# IMPLEMENTATION OF REMOTE WORKING

*Research findings, guidelines, tools and policy for remote transition*

**RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION**

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# Management summary

Limacon is a marketing agency that provides services in marketing, sales, event management and business digitalization. The company consists of 21 employees, 5 of which are the managers of the five main departments of the company – marketing, sales, events, web and administration. The target customers of Limacon are in the B2B market with a focus on production and distribution, e-commerce and SaaS companies on the Bulgarian and the International market.

The monumental shifts of the past year towards remote working affected countries, industries, companies and individuals. Remote work is a new trend that creates a need for awareness, resources, tools, policies and new company operations (William, 2021). As a result of the global trends around remote working and the global pandemic that was a driving force to it, the management team of Limacon started to look for ways to embrace this shift and set a goal for the company to transition to fully remote working by 2022. The goal is to optimize Limacon's processes, create a productive working environment for their employees and benefit their clients. This defines a need for findings on remote work for Bulgaria, supporting guidelines for optimizing the remote processes, digital tools to support remote operations and a way to organize the whole process in the form of a policy.

The research was drawn so that these needs are satisfied. The research consists of desk research, qualitative and quantitative research in the form of a survey with open-ended and close-ended question as well as interviews with the decision-making representatives of the management team of Limacon. 295 survey responses were collected and 3 interviews were conducted. The findings were designated according to the research questions based on the needs and the problem outlined.

The preliminary research outlined global and general context elements such as economic development, geographic location, cultural factors and activities' potential, drivers in particular remote work trend, freelance workforce growth and the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, benefits for employers, employees and clients revolving around lower cost, employment attractiveness, personal gains and lower risk were outlined. Some challenges for remote work such as legal issues, communication and distraction, work performance and company culture were listed. While as per the field research statistical findings the Bulgarian trends for remote work match the global preliminary findings of the desk research.

The guidelines for both employers are setting goals, assigning responsibilities, communicating standard operation procedures (SOPs), ensuring regular checkups in order to overcome the main issues of remote working. The general guidelines for employees revolve around their workspace and technical conditions, preventing distractions and establishing habits.

A list of tools is suggested to support the remote working processes of the departments in Limacon. The suggestions are for Administration - document signing and scanning, for Human Resources - real-time and video communication as well as rewards and recognition, for Sales - engagement, sales dialer and remote prospecting, social media management software for Marketing, Customer Relationship Management software for CRM, for Project management - project management software, for IT – security tools, for Finance and accounting - remote accounting software and Additional suggestions to support remote operations.

A Remote Work Policy template was provided based on the needs of Limacon. The template is to be implemented by Limacon as well as provided to their partners and clients in cases when needed to further sport their business optimizations and further digitalization.

The best strategy for Limacon to transition smoothly to remote work is to increase the awareness on the topic of remote work within the company as well as among their partners and customers, provide supporting materials such as guidelines and tools, set up a remote working policy.

The suggestions given to the company based on the research findings are as follows:

**(1) Increase awareness of remote working**
The more the public especially the SMEs in Bulgaria are familiar with remote work the more they would be ready to embrace it and benefit from it. The campaign should be aimed towards SMEs as Limacon's target clients and partners fall into this category and can be organized as a designated campaign by the marketing department of the company.

**(2) Implement the guidelines and digital tools**
The list of guidelines, resources and tools that benefit the remote processes in a company, provided by the research is to be implemented and put into a test run by the fully remote transition of Limacon in 2022.

**(3) Set up a Remote Work Policy**
Setting up a company-specific policy based on the template provided by this research would guarantee compliance with laws and regulations, would establish a company culture, structure and routine and would ensure quality of work.

**(4) Create an event on the topic of remote work**
Organizing an online event to present the findings of the research to the customers and partners of Limacon would be a considerable opportunity, a source of lead generation and a chance to present the expansion of the company's expertise.
This recommendation has been already put in place, as an online event is in the process of being organized. The event aims to increase awareness on the topic and familiarize the public with this resource that Limacon would be providing to its customers.

**(5) Create remote work operations service**
A long term recommendation is to create a new service targeting companies in transition to remote work or completely remotely operating. This service is an entirely new business opportunity that would increase the customer potential, would increase the brand recognition beyond the current services and would give Limacon a bigger market share as well as better positioning in the national and international market.

The findings of the research have been presented to the company in the form of a Remote Work Guide. The guide is a 25 pages long PDF file that contains the context elements, drivers, benefits and challenges as well as the guidelines, tools and policy template. It is presented in an attractive visual form and intended to be shared with the team of Limacon, sent out to a designated list of survey participants and provided as an additional resource to current and future clients and partners.

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# 1. Preliminary research

## 1.1 Company and product analysis

Limacon is an external marketing and sales agency working with Bulgarian and International companies in the field of marketing, sales, business digitalization and event organization (Limacon, 2020). The company was found in 2016 and is currently situated in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. It was co-founded by Ivan Bondokov and Valentina Kutseva. The company has five main departments – marketing, sales and HubSpot, events, web and administration.

The marketing department of Limacon consists of ten people in total, which includes two account managers, three graphic designers, three community builders and two online advertisement specialists. They provide the service of an "external marketing department" to medium and large companies of any sort in Bulgaria and internationally (Limacon, 2020). The main activities of the department are overseen by one of the co-founders – Valentina Kutseva.

The sales team of Limacon consists of five people currently – one sales specialist, two HubSpot and CRM specialists and two interns. Limacon is a solution partner of HubSpot for Bulgaria and provides services for optimizing sales processes (Limacon, 2020). The main activities of the sales department are supervised by – Ivan Bondokov, a co-founder of the company.

The event management department consists of two people – an event manager and a strategy analyst. They provide service for internal and external event organizing for companies like Schneider Electric, ABB, LIEBHERR, Latecoere, Allianz, Expressbank, EVN, Reward Gateway, AVON, Trakia Tech, Trakia Economic Zone, Stabil Group and many others (Limacon, 2020). The event manager Mariya Dalemska reports the main activities of the department to both of the co-founders.

The web department includes a web development manager as well as a web administrator. This department provides website building, optimization and administration to the clients of Limacon. The manager of the department Ivelin Banchev reports the activities of the department to the two co-founders.

The administration department consists of an administration manager and a project manager. They both are members of the decision-making board of the company alongside the two co-founders. Their main responsibilities are in regards to the internal work of the company, alignment of the teams and in-time execution of the work.

The current goal of the company and its 21 employees is to earn around 800 000 leva per year in revenue that comes from their core activities. Their clients and projects are in the B2B market with mainly production and distribution, e-commerce and SaaS companies in the Bulgarian and the international market.

## 1.2 Preliminary research

The term remote work further known as work from home, work from anywhere, telecommuting is a kind of working arrangement that allows workers to execute their job responsibilities flexibly from any remote location. Such arrangements can differ from temporary to permanent, part-time, full-time or occasional (Gartner , 2021).
On a global scale, there are various context elements and drivers for remote work. Remote work is one of the fastest-growing workforces for the recent decade with a 159 percent growth from 2005 until now on a global scale (MerchantSavvy, 2020). It is a phenomenon that provides companies, employees, employers and customers with various benefits, however, it still has the challenges of a new concept.

### *1.2.1 Main concepts*

The context elements provide a broad understanding of a given situation, a phenomenon, a new concept or something generally unfamiliar (Viswanathan, 2018). Most often the context elements provide a predisposition for the drivers, which are elements that are more specific to a given situation, time period, country or some other kind of other restrictive factors (Viswanathan, 2018).

### *1.2.2 Context elements*

*Economic development*

It is reported that one-fifth of the workforce in the developed economies can work fully remotely (Lund et al., 2020). According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology well-developed countries such as Belgium, Canada, Sweden and the US, that have better access to the internet, a good variety of occupations and pro-workers policies manage better remote working (Siripurapu, 2020). In developing economies where employment is relying more on jobs related to agriculture, manufacturing and retail, defined by manual or physical labour there is a fall in the possibilities for remote working (Lund et al., 2020). When it comes to telecommuting, middle-income countries are often held back by lower internet quality and access, having many intergenerational households with young kids or old family members (Bana & Benzell, 2020).

*Geographic location*

According to research from 2020 on how remote working can differ across different locations, a large part of employment is able to transfer to remote mode easier in some places than in others (Dingel & Neiman, 2020). Furthermore, a study on the potential of remote working within 27 EU countries, Switzerland, Turkey and the US shows that there is a big difference in the potential of remote working that differs between countries and cities. In Luxembourg, up to 50 percent of the employed population is able to work remotely, while, only 21 percent of the employees are able to do so in Turkey (Özgüzel et al., 2020). Eurostat reported that the Netherlands is the country with the most remote workers with Finland, Luxembourg and Austria following with similar results. At the same time, home office rates are far lower in some regions of Eastern Europe and were highly uncommon in Bulgaria and Romania (Walkama, 2020).

*Cultural factors*

One of the most common differences that are faced between different cultures in a remote setting is the role of context when communicating (Walkama, 2020). In high-context cultures

such as Japan, China, France, Spain, Brazil, Bulgaria the non-verbal communication like gestures, handshakes and body language is the most valuable part of the conversation and working remotely imposes a challenge in capturing it (Hofstede-Insights, 2021; Walkama, 2020). While low-context cultures like the US, Canada, Germany are more focused on verbal communication and are viewed as too direct when expressing ideas especially when communicating online (Hofstede Insights, 2021; Walkama, 2020).

*Activities Potential*

The activity mix, the physical, spatial and interpersonal context defines the potential for remote working (Lund et al., 2020). Physical activities that require fixed equipment such as care providing, working and operating machinery, operating with lab equipment or customer transaction processing cannot be executed remotely (Lund et al., 2020). Nonetheless, information collection and processing, communicating, teaching, counselling, coding and suchlike can be done remotely easier (Lund et al., 2020). McKinsey constituted that remote work potential is mainly focused on a few sectors. The highest potential is in the finance and insurance sector, management, business services, and information technology (Lund et al., 2020).

### *1.2.3 Drivers*

*Remote workforce trend*

Research shows that 42 percent of the working-class population that is provided with the possibility to work remotely is ready to embrace that possibility more and more in the upcoming 5 years (Owl Labs, 2019). For 2019, 16.1 percent of the employed citizens of the European Union could work remotely. Unfortunately, the situation is rather different for Eastern Europe in Bulgaria where the lowest share of remote working individuals was recorded among all member states (Statista, 2021). There is also a rise of fully remote companies with more than 50 of the world largest companies going fully remote working, this includes companies like Twitter, Hitachi, Slack, Siemens, HubSpot, Gett, Pinterest, Deutsche Bank, Coca Cola India, Microsoft, Dropbox and Spotify (Build Remote, 2021). Additionally, countries and governments support the remote working trend. For instance, Estonia announced the development of a digital nomad visa that will provide the opportunity for anyone who works remotely to stay in Estonia for a whole year (Spinks, 2018). Another example is the Governor of Vermont, Canada who is providing anyone who is working remotely and willing to move to Vermont with $10 000 from the government reserve (Bach, 2018).

*Freelance growth*

Freelancing has become one of the most trendy, popular and highly viable ways to make a living for the future work class - Generation Z. Since 2014 freelance workforce growth in the US alone has accelerated three times (Deutschkron, 2017). In Europe, the European Commission has announced that freelancers are now a new category on its own within the definition and legislation for businesses. For the EU labour market, this segment is the fastest-growing, as it has had a 45 percent rise since 2000 (Liedke, 2021). In the UK alone, freelance workers in the period from 2001 to 2017 contributed over £275 billion to the British economy (Bromley, 2019). In the US for 2019, over 57 million US workers committed to freelancing which is 35 percent of the total US workforce (Liedke, 2021).

