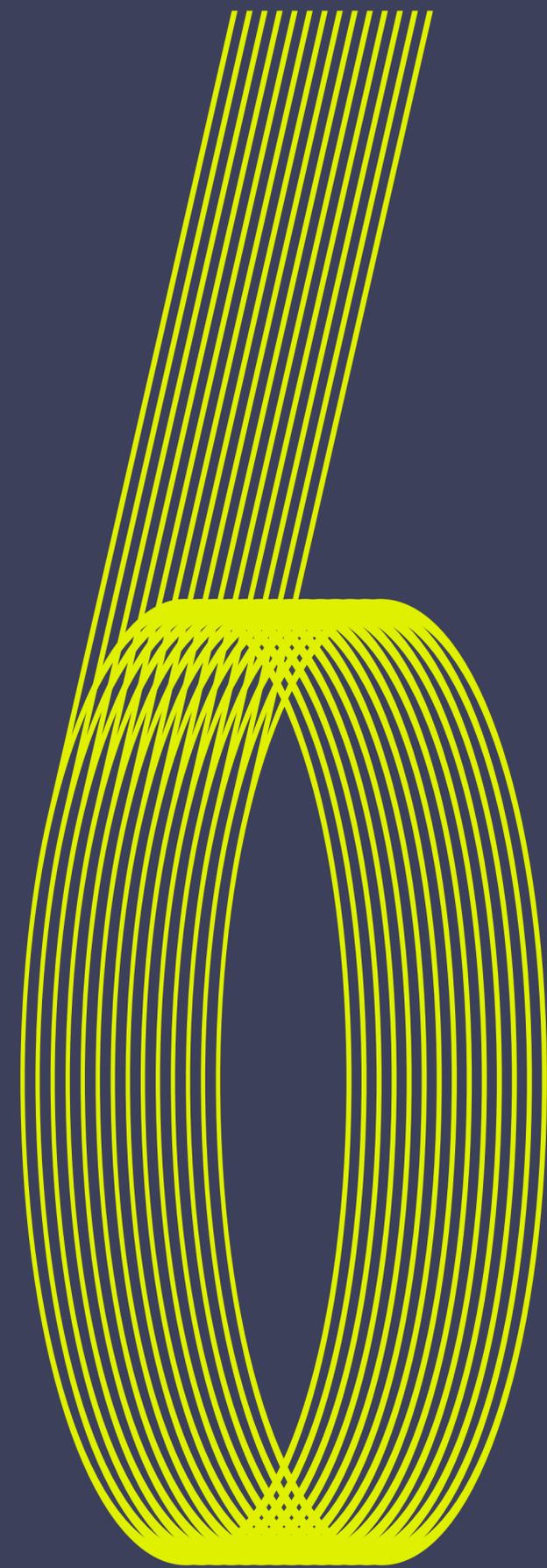
“If an organization genuinely wants to care for its people, it must create

models that help people to work in a way that's optimal to them. For example, agreement-based models and best practices for remote work must be developed based on the learnings from this covid-crisis,” points out Jaakko Eskola, President and CEO of Wärtsilä.

Psychologist Karoliina Mellanen agrees. In her opinion, finding the optimal way of working shouldn't be totally up to individual employees – the organization must have a common set of guidelines and clear goals. Ambiguity creates problems in the atmosphere very quickly.

Mellanen notes that a crisis brings out the differences between individuals.

“The chaos that currently prevails might actually give organizations a chance to start building new structures of working – people first. At long last, I dare say! Perhaps companies will finally understand that a person is most productive when working in an environment that is optimal for that individual.”



Humanity

1. Let trust, curiosity and compassion lead the way.
2. Measure the mood and make good vibes one of your prerequisites for success.
3. Weigh your values. Be honest in judging their authenticity.

A HUMAN APPROACH NEEDED TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

Measuring white-collar knowledge work is difficult. How much is enough? When can we say we have succeeded? How to measure things that can't be added to an Excel sheet?