*COVID-19 pandemic*

At the beginning of 2020 companies had to quickly adapt their business operations under the shocking effect of the spread of the coronavirus. Many countries also had to support the business and workforce in the country by making changes, which resulted in millions of people now working from home (Sharkey, 2021). Germany for example is introducing a new legal right for its citizens to work from home as a consequence of the pandemic. Another European country that has already introduced remote working as a legal right is Finland, where remote working is very well culturally incorporated (Walkama, 2020). COVID-19 has accelerated the adoption of fully digitized approaches to work and business operations (Agrawal et al., 2020).

### *1.2.4 Benefits*

Remote work provides various benefits that can be viewed from the employer, employee and client perspective. It enables companies across all industries to mitigate their local labour shortages and skill mismatches in times when digitalization and innovation processes increase the requirements for technical skill and specialized knowledge (Agrawal et al., 2020). Moreover, it provides various tangible and intangible benefits for employees and clients.

*Benefits for the employers*

Research shows a 21 percent higher profitability of companies that operate remotely as remote worker contributes positively to the companies growth and profitability overall (Farrer, 2020; Gallup, 2017). Office space is one of the biggest expenses for many companies, therefore by transferring to remote work a company can save up to $2 000 per employee on real estate costs (Reiners, 2021; WeWork, 2020). Furthermore, remote work allows employers to embrace diversity and inclusion by reaching personnel from different socioeconomic, geographic and cultural backgrounds, which can be a challenge to accomplish if recruiting is restricted to a certain location (Courtney, 2021). A Stanford University study concluded that remote working improved employee's productivity across a variety of different fields (Bloom et al., 2015). It is also reported that 72 percent of employers notice remote work's highly positive impact on employee retention as they are more likely to opt to stay at their position if they are provided remote work options (Courtney, 2021). Being able to attract and retain employee talent is a key differentiating factor in the current competitive business world and remote work can play a positive role in that (Gallup, 2017). Additionally, 7.8 billion miles aren't travelled each year, 3 million tons of greenhouse gases are being avoided and oil savings have reached $980 million additionally to remote workers having the same positive impact on air quality as planting over 91 million trees (Courtney, 2021).

*Benefits for the employees*

72 percent of Owl Labs survey respondents in 2019 agreed that the ability to work remotely resulted in less stress from work as well as 77 percent reported that working remotely helped them establish a healthier work-life balance (Owl Labs, 2019). A study from 2011 showed the stress levels for employees who work remotely are 25 percent lower, they had a healthier diet and better work-life balance (White, 2019). FlexJobs and Global Workplace Analytics report a higher salary for remote workers compared to the employees who work on location (Howington, 2018). Additionally, 30 percent of remote employees say they manage to save more by cutting down on on-site work expenses and work travel (Bump, 2021).

*Benefits for the customers*

Some of the benefits of remote working for clients are time flexibility as they do nott need to commute and online meetings are often better organized (Jackson, 2020). A more diverse international team working from different time zones and different location can provide a fast and all-inclusive 24/7 service. Moreover, the company can provide a better talent pool to its clients when hiring remotely (Remote Agency, n.d.). Clients expect on-demand services, the virtual operating companies give an opportunity to meet that demand with lower risks and higher effectiveness and efficiency (Jackson, 2020).

### *1.2.5 Challenges*

A study on remote work shows that 27 percent of remote workers cited communication as their number one challenge (Sharkey, 2021). 19 percent of remote workers report loneliness and isolation as one of their biggest issues at this form of work (Owl Labs, 2019). A study cites that disturbances at home impact productivity up to 27 percent(Sharkey, 2021). According to research on marketers in large enterprises around 61 percent said that keeping your creativity is a critical or significant challenge when working remotely. Performance management is cited as a challenge by 57 percent when it comes to working remotely (Sharkey, 2021). One of the obvious challenges in a completely remote operating business is building a company culture and establishing a sense of belonging for employees (Choudhury et al., 2020).

### *1.2.6 Conclusion*

The context elements economic development of a country, its geographic location, the cultural predisposition of its society and the different potential of activities for remote executions provide a broad factor for the development and the growth of the remote work phenomenon. Similarly, the more narrowed down drivers for remote work in terms of the global trend for remote working, the growth of freelancing as well as the most recent COVID-19 pandemic have created a further implementation potential for this working setup. The exploring of this working arrangement has provided various benefits specific for employers, employees as well as clients. It cannot go without mentioning the challenges that it brings and the needs that it creates.

## 1.3 Problem analysis

The decision-making board of Limacon have noticed the global trends around remote working and its benefits. They want the company to embrace these benefits in order to optimize its processes, create a productive working environment for their employees and benefit their clients. This created a need for new resources, further improvements and various ways to overcome general business challenges to working remotely. In particular, Ivan Bondocov, one of the cofounders described the lack of awareness, the need for further information and research on the Bulgarian market and recourses when it comes to remote work for Limacon and their clients.

Limacon has the goal to transition to fully remote working by 2022. Therefore, the company needs some further improvements in order to have a more organized and smooth transition. The situation for Limacon calls for more information on remote working in general in terms of the situation globally as well as in the country in particular. Additionally, the different departments of the company would benefit from improvement on the operations by the implementation of some guidelines, digital tools and further suggestions. Moreover, these changes would have to be presented and set for the internal use of the company in a way accessible for current and new employees.

The recent and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic created a need for rapid changes in the organization designs. In that context, organizations struggled a lot with adapting to working remotely full time rather than having this option as a privilege to a few as it was before (Minervini, 2020). After the initial shock of the sudden change, leaders of global companies worldwide viewed this new way of working as a great long term opportunity (Agrawal et al., 2020). And given that corporate leaders worldwide see the benefits of remote work to the sustainability of brands and businesses, and recognize its added value for the world, investment in the development of this as a resource is significant (Farrer, 2020). Limacon and their clients were similarly affected by that. The experience they got from having to undergo remote working as a result of the national lockdown has additionally highlighted the potential of remote working, but also the need for improvement, further guidelines, resources and information.

## 1.4 Information gaps

The context elements in terms of economic development, geographic location, cultural factors and activities' potential combined with the drivers like remote work trend, freelancing growth and the COVID-19 pandemic outline the global driving forces behind remote work. There are also benefits for employers, employees and clients as well as challenges for companies when it comes to it in a more generalized point of view. In order to support the remote transition of Limacon and satisfy the needs that they and their clients have in terms of remote working theoretical information, practical tools and resources were collected. In that process, four underlying information gaps needed to be taken into consideration: (1) collect findings for remote work in Bulgaria in reference with the preliminary research, (2) general guidelines to be suggested for a remote work setting for employers and employees, (3) digital tools that can be used in the remote work process that are essential and/or beneficial, (4) a remote work policy to support the processes of remote work in a company.

## 1.5 Research questions

The information gaps addressed can be filled by answering the following questions:
Sub-question 1 - What are the statistical findings on remote work for Bulgaria?
Sub-question 2 - What general guidelines could be suggested for employers and employees in a remote work setting?
Sub-question 3 – What tools are beneficial for remote work per department?
Sub-question 4 – What elements are essential for a remote working policy?
The main research question, therefore, is – What is the best strategy for Limacon to transition smoothly to remote working?

## 1.6 Project aim

The project aim of the research is to (1) create supporting resources for the remote transition of Limacon, (2) increase awareness and (3) provide supporting materials for other client or partner companies in order to increase the expertise of Limacon.
To begin with, this research aimed to provide insight into the context elements, drivers, benefits and challenges of remote work on a general scale, suggest guidelines for employers and employees, digital tools per department as well as remote work policy template elements based on research findings for Bulgaria. To do that literature reviews, field research and analysis was conducted. The topic of the research as well as the final deliverable was requested in a discussion with the management team of Limacon and was further supported by the needs outlined by the preliminary desk research.
The needs that this research satisfies are start with predefined ones such as the desire for the remote transition of Limacon and further outlined by the research as the need to improve awareness and provide resources for remote operations. The results and insights from this field research helped outline guidelines and tools that can be useful for remote work based on the difficulties remote working employees had experienced. Furthermore, the findings of the desk and literature research prove insights into the challenges and the benefits of remote work. Additionally, the findings of the research were used in order to compose the building elements of a remote work policy for companies to use.

# 2. Research approach

## 2.1 Approach per information gap

The four information gaps already mentioned were answered by using the means of desk research, qualitative and quantitative research. Information gap 1 focused on supporting the findings of context elements, drivers, benefits and challenges was answered primarily through survey results analysis. Information gap 2, 3 and 4 were fulfilled by conducting interviews with representatives in a decision making position from Limacon, analysis of the survey qualitative and quantitative findings, personal communication with employees at Limacon as well as supporting desk research.

The research on the Bulgarian trade and service industry was to reveal whether the situation in the country matches the global trends outlined by the preliminary research or not. Literature review in the form of exploring existing information on the topic of the research was used in order to establish a foundation of knowledge on the topic, outline the main methodologies & research techniques used and define the need for additional field research (Upstate University of South Carolina, 2021).

The field research was conducted in the form of a survey with open and close-ended questions as well as semi-structured interviews. The survey was used to collect information from a large sample of the chosen population, in a more inclusive, less expensive way. Moreover, open-ended questions in a survey allow for a qualitative data collection of ideas that would not otherwise be able to be accessed and provide additional insight when the researcher is not priorly familiar with the subject (Glasow, 2005). Additionally, close-ended questions are easier to quantify, provide quantitative data that can be converted into graphs and indicators at high accuracy (Dossetto, 2021).

## 2.2 Data collection

### 2.2.1 Survey sample

The research is based on the population of all employed in the non-financial sector in Bulgaria for 2019. The last publically available statistics from the National statistical institute in Bulgaria are from 2019 and show a total number of people employed in non-financial institutions as 2 210 488 people (National statistical institute, 2020). The whole population could be statistically divided into 5 subpopulations: (1) agriculture, forest and fishing sector, (2) manufacturing sector, (3) construction sector, (4) trading sector and (5) service sector. The research is only taking into consideration people employed in the trading and service sector as they have the biggest potential for remote work. Moreover, this research took into consideration the total number of people employed in trading and services which is 1 363 584 as a sub-population as it matches the client profile of Limacon. The total number of people employed in trading corporations in Bulgaria for 2019 have been 497 905 people. Moreover, there have been 200 342 people employed in the service sector by 2019 in Bulgaria (Appendix 1 – Survey Sample Sources).

The sample reached with the survey was 3 000 people and 295 responses were collected (Appendix 2 – Sample Calculations). This sample was composed of the whole contact list of Limacon LTD, a random selection of working professionals from the researcher's personal network as well as working professionals reached through LinkedIn. Having this homogeneous sample of the sub-population ensured a satisfying reliability rate.

The contacts of Limacon were reached through a marketing email build and sent by HubSpot (Appendix 3 – Survey Email Statistics – HubSpot). Working professionals with relevant experience and employed representatives from the given sub-population were reached through LinkedIn, personal social media and direct contact. All responses were collected by a google form survey and data was collected in a linked google spreadsheet.

### 2.2.2 Interviews sample

The population that was considered for the conducted interviews was the management team on Limacon. At the moment when the research was conducted, this amounted to 5 people in total. The research only took managers that are active participants in the decision-making process for the company as a subpopulation with a total of 3 representatives. By having a homogeneous sub-population high reliability was ensured. As the scope and resources of this research allowed it an interview was conducted with each individual belonging to the sub-population. Interviews were arranged and conducted in person at the Limacon Office in Plovdiv Bulgaria.

### 2.2.3 Personal communication source

The information obtained through personal communication was collected in the process of job shadowing of the Limacon team. The subpopulation for that activity was representatives that have been working at the same position for over a year, excluding newly hired employees, interns or employees who have recently switched positions. That was done as to guarantee that the experience reflected in that process is long term oriented and reliable. The total number of people that participated in the job shadowing activity was 14. This was a major task agreed upon with the in-company coach that resulted in a considerable amount of findings for the professional product (Appendix 9 – Job shadowing agenda).

## 2.3 Data analysis

The field research included a survey with close-ended and open-ended questions. In detail, the close-ended part of the survey consisted of a combination of dichotomous, multiple-choice, semantic differential scale and checklist questions. Additionally, the open-ended questions asked for the opinion of the participants or providing additional examples based on the unique circumstances of the participant when needed.

In order to analyze the data collected from the survey, 5 main steps were followed: (1) collect results, (2) filter results utilizing cross-tabulating subgroups, (3) interrogate the collected data, (4) analyze the results, (5) draw conclusions.

In the first step, a google form was sent out as it allowed the data to be sorted out in a basic statistical way and to also download the raw results so they could be further analyzed. The next step was cross-tabulating the different sub-groups. What was interesting for this research was to outline findings for Bulgaria after operationalizing the literature review findings from the global scale. Moreover, the open-ended questions provided a source of further qualitative data. Pivot tables and the VLOOKUP function in Excel were used in analyzing the data and finding correlations. Conclusions based on the statistical findings and correlations were drawn and results were used in the professional product execution.

For the qualitative research in the forms of interviews, the following steps were used: (1) collect the data, (2) convert the data, (3) analyze the data and (4) draw conclusions. The 3 interviews were conducted in person and audio-recorded on location in the Limacon office. Afterwards, the audio recordings were transcribed using Standard Verbatim Transcription, which allows

for a detailed transcription with light editing and creating a transcript that is highly accurate yet not overloaded with unnecessary detail (IndianScribes, 2018). Afterwards, the interviews were coded using inductive coding with a codebook based on the data collected (Spear, PhD, 2018). Afterwards, conclusions were drawn and the findings were used when preparing the professional product for this research.

## 2.4 Operationalisation

The preliminary research has made clear that many variables play a role when the topic of remote working is addressed. In the current paragraph, the concept and variables have been presented as part of the operationalization table upon which the choice for survey and interview questions has been based.

| Concept | Variable | Indicator | Possible Questions | Measurement |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Demographics | Position | -What are the different positions representatives from the non-financial sector occupying?<br>-Is the majority at a decision making level or a staff level?<br>-What occupations are present in the chosen subpopulation? | -What is your current position? | Position indicated |
| | Number of employees | -What sizes are the companies that fall in the sub-population category?<br>-How big are the companies in the non-financial sector in terms of staff number? | -How many employees does the company you work for have? | Number indicated |
| | Geographic location | -Are the companies in the sample local?<br>-Are there international companies that operate in the non-financial sector in Bulgaria?<br>-What countries have extended their businesses to Bulgaria? | -Where is the company you work for based? | Location stated |
| Expertise in remote work | Experience | -Is the sub-population familiar with remote working?<br>-What kind of experience do they have with remote working?<br>-Experience with: (1) Having worked remotely full time, (2) Having worked remotely part-time, (3) Haven't worked remotely at all | -Do you have experience working remotely?<br><br>-What type of experience do you have working remotely? | Answer given Yes/No |
| If yes: | | | | |
| Satisfaction | Personal experience | -What has been their experience while working remotely?<br>-How would they rate their experience working remotely?<br>-Experience rating: (1) I think I don't do good when working remotely, (2) I have completely adjusted to remote working | -How would you rate your work experience remotely? | Rating of personal experience |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Challenges | Difficulties | -What are some major challenges of remote working?<br>What are the main difficulties people experience?<br>-What are the main difficulties related to different departments/positions?<br>-Difficulties and challenges:(1) loneliness, (2) distraction (3) difficult cooperation, (4) difficult communication, (5) technical issues, (6) low motivation, (7) difficulties establishing work-life balance, (8) I don't face difficulties or (9) Other. | -What are your biggest difficulties with teleworking?<br><br>-What are the biggest challenges for remote execution of your job? | Mentioning of difficulties |
| | Management difficulties | -What challenged did the managers of different departments face during remote work? | -What experience do you have working remotely?<br><br>-What challenges did you face working remotely? | Challenges mentioned |
| | Clients 'difficulties | -What are the challenges clients face when working remotely? | -What was the clients' reaction to remote work?<br>-What was done to prepare them and guide them through this process?<br>-How did you overcome these challenges? | Difficulties explained |
| Support | Tools | -What tools are used in a remote setting?<br>-What tools are used in different departments?<br>-What are the most used tools?<br>-Tools: (1)CRM,(2) Communication, (3)Online meeting, (4)MS Office, (5)Google, (6)Project Managemen, (7)Cloud storage, (8)Accounting, (9)VPN tools or any (10)other | -What programs and tools do you use to do your work remotely?<br>-What administration tools are useful for remote work?<br>-What marketing tools are useful when working remotely?<br>-What tools and practices could be useful when working remotely in term of Project management?<br>-Why did you choose teamwork for the project management of Limacon?<br>-How do you ensure that such tools are used properly and being beneficial?<br>-What other suggestions could benefit remote working in a company? | Tools mentioned<br>Tools used |
| | Habits 'changes | -What changes in a person's daily habits are observed when working remotely?<br>-Daily activities like: (1) following a tight schedule, (2)strictly scheduled daily activities, (3)use more sticky notes,(4) using a daily schedule app,(5) taking more breaks,(6) talk with colleagues online, (7)use meditation apps, (8)practice sport and exercise,(9) haven't changed my habits, (10)others | -How have you changed your habits to adapt to work outside the office? | Mentioned habits changes<br>Changes in behaviour<br>Changes in routine<br>Changes in daily activities |
| | Operations | -What changes have been done in Limacon's operations to adjust to remote work?<br>-Why were SOPs needed?<br>-How do prepare the tea? | -How did you need to adjust the operations in Limacon to adjust to remote work? | Examples given |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | -How do you manage the situation? | -What are the steps towards implementing SOPs?<br>-How do you ensure the success of a new operations in a company?<br>-How do you prepare the team for such a big change? | |
| Prospects | Personal opinion | -What is the general opinion about remote work?<br>-What additional remarks people have to make? | -What is your opinion about telecommuting? | Opinion expressed |
| If not: | | | | |
| Awareness | Positive impact | -Are people aware of the positive impact of remote working?<br>-What is the general opinion on the benefits of remote working?<br>-What awareness can be brought on the topic of remote work?<br>-What benefits are recognized by the public?<br>-Opportunities:(1)Ability to work remotely due to disability, (2)Opportunity to work remotely due to health condition, (3)Opportunity to work remotely due to the need to take care of a child/children,(4)Opportunity to work remotely due to inability to travel, (5)Opportunity to work remotely due to inability to visit an office, (6)Opportunity to work remotely in a company based on a different location from mine, (7)It doesn't | -Are you aware of the benefits and advantages of telecommuting?<br><br>-What opportunities do you think remote work provides? | Listed benefits and advantages |
| Prospects | Interest | -Do people have interest in working remotely? | -Are you interested in working remotely? | Yes or No answer provided |
| | Conditions | -What are the general conditions for remote work?<br>-What are people expecting from remote work? | -Under what conditions would you work remotely? | Examples given |
| | Personal opinion | -What is the general opinion about remote work?<br>-What additional remarks people have to make? | -What is your opinion about telecommuting? | Opinion expressed |

## 2.5 Reliability & validity

The reliability of this research shows to what extent the instruments used would ensure consistent results if the measurements are taken multiple times under the same conditions (Morrison, n.d.).

### 2.5.1 Survey

*Reliability*

*Internal consistency* is the type of reliability used for this research. It shows the consistency of participants' responses across the answers on a multiple-question measure. In other words, the people who answered that they have experience with remote work reflect their experience and people who did not work remotely should provide their insight on awareness of the topic and future prospects (Taherdoost, 2016).

*Validity*

The validity of a survey measures its accuracy. In other words, it is the extent to which the survey measures exactly what it is intended to measure. For this survey predictive validity is used (Morrison, n.d.). Using the already established and validated results from three international surveys report - Buffer's "The 2021 State of Remote Work, Owl Labs' "2020 State of Remote Work Report (United States)" as well as Owl Labs' " 2020 State of Remote Work Report (UK)". The combination of the questions for this field research comes from the various questions asked in the 3 reports in order to determine if the results for Bulgaria match the international trends(information gap 5) (Morrison, n.d.).

### 2.5.2 Interviews

The instrument used in this qualitative research is open-ended semi-structured interviews with a formalised list of questions. The questions were drawn based on the operationalization of the literature review on the topic of remote work. After conducting the interviews in either an audio-recorded version or a written version a transcription was prepared for each one using standard verbatim transcription (Imtiaz Abd Gani et al., 2020). As a means to ensure methodological coherence, the questions are ensured to match the method chosen, that matches with the data collected and the analytic procedure. The sample of managers in a decision making position at Limacon is appropriate as they well represent the research sample and have expertise on the topic. After that, collecting and analyzing the data concurrently resulted in invalid theory development in which the micro perspective of the results of the interview and macro conceptual findings of the literature review match. All these verification strategies were followed in order to incrementally and interactively ensure rigour (Morse et al., 2002).

## 2.6 Limitations

The limitations of this research revolve around the fact that it focuses only on the trading and service sector in Bulgaria due to the time and resources limitations of the research. The employment in the other sectors has not been taken into consideration since there is a lack of information on what type of activities are actually considered in these sectors and what is the remote execution potential of the activities they perform.

Another limitation is the fact that the research only takes into consideration Bulgarians employed in these sectors regardless if they are employed in Bulgarian companies or in foreign companies with offices in Bulgaria or work remotely for entirely foreign companies. It would be interesting to exceed these limitations by extending the research and making the factors even more specific to all the different sectors of employment in Bulgaria, however, this would require a longer research period, a bigger research team and more resources.

# 3. Results

Processing the results of the preliminary research led to sub-question 1 on the statistical findings on remote work for Bulgaria, sub-question 2 about the general guidelines that could be suggested for employers and employees in a remote work setting, sub-question 3 on tools that are beneficial for remote work per department and sub-question 4 focused on the elements that are essential for a remote working policy. Collectively the findings on the sub-questions provide the information needed to outline the best strategy for Limacon to transition smoothly to remote working. The results from the field research provide support to the findings of the preliminary research, insights on the guidelines and tools used for remote work as well as the expressed need for a policy of remote work.

## 3.1 Preliminary research support

*Activities potential*

As seen from the preliminary research the activities' potential is one of the context elements of remote work. Some work activities have a better potential for remote execution depending on the physical, spatial and interpersonal factors; similarly, some people in specific positions have higher remote working opportunities (Lund et al., 2020). The findings for Bulgaria from the survey support that notion showing us that higher management positions and fields like IT, business services and teaching have higher opportunities for remote working (Appendix 5 - Survey Findings – correlations).

*Remote work trends and COVID-19 Pandemic*

As seen in the preliminary research Bulgaria used to be one of the countries with the lowest remote work opportunities in the EU (Statista, 2021). The qualitative research in the form of open-ended survey questions supported the fact that remote working is not a common option provided by Bulgarian employers. Moreover, among the most frequent responses when it came to remote work opportunities was the COVID-19 pandemic as a driver for change. Among the answers of the qualitative research, this was one of the reasons why many people got to transfer to remote working and why this was introduced to them in the first place.

*Benefits*

Retention of human capital was one of the benefits outlined by the preliminary research on remote work (Courtney, 2021). Evidence in support of that notion can be seen from the field research. 70 percent of the participants that do not have remote work experience express interest in remote working. Moreover, when asked under what circumstances they would consider remote work - "having this option provided by their employer" was chosen 29 times making it the most frequent answer.