Non-fiction writer Perttu Pölönen states that what is left outside the accelerating pace of technological development is emotions and humanity. These are the things that give work – and life itself – meaning.

Pölönen thinks that leadership often focuses on the wrong things. Economic meters define if people are doing well or not – end of discussion. According to Pölönen, economic conditions should be the start of discussion since numbers can't tell what makes life meaningful.

“Leaders should be asking questions about what do people want in their personal life and workplace? Security,

human contact, peace and closeness. Moreover, human beings will always be curious,” Pölönen says.

Pölönen believes that this means a deeper understanding of the significance of emotions in workplace culture, organizational structures, relationships between people and ways of working. The importance of managing emotions may also be seen better than before. There will be no results if the leader only manages things, numbers and substance. The leader must be able to lead people holistically and have the courage to show their own humanity as well.

Eija Hakakari, Director of Human

“There will be no results if the leader only manages things, numbers and substance.”

– Perttu Pölönen, inventor

Resources at the Finnish Broadcasting Company, thinks we are facing a revolution of human-oriented leadership.

“In the cruelest way possible, we’ve come to realize that leadership must consider employees and their skills holistically. This is a tough lesson to learn for many leaders. The companies that take leadership forward in terms of psychological safety will be successful,” she says.

Psychologist Karoliina Mellanen agrees. “Human-oriented leadership has been a hot topic for long, but only few examples have been shown. In my view, we’ve now entered the acceleration lane towards the beginning of a new, more humane era,” she states.

In the future, human-oriented leadership will be an ever more important asset for companies that want to attract the best talent. Young adults in particular value a humane corporate culture.

Karoliina Mellanen and her husband Atte Mellanen have co-authored a book titled *Hyvät, pahat ja milleni-aalit – miten meitä tulisi johtaa*, “The good, the bad, and Millennials – how we should be led”. According to the authors, Millennials expect work to adjust according to an individual’s needs – not the other way around. The better organizations and leaders can respond to employees’ needs and create a successful employee experience, the more likely they are to earn Millennials’ commitment to the organization.

No hocus-pocus is needed – small gestures of caring are enough. For instance, video game company Ubisoft RedLynx promised to its employees at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic: “If your children are distracting your work, do as much as you can. We will pay you in full anyway.”

Marja-Liisa Manka, docent in leading wellbeing at work, says good lead-

ership cultivates optimism and relays a sense of trust. Managing emotions means that the leader senses how people are feeling. What emotions are they experiencing and why? An annual survey on wellbeing at work is not enough to figure this out. The leader must feel the people’s pulse all the time.

Marja-Liisa Manka would add measuring the mood in every leader’s performance targets. Bad vibes could result in getting fired, just like a bad financial result would.

“They’re like two sides of the same coin. You need good vibes to make good results.”

A crisis often transforms our personal values. Several of the interviewees think the current pandemic will result in such changes. Once we’ve learned that international conventions and sales meetings can be done remotely, we’ll begin to question the need for continuous traveling. An empty calendar has made many of us stop and rethink our values: am I doing what I want and what makes me happy? Is this how I want to use my time? Is my job meaningful to me?

Such soul-searching can result in many good things. People usually won't change their ways until they have to. Now, a global crisis has made us change our ways and shown us that we can live a good life in a much more sustainable way. Similarly, organizations will have to be honest in judging if their values are genuine or just a bunch of empty words that sound hip.

"Human-oriented leadership has been a hot topic for long, but only few examples have been shown. In my view, we've now entered the acceleration lane towards the beginning of a new, more humane era."

– Karoliina Mellanen, psychologist





Creativity

1. Creativity requires randomness, interaction and a connection between the body and the mind.
2. Ideas won't come about when you're sitting still. Knowledge workers, too, need opportunities to use their embodied wisdom.
3. Work spaces are essential for creativity and wholesome wellbeing.

NEW IDEAS NEED HUMAN INTERACTION

Working from home and using various virtual tools has revealed to us the complexity and diversity of human interaction: it's not all talk. It's straining for the human brain to interpret another person, if the person's face isn't visible.