One finding of the remote work survey was that remote employees highly benefit from the freedom that this form of work provides. 26 people explicitly state freedom as one of their biggest benefits when working remotely. Moreover, as stated by the preliminary literature review finances in the form of salary and savings is one of the benefits of remote work. In the survey answers, 14 people stated that lower costs and the positive impact on their personal finances were an advantage in a remote work setting. Additionally, when asked about the conditions under which they would consider remote work 26 participants stated lower costs as

a criterion, making it the second most popular choice after having this option provided by their employer (Appendix 4 – Survey Findings- question-by-question).

*Challenges*

The field research suggested a few further challenges of remote work for the Bulgarian market. First of all legal issues caused by the legal system in the country not being designed to consider the remote work setting was suggested (I. Bondokov, personal communication, April 1, 2021) (Appendix 9 – Job shadowing agenda). Different legal systems require different alterations to adjust to remote work on demand (Gera, 2020). As per the Bulgarian Labour Code, it is the employer's responsibility to provide the necessary equipment for their employees and ensure that they have access to all essential technical and communication tools and channels to perform their work appropriately. In case that these requirements are not met employees may lawfully refuse to fulfil their responsibilities. The same regulations apply when working from home or remotely. Another regulation from the Bulgarian Labour Code is concerned with the occupational health and safety of remote employees. In the case of remote work employers remain responsible for providing safe and healthy working conditions even though employees are not working on location. (Tsifudina & Ivanova, 2020)

Furthermore, employers and managers face challenges when it comes to performance management (Kutseva, 2021). Employers should find a way to overcome the challenges of the new way of communication, information transfer and transparency. For example, a way of transparent compensation is always suitable for situations where employees' contribution is traceable, observable and directly connected with a given individual. But in situations where work is performed from a great distance via online platforms and suchlike that cannot always be ensured. An additional challenge is also a decomposing individual effort into a team. This is a factor many prize competition companies struggle with (Boss et al., 2019).

Additionally, some of the challenges outlined by the initial literature review that was supported further by the field research were the communication as well as company culture difficulties. 22 percent of the participants in the survey pointed to communication as one of their biggest challenges when working remotely, in addition, 5 participants further commented on their communication challenges when asked about their opinion on remote work. In an interview, the co-founder and manager of Limacon shared the difficulties of establishing and keeping appropriate company culture in a remote setting (Kutseva, 2021).

## 3.2 Guidelines for remote work

*Guidelines for employers*

To outline the guidelines for employers, two interviews were conducted. The findings of these interviews presented four general guidelines. First of all, setting the right expectations, defining the end goals, assigning ownership and deadline as well as familiarizing the team with the standard operation procedures (SOPs) for the company is of great importance (Ilieva, 2021) (Kutseva, 2021). Next, regular checkups with the team regarding well being and issues prevent larger challenges from arising especially in a remote setting (Kutseva, 2021). Following this guideline has been beneficial for the management team of Limacon. What Valentina Kutseva shared in the interview is that there have been multiple instances where regular check-ups were a source of feedback on various undergoing issues and that was the way to identify them early on and find a way to solve the situations. That could be further implemented by the general management in a lot of companies. Regular feedback and constructive suggestions are among the things managers can benefit from when working

remotely (Kutseva, 2021). Lastly, open communication through the right means is beneficial for the management of people as well as for the whole team dynamics (Ilieva, 2021) (Kutseva, 2021). These suggestions aim to assist in overcoming the challenges faced during remote working by organizing the performance management, establishing transparent and strong company culture and preventing communication fallbacks.

*Guidelines for employees*

A combination of the survey results, especially the answers to the open questions, personal communication with employees of Limacon as well as literature review suggested a number of general guidelines for employees when working remotely. Establishing a safe, private and comforting space equipped with the right ergonomics was suggested by 21 of the respondents in the survey as something that helped them adjust properly to remote work. Moreover, internet connection and technical conditions was a suggestion made by a Limacon employee that has experience working remotely extensively (I. Banchev, personal communication, April 28, 2021) (Appendix 9 – Job shadowing agenda). Additional suggestions were made regarding overcoming distractions that were further backed up by literature. Creating a routine, blocking off time, having healthy eating habits as well as practising physical exercise and meditation were among the guidelines (Moonlyte, 2021) (Microsoft Corporation, 2021)( Appendix 4 – Survey Findings- question-by-question).

## 3.3 Remote working tools

After conducting a series of interviews and personal communication with the team of Limacon as well as supporting desk research a number of useful tools were outlined that could be used by remote workers and that employers could implement to support their remote processes. The tools are grouped per department and are concerned with either the main needs of the department, major issues for remote execution of certain activities and/or the need for tools to support certain remote processes that have been flagged by Limacon's team during the research data collection.

*Administration*

For the administration department document signing and scanning is the biggest issue Limacon faced during their completely remote working period during the pandemic in 2020, therefore for that need four alternatives were suggested in order to meet the needs of Limacon as well as provide options for different companies. Evrotrust and B-trust Mobile are the solutions suggested for Limacon, as they are compatible with the operations the company has and with the Bulgarian legal documents. They are being implemented from 01.06.2021 at Limacon. Moreover, Adobe Sign and Microsoft Lens were suggested with the intention of providing additional documents signing options as well as meet the need for document scanning (Babikova, 2021). Cloud storage was one of the main needs when working remotely by the whole team as mentioned by the project manager in Limacon. For that need, Google drive and DropBox were suggested (Ilieva, 2021). Another need that Limacon has faced is access and approval management since the team is growing and the company uses more and more platforms and also works with more clients and deals with a large quantity of personal data. For that need, 1password and LastPass were suggested (I. Banchev, personal communication, April 28, 2021) (Appendix 9 – Job shadowing agenda). Additional desk research suggested announcement and internal documentation tools for the administration department in a remote setting. These tools provide options for employee onboarding, keeping and sharing notes, product requirements, plans, instructions from one place (DeMeré, 2020).

*Human Resource*

In a remote setting human resource's needs revolve around communication and reward and recognition (Ilieva, 2021). The results from the conducted survey showed that the tools used the most during remote working is the online meetings tool. Online meetings tools including Zoom, Skype, MS Teams, Google Meets have been given 177 times as an answer, which is 75 percent of the participants with remote work experience. Real-time communication tools such as Slack, MS Teams, Discord etc are used by 44 percent or 103 of the participants in the survey with remote experience. Additionally, the change in work-related habits shows that having a good set of communication channels is important as 78 people have indicated that their habits have changed towards communication with colleagues online when working remotely. 67 people have explicitly chosen communication among their biggest challenges when working remotely as well as 5 people have expressed the need for better communication procedure at their workplace when asked about remote work (Appendix 4 – Survey Findings-question-by-question). Additional desk research suggests reward and recognition as an important factor in remote work. Therefore, Bonusly and Fond have been included as a suggestion for the satisfaction of this need in a remote setting (Bell, n.d.).

*Sales management*

Desk research on the remote needs of sales management suggested the need for sales engagement platforms as well as sales dialer tools (Efti, 2020). Personal communication with Ivan Bondocov led to narrowing down the tools suggested to Outreach and Reply for sales engagement and HubSpot dialer and RingCentral for the need of a sales dialer software (I. Bondokov, personal communication, April 1, 2021) (Appendix 9 – Job shadowing agenda). These are covering the basic needs of the specific sales activities that can be executed remotely (Efti, 2020). Additionally, personal communication with Liliana Tskova a sales employee at Limacon outlined the need and remote use of the tools for remote prospecting (L. Taskova, personal communication, March 5, 2021) (Appendix 9 – Job shadowing agenda). LinkedIn Sales navigator is suggested as the tool that Limacon itself uses and has used during their remote period as well as Profiler as an alternative to it.

*Marketing management*

In an interview with Valentina Kutseva - co-founder of Limacon, she suggested social media management software as the main tool needed for a marketing team or a marketing agency in a remote setting (Kutseva, 2021). The suggestions made in the interview were Hootsuite and SocialBakes as a valuable option, additionally, MailChimp and Marketo were suggested for companies with different needs (G2, 2021 (Kutseva, 2021).

*Customer relationship management (CRM)*

CRM is used for all activities, strategies and technologies that a company need to manage interactions with current and potential customers and clients (Kulpa, 2017). As Limacon is an official partner of HubSpot for Bulgaria it was particularly important to include CRM and its use in the Remote Work Guide in order to bring further awareness and familiarize the potential customers with the extra benefits of CRM in a remote setting. In a personal conversation with Ivan Bondocov - co-founder of Limacon, HubSpot CRM, Pipedrive and Salesforce were suggested as the main options for a business CRM that would satisfy different needs of different types of companies (I. Bondokov, personal communication, April 1, 2021) (Appendix 9 – Job shadowing agenda).

*Project management*

Project management in a company helps it run smoothly, enables employees to deliver better results and save resources (teamwork, 2021). In an interview with Neli Ilieva, the processes of implementing project management and the importance of it especially in the remote setting have been discussed. Some tools for project management that are suggested are teamwork as the tool that Limacon itself uses, Monday as a popular option and Jira, which is IT companies' specific software for project management (Ilieva, 2021).

*IT*

Information security is important for remote workers as storing business information on laptops and smartphones isn't the safest (Pinola, 2020). After a discussion with the manager of the digital team of Limacon - Ivelin, the needs for security tools when working remotely were defined. Encryption, cloud cybersecurity, two-factor authentication and virtual private network tools were some of the main suggestions(I. Banchev, personal communication, April 28, 2021) (Appendix 9 – Job shadowing agenda). In the Guide tools for these needs were suggested that serve the needs of Microsoft and Mac users such as BitLocker and FileVault, Mimecast, 2FA and NordVPN (I. Banchev, personal communication, April 28, 2021) (Appendix 9 – Job shadowing agenda).

*Finance and Accounting*

When aiming to make financial processes remote-friendly it is important to digitize all workflows in a company. When surveyed the majority of CFOs suggested FreshBooks, QuickBooks Online, NetSuite, and Xero as the best digital accounting systems for remotely operation teams (Procurify, 2021). For the Remote work guide of Limacon, FreshBooks and Xero were suggested as suitable options for companies that manage and don't manage inventories. That was due to the fact that the clients of the company vary between the two types.

*Others*

From the survey results, the MS Office package was among the most used tools by remote workers. 72 percent chose it as one of the main tools that they are using in a remote working set-up(Appendix 4 – Survey Findings- question-by-question). The Google tools Gmail, Drive, Calendar, Meet were among the most used tools by remote workers. These tools are used by 58 percent of the respondents with remote work experience. Aiming to combine the two options and provide a more digitized business option, Google workplace was suggested. Google Workspace includes Gmail, Calendar, Drive, Docs, Sheets, Slides, Meet, with additional integrated customizable user experience, brand identity and tailored business solutions. It enables remote teams to collaborate easier and allows companies to customize it to their needs in a more secure way (Google Cloud & Soltero, 2020).

Another popular suggestion by the participants in the survey has been remote desktop applications and AnyDesk in particular. This answer was suggested 8 times (Appendix 4 – Survey Findings- question-by-question). Given that Limacon itself also uses the application and has proven helpful for their work in a remote setting it has been included in the Remote Work Guide.

## 3.4 Remote work policy

In order to make the process of transitioning to remote work and the process of remote working successful companies of all sizes and types need a well-defined remote work policy (DiPietro, 2021). As remote work is a rather new concept for many companies having set rules, expectation, standard operating procedures and everything else relatable to the type of business has to be written down and shared among the team with a view to prevent confusion, misunderstandings, disconnections and malpractices (Bayern, 2020).

Policy summary, purpose and scope are standard elements of a policy (DiPietro, 2021). Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are elements that aim to outline the general processes in a company in order to guarantee the same results and quality of work as well as prevent misunderstandings and issues from arising (Ilieva, 2021) (Kutseva, 2021). Not being able to unplug from work and having difficulties with the work environment and distractions in an at-home set-up are some issues outlined by the survey findings (Appendix 4 – Survey Findings – question by question). Therefore Work availability and environment are elements of the Remote Work Policy that aim to guide employees through these difficulties. Next, communication issues have been reported by 30 percent of 72 of the participants in the survey. Moreover, Valentina Kutseva suggested that as a major issue in a remote setting from a managerial point of view. Hence, communication has been pointed as a main element of the survey, providing details on communication channels, their usage and suchlike. Following that, equipment is another clarification that needs to be done for employees as 55 of the participants in the survey reported technical difficulties.

The next important aspect to be considered for a remote work policy is security. That concerns confidentiality for example as well as cybersecurity in the form of a company cybersecurity protocol. As discussed with Ivelin from Limacon, this is an issue for companies that are growing and are working with partners, freelancers and multiple clients like Limacon and the majority of their client's portfolio (I. Banchev, personal communication, April 28, 2021) (Appendix 9 – Job shadowing agenda). Goal setting is the next part included after the interview with Neli the project manager at Limacon. She suggests that having the right goals and setting expectations with the whole team is the right approach to aligning the team and achieving the expected results in a remote setting (Ilieva, 2021). The wellbeing and the issue with it have been a repetitive answer when the participants in the survey were asked about remote work. So that the issue is prevented, a protocol for such situations is suggested (Appendix 4 – Survey Findings – question by question). An additional section for company-specific information has been provided as a standard feature (DiPietro, 2021).

# 4. Conclusion

The situation that Limacon was facing as of February 2021 was uncertainty among the team, their clients and the whole world all caused by the global pandemic and the most recent forced change towards remote work. Even though the company did well during their lockdown period thanks to previous preparations and the high level of digitalization of their processes there still was a need for internal improvement and external needs coming from their clients. The main aim of this research was to support Limacon towards their transition to completely remote working by 2022. In that process, four sub-questions were answered.

The preliminary research outlined global and general context elements, drivers, benefits and challenges for remote work, while as per the field research statistical findings the Bulgarian trends for remote work match the global preliminary findings. For the potential of certain activities to be executed remotely over others, in Bulgaria similarly to the global findings IT, business services and teaching have higher opportunities for remote execution. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic was a major driving force behind the remote transition of many companies in Bulgaria as well. The benefits of remote working in Bulgaria revolve around high interest in this form of working, more freedom and lower costs and expenses. That highlights the tangible and intangible benefits for employers and employees in Bulgaria and the potential of further popularizing this work arrangement. The challenges for remote work in Bulgaria begin with the legal limitations, which provide a challenge for arranging this type of work setting on a company level. On another level performance management, communication, transparency and company culture are additional challenges that remote working imposes on companies and individuals.

The analysis of the research results suggested guidelines for both employers and employees in order to overcome the challenges and fully embrace the benefits of remote working. Setting goals, assigning responsibilities, familiarizing with standard operation procedure, checkups are the main suggestions for employers in an attempt to prevent communication issues, set up the right performance management and establish transparent and strong company culture. The general guidelines for employees revolve around having the right workspace and technical conditions, preventing distractions by following routine, blocking off time, having healthy habits. These guidelines support the remote working adjustment for employees and set up a path for success.

The tools suggested support the remote working processes of the departments in Limacon and aim to enable the workflows related to these departments to be executed remotely. The tools suggested for Administration are for the need of remote document signing and scanning. The tools for Human Resources are intended for the need of real-time and video communication as well as rewards and recognition in a remote setting. Remote sales engagement, remote sales dialer and remote prospecting are the needs that the tools suggested for Sales correspond to. Options for remote social media management were suggested in the marketing tools sections related to the needs of this department. Customer relationship management tools are a great solution for businesses that want to operate remotely and additionally Limacon can provide the HubSpot onboarding service if any company is interested. Project management software is an additional suggestion for remote project management ensuring collaboration, timely deliverables and quality of the work. IT has security conditions that need to be ensured when working remotely therefore, security tools have been listed. Finance and accounting benefits from remote accounting software that

provide accessibility and organization of financial matters. Additional suggestions based on needs and research findings are made in order to provide a complete tool list and ensure the satisfaction of a broad range of requirements.

With a focus on providing a supporting recourse for the Limacon's transition to remote work and the further support the process of remote working – a remote work policy template was provided. The elements of the template are carefully chosen based on desk research, survey finding as well as based on the specific needs of Limacon outlined during the interviews. This resource is to be implemented by Limacon as well as provided to their partners and clients in cases when needed to further sport their business optimizations and further digitalization.

In short, the best strategy for Limacon to transition smoothly to remote work is to increase the awareness on the topic of remote work within the company as well as among their partners, clients and customers by providing an overview of the context elements, drivers, benefits and challenges of it, give supporting materials to ease the process and enable the parties involved with remote working essentials such as guidelines and tools. Finally, set up a remote working policy to be followed in that transitioning process and afterwards when it comes to onboarding of new remote employees. All that ensures an increase in the awareness of remote work, ensure a smooth transition and provides new future opportunities for Limacon.

# 5. Recommendations

These are the five significant recommendations that are suggested to Limacon in order to increase the awareness of remote work in Bulgaria in addition to improving the remote work processes for the company, provide additional resources for their clients and create entirely new business opportunities.

### 5.1 Increase awareness

The global COVID-19 pandemic shifted the perspective and threw the business world into acting before being aware of a topic. As we already know many companies, employers and employees around the world had to transfer to remote working as a result of this. That led to many issues and difficulties in adjusting to the new normal. The Bulgarian market faced even bigger issues as remote working was a broadly unfamiliar and rare practice in the country. Limacon, being the digital agency helping SMEs thrive in the new digital era, aims to provide support for their clients in that field.

This can be done step by step, starting with raising awareness on the remote work topic. The more the public is familiar with a subject the more they are ready to embrace the situation and move along. The four essential elements to successfully creating an awareness campaign on the topic are (1) targeting the right clients that have the highest potential for remote work, (2) spreading a clear message on the benefits and potential of remote work, (3) providing the right guidance and useful practices to guide the people through the process and (4) doing all of that through the right channels intending to achieve the aims of the campaign (Christiano & Neimand, 2017). The campaign should be aimed towards SMEs as Limacon's target clients and partners fall into this category and can be organized as a designated campaign by the marketing department of the company.

### 5.2 Implement provided resources

Limacon has its own experience having worked remotely during the national lockdown from 03/2020 to 02/2021 and currently, the company is striving to be fully remote by 2022. In that period many standard operating procedures(SOPs) have been adjusted to remote execution. Nonetheless, there have been some issues identified by the research and some improvements that can benefit the processes in the company, given that.

There is a list of guidelines, resources and tools that benefit the remote processes in a company, provided in the Professional Product. The suggestions of goal setting, responsibilities distribution, standard operation procedure set up and regular checkups are for employers, while the general guidelines for employees are about workspace and technical conditions, distractions, routines and habits. Tools refer to the main departments in a company such as Administration, Human Resource, Sales, Marketing, CRM, project management, IT, Finance and Others. Implementing these guidelines and tools while still operating in a hybrid remote work setting with occasional remote work of part of the team would provide the opportunity to test the process and prepare the team to operate with these resources.

This recommendation is in an implementation process as internal changes in the organization have been done in order to optimise the resources provided and prepare the team for the most optimal transition.

### 5.3 Set up a Remote Work Policy

A company-specific policy not only provides guidelines for the daily activities, responsibilities and procedures but also guarantees compliance with laws and regulations in situations like dealing with third parties, outsourcing work or managing clients relations.

A Remote work policy at Limacon would provide the team with a work structure and ensure the quality of work. Additionally, having this resource would improve the onboarding process for new employees and would align the work with freelancers on different projects. The provided Remote Work Policy Template has been executed with the main challenges that Limacon is currently facing, implemented the main suggestions drawn from the interviews and the survey results as well as supported by additional desk research on the topic. It can be set as a standard part of the onboarding documentation for the team.

### 5.4 Create an event on the topic of remote work

Having all the resources collected in one place, the Remote Work Guide could benefit not only Limacon but also the clients, partners and potential customers of the company. Popularizing the topic in a time when there is an explicit need for resources on the topic would benefit the company by increasing its brand awareness and potentially bringing new clients.

Moreover, as Limacon has started out as an event management company and is well known for its events that are now executed online, there is a big potential for an online event. Organizing an online event to present the guide to their customers and partners would be a great source of lead generation and an opportunity to present the expansion of their expertise. This recommendation has been already put in place, as an online event is in the process of being organized. The focus of the events would be the findings of the research and the expertise of the researcher gained in the process. The aim of the event is to increase the awareness of the topic and familiarize the public with this resource that Limacon would be providing to its customers.

### 5.5 Create remote work operations service

A long term recommendation as a result of the research would be to create a new service that would be part of the digitalization department of Limacon that supports companies in the transition to remote work, introducing remote work or starting out as completely remote companies. Limacon strives to be an external partner for Bulgarian and International companies and already provides services related to marketing, sales and HubSpot that support other companies and develop their businesses. Having this extra service is an entirely new business opportunity that would increase the customer potential, would increase the brand recognition beyond the current services and would give Limacon a bigger market share as well as better positioning in the national and international market. By having the provided resources from the research as well as having gone through the process of transitioning to a fully remote company by 2022, Limacon would have the expertise, practice and knowledge to guide the SMEs in Bulgaria and Internationally through the remote process and expand their potential even further.

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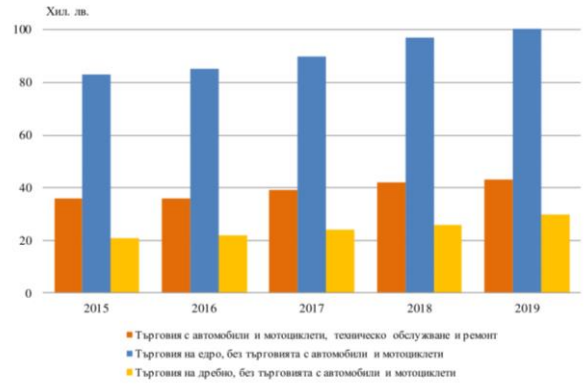
# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Survey Sample Sources



В търговския сектор през 2019 г. е произведена продукция на стойност 27 939 млн. лв. по текущи цени, което представлява 14.4% от общия обем на продукцията на нефинансовите предприятия. Заетите в търговията през 2019 г. са 497 905, или 22.5% от общия брой заети в нефинансовите предприятия.