Virtual meetings with many participants are especially demanding. Inevitably, the situation creates several delays in communication, during which a participant can go through many lines of thought. Just two seconds are enough to analyze what the other person meant, if we are allowed to speak, if we should wait, if anyone understood us, if what we said resonated with the recipient, whose turn is next and so on.

Non-verbal communication has been studied for decades in top-ranking universities and institutions around the world. There is no shared universal understanding about its role, but

researchers are united in thinking that non-verbal communication plays a bigger role in interaction than speech.

Facial expressions, eye movements, small nods, and body language as a whole, including all the fine nuances, build meaning between people more than just words. Many of us recognize a situation where a speaker's words and body language give out two entirely different messages.

Non-verbal communication and our perception and interpretation of the world around us also involve a kinetic dimension. People communicate with the world by touching things and each other. Our sense of touch helps

us to perceive the shape, temperature, material and other characteristics of things, objects and people, and to make interpretations of the world accordingly.

All this is fuel for creativity. We need physical movement to produce new ideas, solve problems or give a beautiful shape to an object.

“To be creative, you need the experience of touching. Our endless curiosity is fueled by being able to touch, feel, twist and turn things with our hands, to smell with our noses, taste with our mouths. All this is extremely difficult to do remotely or virtually. Therefore, I don’t think we could continue working remotely forever. Instead, employers would be smart in offering their knowledge workers a lot more opportunities to use their embodied wisdom,” says brain scientist Minna Huotilainen.

According to Huotilainen, the line at the lunch cafeteria is an amazing concept of social and kinetic encounters. While waiting for their food, people run into random acquaintances, chat with strangers from other departments,