**Фиг. 11. Произведена продукция на един зает в търговията по дейности и години**

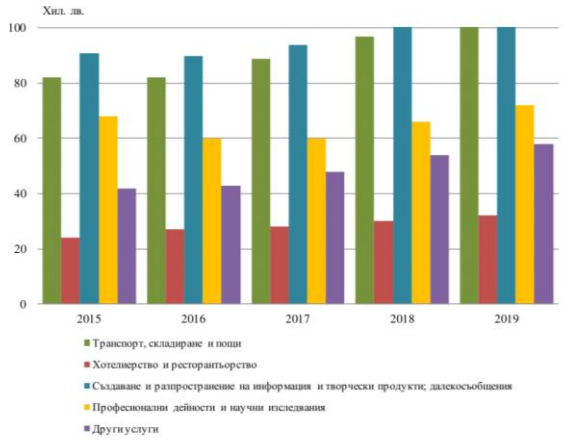






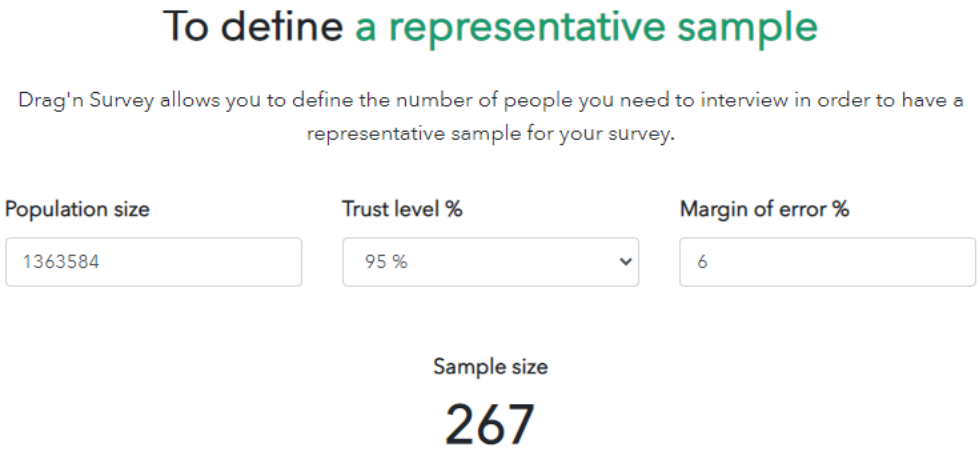

По текущи цени в сектора на услугите през 2019 г. е произведена продукция на стойност 61 488 млн. лв., която формира 31.6% от общия обем на продукцията на нефинансовите предприятия. През 2019 г. в този сектор са заети 865 679 лица, или 39.1% от общия брой на заетите в нефинансовите предприятия.

**Фиг. 14. Произведена продукция на един зает по видове услуги и години**






## Appendix 2 – Sample Calculations



# Appendix 3 – Survey Email Statistics – HubSpot



## Email details

**Subject**
Наръчник за дистанционна работа

**Sent date**
21 April 2021 08:38

**Title**
21.04 - Анкета за дистанционна работа в България

**From name**
Limacon

**Sent by**
Elitsa Vodenicharova <elitsa.vodenicharova@limacon.bg>

**From address**
welcome@limacon.bg

**Included lists**
AL: Opted Into Marketing Information

**Excluded lists**
AL: Unsubscribed, SL: Black List, AL: Bounced Emails, SL: KZPdoNOTsend, and SL: Limacon Team

**Don't send to contacts with low engagement**
Disabled

**Subscription**
Marketing Information

**Created on**
20 April 2021 09:12

**Internal HubSpot ID**
122483550



### Open rate 22.1%

| | |
|---|---|
| Unique opens | 560 |
| Total opens | 1047 |

DESKTOP 56% MOBILE 44%

### Click rate 4.7%

Click-through rate 21.3%

| | |
|---|---|
| Unique clicks | 119 |
| Total clicks | 132 |

DESKTOP 76% MOBILE 24%

### Reply rate 0%

| | |
|---|---|
| Unique replies | 1 |

### Delivery

| SUCCESSFUL DELIVERIES | BOUNCES | UNSUBSCRIBES | SPAM REPORTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2,530 | 15 | 3 | 0 |
| 99.41% | 0.59% | 0.12% | 0% |

### Time spent viewing email

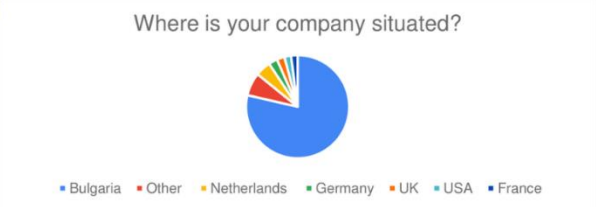
| READ | SKIMMED | GLANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 47% | 45.9% | 7.1% |

Appendix 4 – Survey Findings – question by question

| What is your current position at work? | |
|---|---|
| Employee | 108 |
| Manager | 49 |
| Business owner | 26 |
| Director | 24 |
| Student | 21 |
| Intern | 16 |
| Teacher | 14 |
| Assistant | 13 |
| Consultant | 10 |

| How many employees does the company you work for have? | |
|---|---|
| 10 - 50 | 70 |
| 1 to 10 | 58 |
| >100 | 56 |
| >1000 | 51 |
| 50 - 100 | 43 |

| Where is the company you work for situated? | |
|---|---|
| Bulgaria | 228 |
| Other | 21 |
| Netherlands | 14 |
| Germany | 8 |
| UK | 7 |
| USA | 6 |
| France | 6 |




| Do you have any experience with remote work? | |
|---|---|
| Yes, I have worked partly remotely | 126 |
| Yes, I have work completely remotely | 110 |
| No, I don't have experience working remotely | 54 |

## Have experience working remotely

| How would you rate your work experience remotely? | |
|---|---|
| 6 | 87 |
| 5 | 78 |
| 4 | 43 |
| 3 | 23 |
| 2 | 3 |
| 1 | 4 |

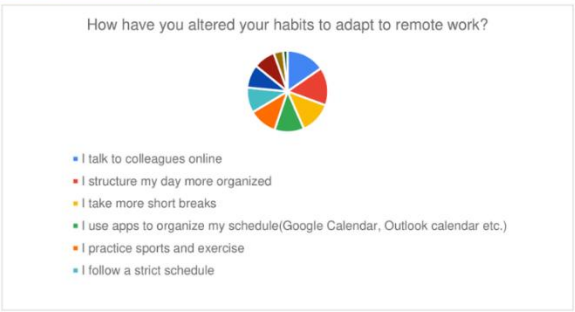
| What are your biggest difficulties when working remotely? | |
|---|---|
| No work-life balance | 79 |
| Distractions | 78 |
| Difficult communication | 67 |
| I don't have difficulties | 66 |
| Difficult coperation with colleagues | 58 |
| Technical difficulties | 55 |
| Lack of motivation | 52 |
| Loneliness | 49 |
| Additional | 9 |
| Lack of socialization | 5 |

What programmes and tools do you use to perform your job remotely?

| | |
|---|---|
| Online meeting tools (Zoom, Skype, MS Team, Google Meets etc.) | 177 |
| MS Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, etc.) | 171 |
| Google Tools (Gmail, Drive, Calendar, Meet, etc.) | 136 |
| Communication tools (Slack, MS Teams, Discord, etc.) | 103 |
| Cloud storage (Dropbox, OneDrive, etc.) | 90 |
| Project Management tools (Teamwork, Asana, Trello, etc.) | 61 |
| VPN | 61 |
| CRM (HubSpot, Zoho, Bitrix, Pipedrive, etc.) | 45 |
| Accounting programmes (CsAcc, WinSal, etc.) | 20 |
| Other | 19 |
| Anydesk | 8 |

How have you altered your habits to adapt to remote work?

| | |
|---|---|
| I talk to colleagues online | 78 |
| I structure my day more organized | 77 |
| I take more short breaks | 65 |
| I use apps to organize my schedule(Google Calendar, Outlook calendar etc.) | 60 |
| I practice sports and exercise | 57 |
| I follow a strict schedule | 51 |
| I have not changed my habits in any way | 47 |
| I use more Sticky notes | 44 |
| I use meditation applications | 19 |
| Other | 9 |



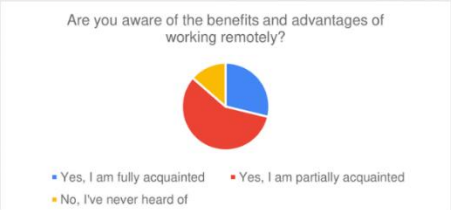

What is your opinion about remote work?

| | |
|---|---|
| **Excelent** (90-100% satisfied with remote work) | 59 |
| **Good**(60-90% satisfied with remote work) | 96 |
| **Neutral**( express 50-50 opinion on remote work) | 41 |
| **Negative**( explicidly state that they are not satisfied with remote working) | 15 |
| **Other** | 25 |

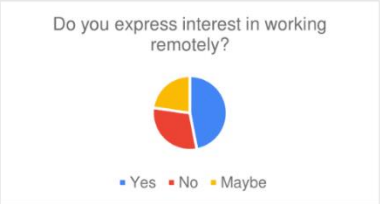
| | |
|---|---|
| Expressed explicid need for more information on remote work, need for policys and tools | 25 |
| **Challenges mentioned** | |
| socialization | 6 |
| lack of motivation | 7 |
| communication | 5 |
| company culture | 4 |
| lack of work-life balan | 8 |
| distractions | 6 |
| | |
| **Benefits mentiones** | |
| time saving / optimiza | 15 |
| financial benefits | 14 |
| productivity and effick | 13 |
| freedom | 26 |

## Don't have experience working remotely

| Are you aware of the benefits and advantages of working remotely? | |
|---|---|
| Yes, I am fully acquainted | 19 |
| Yes, I am partially acquainted | 38 |
| No, I've never heard of remote operation | 9 |

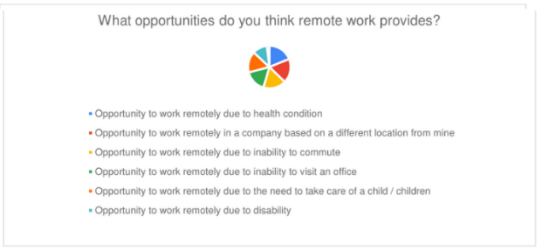



| Do you express interest in working remotely? | |
|---|---|
| Yes | 31 |
| No | 20 |
| Maybe | 15 |
| | |
| In favour: | 70% |
| Against: | 30% |




| Under what conditions would you work remotely? | |
|---|---|
| If provided this opportunity by the employer | 29 |
| Opportunity for lower costs | 26 |
| Work remotely in a company based on a different location than mine | 25 |
| Personal inability to visit the workplace | 25 |
| If changing my field of development | 17 |
| I would not work remotely | 16 |
| Other | 1 |

| What opportunities do you think remote work provides? | |
|---|---|
| Opportunity to work remotely due to health condition | 39 |
| Opportunity to work remotely in a company based on a different location from mine | 38 |
| Opportunity to work remotely due to inability to commute | 36 |
| Opportunity to work remotely due to inability to visit an office | 34 |
| Opportunity to work remotely due to the need to take care of a child / children | 33 |
| Opportunity to work remotely due to disability | 23 |
| It doesn't provide any opportunities | 4 |




| What is your opinion on remote work? | |
|---|---|
| Positive | 26 |
| Negative | 5 |
| Interested | 9 |
| No opinion | 6 |
| Good example | 5 |

Appendix 5 - Survey Findings – correlations

| Count of Колко служители има компанията, за която | Column Labels | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Row Labels | >100 | >1000 | 0 - 10 | 1 - 10 | 10 - 50 | 1000+ | 50 - 100 | Grand Total |
| Асистент | 3 | 4 | | | 2 | | 4 | 13 |
| Главен счетоводител | 1 | | | | | | | 1 |
| Директор | 3 | 4 | 5 | | 5 | | 5 | 22 |
| Доцент | 1 | | | | | | | 1 |
| Заместник-директор | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Инвеститор | 1 | | | | | | | 1 |
| Кмет | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Консултант | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 9 |
| Мениджър | 12 | 11 | 7 | 1 | 11 | | 5 | 47 |
| Преподавател | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 7 | | 3 | 14 |
| ръководител на екип | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Ръководител на сектор, но без екип | | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Свободна професия | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Служител | 23 | 18 | 12 | 2 | 29 | 1 | 21 | 106 |
| Собственик на бизнес | 2 | | 12 | 4 | 6 | | | 24 |
| Стажант | 2 | | 3 | 1 | 7 | | 2 | 15 |
| **Grand Total** | **52** | **41** | **44** | **9** | **68** | **1** | **43** | **258** |

| Count of Къде е базирана компанията, за която работите? | Column Labels | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Row Labels | България | Германия | Испания | Италия | Нидерландия | САЩ | Франция | Grand Total |
| Асистент | 7 | 2 | | | | 2 | 1 | 1 13 |
| Главен счетоводител | 1 | | | | | | | 1 |
| Директор | 18 | | | | | | 2 | 2 22 |
| Консултант | 6 | | | | 1 | | | 1 8 |
| Мениджър | 39 | 2 | | | | | 2 | 43 |
| Преподавател | 14 | | | | | | | 14 |
| Служител | 92 | 3 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 99 |
| Собственик на бизнес | 20 | 1 | | | | | | 1 22 |
| Стажант | 6 | | | | | 6 | | 12 |
| **Grand Total** | **203** | **8** | **1** | **2** | **8** | **6** | **6** | **234** |

Опит в дистанционната работа по позиция

| Count of Имате ли опит в работата дистанционно? | Column Labels | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Row Labels | Асистент | Директор | Консултант | Мениджър | Преподавател | Служител | Собственик на бизнес | Стажант | Grand Total |
| Да, имам опит с изцяло дистанционна работа | 3 | 12 | 3 | 18 | 5 | 40 | 10 | 6 | 97 |
| Да, имам опит в частично дистанционна работа | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | 2 |
| Да, имам опит с частично дистанционна работа | 7 | 7 | 3 | 24 | 9 | 42 | 11 | 8 | 111 |
| Да, работил/а съм изцяло дистанционно | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Да, работил/а съм частично дистанционно | | | | | | | 2 | | 2 |
| Не, не работя дистанционно | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Не, нямам опит с дистанционна работа | 3 | 5 | 3 | 5 | | 25 | 3 | 2 | 46 |
| **Grand Total** | **13** | **24** | **10** | **49** | **14** | **108** | **26** | **16** | **260** |

Оценка на дистанционната работа по позиция

| Имате ли опит в работата дистанционно? | (Multiple Items) |
|---|---|

| Count of Как бихте оценили преживяването си в раб | Column Labels | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Row Labels | Асистент | Консултант | Мениджър | Преподавате | Служител | Собственик | Стажант | Grand Total |
| 1 | | | 2 | | | 1 | | 3 |
| 2 | | | 2 | | 1 | | | 3 |
| 3 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 3 | 2 | 18 |
| 4 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 15 | 3 | 3 | 34 |
| 5 | 6 | 1 | 17 | 4 | 20 | 7 | 6 | 61 |
| 6 | 2 | 4 | 15 | 5 | 37 | 9 | 3 | 75 |
| **Grand Total** | **10** | **7** | **43** | **14** | **83** | **23** | **14** | **194** |

| Count of Кои са най-големите ви трудности при дист | Column Labels | |
|---|---|---|
| Row Labels | Не срещам тр | Grand Total |
| freelancer | 1 | 1 |
| Асистент | 5 | 5 |
| Главен счетоводител | 1 | 1 |
| Директор | 6 | 6 |
| Консултант | 3 | 3 |
| Мениджър | 7 | 7 |
| Преподавател | 3 | 3 |
| Служител | 18 | 18 |
| Собственик на бизнес | 3 | 3 |
| Стажант | 2 | 2 |
| Студент | 2 | 2 |
| **Grand Total** | **51** | **51** |

| | |
|---|---|
| Most frequent combination of tools | Communication tools, Online meeting tools, MS Office , Google Tools , Project Management tools |
| Most frequest combination of tools per position | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Служител | Communication tools , Online meeting tools , MS Office, Google Tools, Project Management tools, Cloud storage |
| Асистент | Online meeting tools , MS Office , Google Tools , Cloud storage (Dropbox, OneDrive, etc.) |
| Директор | Online meeting tools, MS Office , VPN |
| Консултант | Communication tools , Online meeting tools , MS Office, Google Tools, Cloud storage |
| Мениджър | Online meeting tools, MS Office, VPN |
| Собственик на бизнес | Communication tools, Online meeting tools, MS Office, Cloud storage |
| Стажант | Communication tools, Online meeting tools, MS Office, Google Tools, Cloud storage, VPN |

| | |
|---|---|
| Most frequent habit change | Следвам стриктен график |

**No remote work experience**

| Count of Запознати ли сте с предимствата и ползите | Column Labels | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Row Labels | Да запознат/а съм напълно | Да, частично съм запознат/а | Не, никога до сега не съм чувал/а за дистанционна работа | Grand Total |
| Асистент | | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Директор | 3 | 3 | | 6 |
| Консултант | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Мениджър | 3 | 3 | | 6 |
| Служител | 8 | 17 | 5 | 30 |
| Собственик на бизнес | 1 | 3 | | 4 |
| Стажант | | 2 | | 2 |
| **Grand Total** | **16** | **31** | **9** | **56** |

| Count of Имате ли интерес към работата дистанцион | Column Labels | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Row Labels | Да | Може би | Не | Grand Total |
| Асистент | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Директор | 3 | 3 | | 6 |
| Консултант | 3 | | 1 | 4 |
| Мениджър | 2 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| Стажант | 1 | 1 | | 2 |
| **Grand Total** | **26** | **14** | **17** | **57** |

| | |
|---|---|
| Most frequent condition for working remotely | Предоставяне на тази възможност от работодател |

Appendix 6 – Interviews Transcripts Veneta Babikova

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## Interview Veneta Babikova

Interviewee: Veneta Babikova
Interviewer: Fatme Feta
Date of Interview: 21/04/2021
Location of Interview: Limacon office, Plovdiv Bulgaria
List of acronyms: VB: Veneta Babikova, IN: Interviewer
Type of transcript: Standard Verbatim Transcription*

| Inductive Code Table | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Challenges | Examples | Tools | Job description | Suggestions |

/Begin transcript 00:00:07/

**IN: Какви трудности срещна ти при преминаването към дистанционна форма на работа по време на пандемията?**

VB: Като мениджър администрации в Лимакон аз се занимавам с много документация. Всичко свързано с документи, съхранение, обработка и разпространиние е мое задължение. Най-голямата трудност срещнахме с подписването на документи. Тъй като в България всички официални фирмени документи трябва да имат ръчен подпис и печат, трябваше бързо да се пригодим към различен подход.

/00: 03: 04/

**IN: Какви бяха основните стъпки за преодоляването на тези предизвикателства?**

VB: Това, което ние правихме в началото беше да си вземем принтера от офиса вкъщи и да принтираме и подписваме всъчко рачно, после да си сканираме и разпращаме документите или дигитално или чрез куриер. После установихме, че този подход е доста непрактичен и трябваше да наерим нещо друго.Започнахме да търсим приложения, които да ни помогнат да подписваме документи онлайн. Важно беше те да са в съответствие с Българските държавни и правни стандарти и да могат да фонкционират както с латинска азбука така и с кирилица. Такива приложение за момента в страната са Evrotrust и B-trust Mobile.

/00: 07: 12/

**IN: Какви административни нужди има една фирма, за да работи дистнационно?**

VB: Със сигурност това ще е свързано с администрация на достъпа до лични данни и важни документи за компанията и както вече споменах подписването на документите.

**IN: Много благодаря за ползотворния разговор!**

*** Standard Verbatim Transcription**
Standard Verbatim is probably the most popular transcription style out there. It involves detailed transcription with by light editing, creating a transcript that is highly accurate yet not overloaded with unnecessarily detail.
The style captures every word that is said on the recording, leaving out parts like false starts, repetitions, ambient sounds and non-verbal communication. This makes the transcript cleaner and easier to read, while still including all the relevant parts.

Appendix 7 – Interviews Transcripts Neli Ilieva

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## Interview Neli Ilieva

Interviewee: Neli Ilieva
Interviewer: Fatme Feta
Date of Interview: 30/04/2021
Location of Interview: Google Meet
List of acronyms: NI: Neli Ilieva, IN: Interviewer
Type of transcript: Standard Verbatim Transcription*

| Inductive Code Table | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Challenges | Examples | Tools | Job description | Suggestions |
| Benefits | Processes | Implementation | | |

/Begin transcript 00:00:59/
**IN: Защо трябваше да създадете SOPs в Лимакон?**

NI: Искахме да създадем процедури, които да зададат правила, които да се следват при изпълнението на ежедневните задачи. Целите, които гонехме бяха:

- по-лесно да следим и управляваме изпълнението на задачите. Когато имаш да проследиш как вървят 200-300 задачи, много по-лесно е задачата да е раздробена на по-малки задачки и така да следиш прогреса.
- да помогнем на служителите в изпълнението на задачите, като зададем точни и ясни стъпки. Това е особено полезно и за нови служители, тъй като така те много по-бързо навлизат в работата и имат ресурс с процедури, до който да се допитат.
- да гарантираме еднаквост при изпълнението на задачите, за да може да гоним вътрешните стандарти за качество, които сме си задали. Също така SOPs намаляват допускането на грешки поради мискомуникация.

/ 00:03:46/
**IN: Какви бяха основните стъпки от създаване до пълна имплементация на SOPs?**

NI: Първоначално, аз и Валя започнахме работа по създаването на SOPs. Тя познава всички процеси и има визията за това, как най-оптимално могат да се изпълняват задачите. Създадохме първите SOPs и обмислихме как да ги внедрим в TW. Стартирахме използването им, но с ясната идея, че това няма да са окончателните процедури. Следващата стъпка беше да следя дали процедурите се изпълняват, кои стъпки се пропускат най-често, къде се затрудняват хората. Започнах да събирам и мнения от останалите за това как им се струват процедурите. На базата на моите наблюдения и на събраните отзиви започнахме периодично да актуализираме SOP-тата. Актуализирането на SOP-тата вървеше паралелно и с актуализиране на начина ни на работа с TW, затова през цялото време беше важно да помагам на хората със следването на процедурите, като им напомням за определени стъпки. Беше ми ясно, че за тях с тези спорадично променящи се процедури е предизвикателство да следват всичко стъпка по стъпка.

/ 00:08:11/
**IN:Как можеш да се осигури успеха на този процес и успешна иплементация на SOPs?**

NI: Предварително обяснихме на екипа каква е важността на SOPs и с какво те ще помогнат. След внедряването им, събирахме обратна връзка, за да могат хората да се чувстват по-ангажирани към процеса и разбира се, за да можем да подобрим самите SOPs.
След това трябваше да се намери баланса между това, кога дадена процедура трябва да се промени според получената обратна връзка и кога трябва да се настоява хората да свикнат да работят по определен начин. Тук вече нещата опират до преценката на мениджърския екип и хората с повече опит.

/ 00:10:56/
**IN:Как се подготвя един екип за такава промяна, за да бъде тя успешна?**

NI: Екипът трябва да е подготвен и информиран, за това което следва и да разбира смисъла на тази промяна. При всяка нова итерация с корекции на SOP-тата се стараехме екипът да е осведомен и да бъде обяснено, защо правим дадената промяна. Също така събирането на обратна връзка и прилагането на идеите за промени дошли от екипа, допринесе за успешното внедряване на SOPs.

/ 00:13:27/
**IN: Как и защо избрахте да организирате работата в онлайн платформата teamwork?**

NI: Изборът на платформа беше направен от екипът на Лимакон, преди моето присъединяване към компанията. С увеличаване броя на клиентите, мениджърския екип е усетил нуждата от дигитализиране на процеса по разпределение и следене на задачите. Проучили са няколко различни инструмента и са се спрели на TW.

/ 00:15:05/
**IN: Как се подготвя екипа за използването на такъв инструмент и подсигуряваш това той да продължава да се използва по предназначение и успешно?**

NI: Внедряването на инструмент като TW много често е една естествена нужда, която се появява с увеличаване на обема на работата и с увеличаване на екипа. В екип от 3-4 човека и с не много работа, задачите спокойно могат да се

делегират устно и всеки да прецени как да си води свой собствен To Do лист. Но с големия екип и многото задачи е необходим project management и инструмент, който да служи на нуждите му.
При нас тази нужда на екипа също се е появила по този естествен начин. След избора на инструмент, екипът е трябвало да бъде обучен как да работи с него, но в случая с Лимакон - без човек, който да администрира инструмента на ежедневна база, TW останал на заден план и неизползван.
С присъединяването ми към компанията, това беше една от основните ми задачи – да направя TW работещ и полезен. Тогава предложих да създадем и SOPs и да ги внедрим в TW. Комбинацията от SOPs и ежедневно поддържане на TW го направи успешен. Трябваше да мине известно време, докато се утвърди новия начин на работа и докато се премахнат някой стари навици. В този период се грижех постоянно да помагам и напомням на колегите за спазването на процедурите.