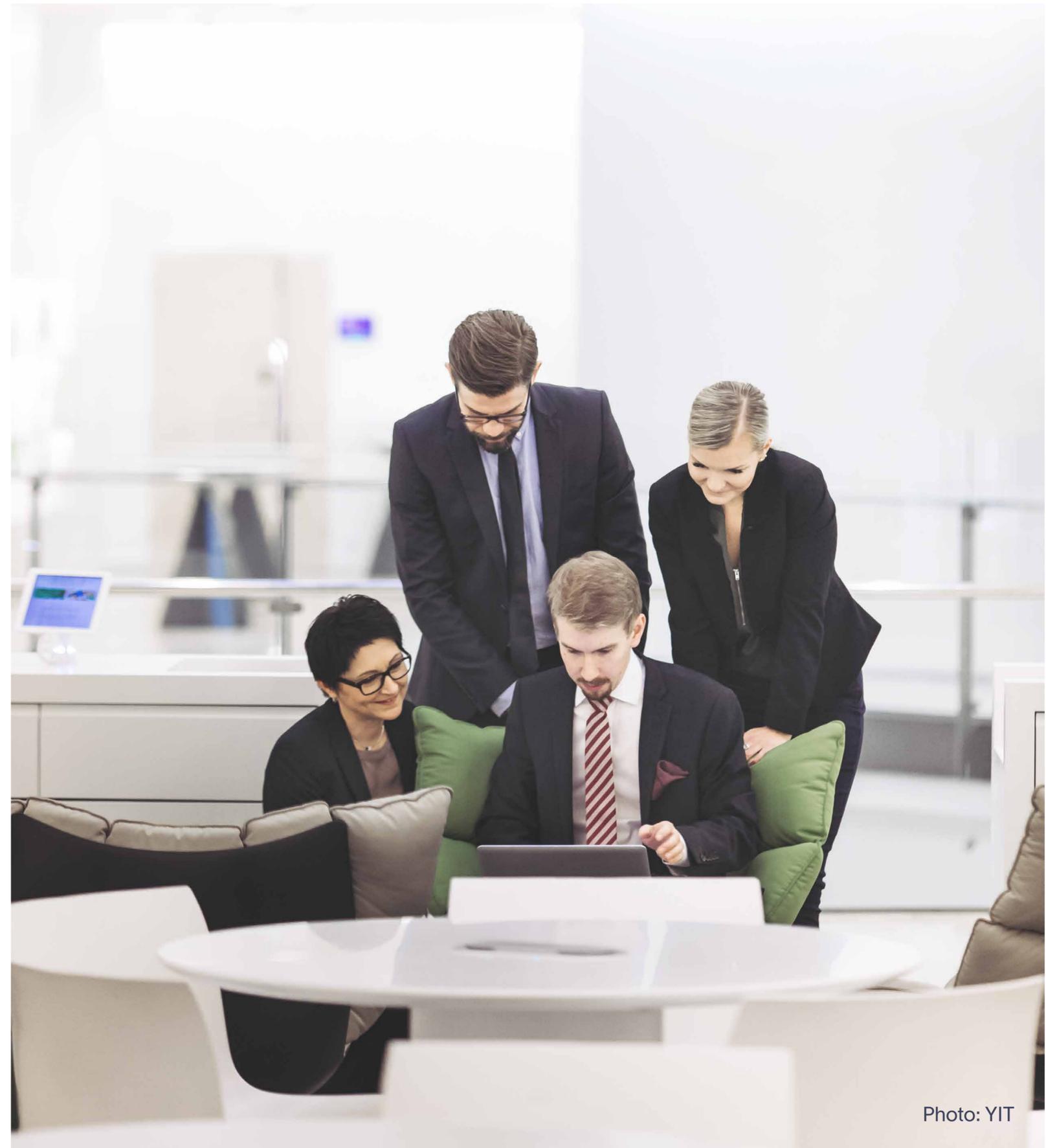


Photo: YIT

“Creativity requires randomness and encounters with different people.”

– Outi Sivonen, Solita

and do things with their bodies while helping themselves to food, walking to their table and eating.

“All of a sudden, you might come up with a new idea or meet someone who can help you with an unsolved problem in a matter of minutes, without bombarding people with emails. What’s essential is that you haven’t interrupted or disturbed anyone. Employers must create space for these random encounters. At best, the work community and the physical workplace make an important source of wellbeing,” she says.

“What’s difficult about remote work is putting up with that certain kind of boredom and monotony. Creativity requires randomness and encounters with different people,” says Outi Sivonen, Director of Culture and Employee experience at Solita.

Giving employees the opportunity to interact and make use of kinetic experiences pose a challenge to interior design. Nonetheless, even amid a turmoil of change, restructuring should be given careful consideration. Tuula Klemetti, Director and Vice President in charge of business premises leasing services at YIT, notes that it’s not only a question of the future of open-plan offices, but a question of organizing and leading work and creating safe, healthy and conscious solutions that support it.

“It takes a lot of skill to make solutions that work well into the future and don’t rule out any future needs or changes that those needs bring about. From the perspective of a company’s operations, it makes sense to design flexible premises that serve the company in the long run,” Klemetti summarizes.

EXPERTS INTERVIEWED

Salla Eckhardt

Director of Transformation Services, Microsoft

Jaakko Eskola

President & CEO, Wärtsilä

Eija Hakakari

CHRO, Yle Finnish Broadcasting Company

Jari Hakanen

Research Professor, Finnish Institute
of Occupational Health

Charles Héaulmé

CEO, Huhtamäki

Minna Huotilainen

Professor, University of Helsinki

Ville Karkiainen

VP Leadership and Talent Development,
Cargotec

Tuula Klemetti

Director, VP, YIT

Juha Kostainen

EVP, Urban development, YIT

Marja-Liisa Manka

Docent, leading well-being at work,
University of Tampere

Karoliina Mellanen

Organizational Psychologist

Harri Mikkanen

Product Marketing Manager, Microsoft

Esa Neuvonen

EVP, Construction and Building, YIT

Perttu Pölönen

Author, Inventor, Keynote speaker

Timo Ritakallio

CEO, OP Ryhmä

Tapio Salo

SVP, Head of Project Tripla, YIT

Outi Sivonen

Director Culture & Employee experience,
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Joonas Tamminen

Studio General Manager, Ubisoft RedLynx

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CEO, Messukeskus Helsinki

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