/ 00:19:03/

**IN: Какви други подобни действия/инструменти/платформи могат да организират процеса на работа на дадена фирма?**

NI: Съществуват редица методологии и инструменти за project management. Някой от по-известните методологии са Waterfall, Agile и Scrum, Kanban, Lean…
Други инструменти за task and project management, подобни на TW:
https://monday.com/
https://asana.com/
https://www.getflow.com/
https://basecamp.com/
https://www.wrike.com/
https://xbsoftware.com/products/ganttpro/
https://www.easyproject.com/gantt-project-management/
https://www.agantty.com/en
https://www.bitrix24.eu/
https://www.paymoapp.com/
https://trello.com/
В зависимост от нишата, в която оперира компанията могат да се намерят и по-специализирани инструменти. В IT сферата например доста популярни са Jira и Confluence, а в производствените предприятия се използват други специфични инструменти и ERP софтуери.

/ 00:21:16/

**IN: Какво допълнително може да се направи от гледна точка на project management когато се работи дистанционно/от вкъщи?**

NI: При дистанционната работа е важно:

- Да има инструмент за делегиране на задачи и управление на проектите (TW).
- Да има яснота относно кой какви задължения има (TW), какви са точните срокове за изпълнение (TW) и как точно трябва да се изпълни задачата (SOPs).
- Да се поддържа добра комуникация в екипа. Да се организират срещи на мини екипи, когато изпълнението на дадена задача зависи от повече хора. (Видеосрещите са особено полезни чрез Slack, Zoom и т.н.)
- Ежедневно/регулярно да се дава обратна връзка за прогреса на задачите. (Това също го правим в TW)
- Хората от екипа да са на разположение. При дистанционната работа много често по-голямо внимание се обръща на свършената работа, отколкото на това, колко часове си прекарал в работа и кога. Но е важно да се определят „задължителни“ работни часове, за да могат хората от екипа да са на разположение за колегите си, когато им потрябват.
- Да се подсигури достъп до необходими ресурси (Dropbox).

… и т.н.

*** Standard Verbatim Transcription**
Standard Verbatim is probably the most popular transcription style out there. It involves detailed transcription with by light editing, creating a transcript that is highly accurate yet not overloaded with unnecessarily detail.
The style captures every word that is said on the recording, leaving out parts like false starts, repetitions, ambient sounds and non-verbal communication. This makes the transcript cleaner and easier to read, while still including all the relevant parts.

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# Interview Valentina Kutseva

Interviewee: Valentina Kutseva
Interviewer: Fatme Feta
Date of Interview: 21/04/2021
Location of Interview: Limacon office, Plovdiv Bulgaria
List of acronyms: VK: Valentine Kutseva, IN: Interviewer
Type of transcript: Standard Verbatim Transcription*

| Inductive Code Table | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Challenges | Examples | Tools | Job description | Suggestions |
| Benefits | Processes | Implementation | Experiences | Remarks |

/Begin transcript 00:00:04/
**IN: Първо да ми разкажеш за това какъв опит имаш ти в дистанционната работа и в това как започнахте да работите дистанционно по време на COVID-19 пандемията?**

**VK:** Реално дистанционната работа за Лимакон започна абсалютно през пандемията. Преди това всички бяхме в офиса и почти нямаше хора, които да работят от вкъщи както сега. И аз като цяло доста се страхувах от дистанционния начин на работа и заради това и не работех с много подизпълнители. Защото ми се струваше постоянно, че комуникацията, която извършвам с тях и да обяснявам и същр тези брифове, които правим с тях биха ми отнели повече време отколкото сама да го направя.
Сега, когато дойде пандемията, разбира се, трябваше веднагически.. Слава Богу тогава имахме Нели, която беше нашият project manager. Съответно тя беше въвела вече последните няколко два-три месеца teamwork заедно с мен, разбира се, но най-вече тя го беше въвела.
Използвахме го, но нямахме правила, каквито имаме сега. Заедно с нея същр ги въведохме като това в кой канал какво и кога да се пише и така нататък.
И според мен това беше ключа. Ключа в това да можеш да правиш много добър remote work е първо да имаш SOPs, второ да са разписани перфектно стъпките на всяка една задача, която да се извършва, трето да са ясни каналите за комуникация на екипа и да е ясно къде какво трябва да се комуникира и това да е разписано като правила. Това влиза и в SOP-тата по някакъв начин. И съответно, постоянно в началото да има човек, който да е дедикейтнат в това да следи тези правила да се изпълняват и в нашия случай това беше Нели тогава.
Буквално казвам, че за да премине една фирма от едно към друго не може просто да се внедрят едни инструменти и да се очаква хората да почнат да ги използват. Всеки един нов инструмент, хората първо му казват – не, после се опитват да го саботират, като постоянно се опитват да покажат, че е прекалено сложен, не могат да го разберат, никога няма да свикнат с него и така нататък. И на трето място като започнеш да им показваш, чрез този човек, който освен да прави забележки, той показва постоянните ползи, той набляга върху тях, и изтъква как някоя комуникация ни е помогнала да извършим някоя задача, той го казва в съответния канал. Просто казва и постоянно мотивира и потупва по- рамото хората, които използват tool-а и то много добре. За да предизвика този т.нар. психологически greed в хората, защото всеки иска да е потупан по рамото. И по този начин хората лека по лека навлизат и решават, че ще го използват по този начин.
Демек, трябва човек, който е дедикейтнат да върши три неща: едно е да прави забележки, другото е да похвалва и третото постоянно да набляга върху положителните резултати, които е дал даден инструмент. И това лека по лека се вкоренява в хората и те започват да го правят. Това отнема между два и три месеца. Слава Богу, ние бяхме имплементирали teamwork около Януари и Февруари. Когато април, средата на март по-точно, ни се наложи да излезем в home office имахме някои проблеми в началото за 14 - 15 дена, но мисля, че много бързо ги изчистихме и започнахме да работим нормално. Ако в този момент, обаче, тепърва трябваше да го правим.. Имай в предвид това, че ние тези инструменти и SOP-та сме започнали да ги внедряваме от Септември месец и до към Януари, после Февруари и Март беше малко клатушкащо и вече Април работеше безотказно. Имай в предвид, че имаше някой неща, които сме променили в течение на работата, но не са били неща, които да променят общата логика на процеса. Споведе например доста сме променяли в последните 6 месеца, за да ги правим колкото се може по-оптимални. Това е постоянен процес и за този процес ти трябва човек. Това е причината Алекс в момента да изпълнява тази задача и Нели преди това да се занимава с наблюдаването на тези неща.
Това същр е и причината в момента да не искам на диджитъл екипа да му внедряваме tool, в който той да може да си качва всички постове от едно място и т. н. като за всеки клиенто да можеш да постваш всичко от едно място. Защото трябва дедикейтнат човек, който да се занимава със задачата, да си намери определения tool, да се влюби в него и след това да накара всеки останал да се влюби иначе не се получан нещата. Затова според мен много компании фейлват.

/00:06:20/
**IN: А ти каза, че от Септември сте започнали този процес, какво ви накара да го започнете?**

**VK:** Ние реално не отивахме към remote. Не го направихме с идеята да ставаме remote, а само и единствено с идеята да си подредим къщичката и да имаме project management/task management tool, чрез който да проследяваме с колко ни закъсняват проектите и как се движат те и разбирасе всичките ни задачи. Просто в един момент започнахме да имаме прекалено много клиенти. Колкото и да не ти се вярва преди Септември всички задачи бяха в моята глава и аз просто ходех при хората и им ги раздавах, но в едни момент това започна да става невъзможно и аз започнах да ги забравям. И като започна да се случва това аз си казах it's time. Всъщност ние и заради това го направихме. Slack така или иначе си го имаше просто вече, когато внедрихте teamwork трябвше да направим разделение просто защото хората започнаха да се питат защо въобще има два tool-а. Съответно трябваше да разделим добре, едната комуникация е тук, а другата тук. И в това има тепърва още неща, които могат да бъдет променени. И съответно ние просто искахме да си подредим процеса дали той е remote или на място. Съответно вече така се оказа, че го подредихме в онлайн инструмент и когато излязохме в remote work това беше един много добър момент.
**IN: Разбирам, да**

/00:07:57/
**IN: Освен тези tools, чисто оперативно, какво друго трябваше да се промени в смисъл на отношения interaction между екипите и т.н.?**

**VK:** Със сигурност другото предизвикателство на remote work е в това, че хората не се виждат. Съответно много по-трудно се изграждат тези приятелски взаимоотношения и този together дух на компанията. Когато хората ги свързва единствено и само работата и никаки други преживявания заедно така се пораждат конфликти. Знаете, че когато имаш много яки спомени с един човек, когато те издразни за нещо малко по-лесно го преживяваш. Тази психологическа връзка, която се изгражда между хората тук на място липсва.

Честно казано, аз не мисля, че сме направили нещо определено, с което да се предпазим. Просто имахме късмета, че екипа ни е от хора, които са много години заедно повечето и само трима или четирима бяха нови. Останалите бяха заедно от много време и си ги имаха тези изградени отношения. Затова тези 4-5-6 месеца и не бяха проблем, те си ги запазиха.
Това което смятам, че ако една фирма е по принцип remote и така се изгражда като цяло, задължително трябва да има т.нар. човек, в зависимост от колко е голяма фирмата или поне процеси по team building. Такива могат да бъдат на седмична база празнуване на успехи по екипи. Тези успехи не е толкова задължително да се празнуват онлайн по Zoom например, а може буквално да се съобщава в Slack кой и кой е постигнал какво. За да може ти да осещаш този togetherness и това, че НИЕ постигнахме това заедно.
Има вече и компании, които могат да си позволят да изпратят на тези няколко човеке, защото те са постигнали някакви супер яки резултати подаръци – идентични за всички. Ако тези хора са в едни град можеш да ги изпратиш примерно на театър заедно, а ако не са в едни град да се опитат да споделят едно преживяване заедно или поотделно, но просто да качат снимки, че са направили едно и също нещо. Самият факт, че примерно 5 човека ще отидат на масаж и ще постнат снимките като предизвикателство, че са направили нещо заедно психологически ги сближава. Това е първото- да се празнуват много успехи заедно. Ти да посочваш като мениджър, HR или собственик на компанията, успехите на екипа.

Второто е при възникване на конфликти да имаш много ясна политика за отвореност. Понеже ти като собственик не можеш вече да ходиш между хората и да виждаш и чуваш конфликтите ти трябва да имаш много ясна политика на отвореност, за да може всеки да ти се обади и да ти каже какво се случва и знае, че ти ще реагираш адекватно и няма да го изложиш, че ти се е обадил и " се е оплакал на госпожата". Важно е и ти да реагираш възможно най-бързо. На мен, когато някой ми се обади, не си позволявам да каза айде да го говорим след няколко дена, а възможно най-скоро се събират хората, коментира се и се вземат мерки. Победите и конфликтите са нещата, които са много важни.

И вече на трето място според мен една remote компанияq която много се кефи когато техните лидери са ангажирани, с това което се случва в компанията. Например ако има вечеря пица и филм заедно по Zoom, човека да е там. Това е доста важно. Хората са токива, малко като планетите трябва да има човек по средата и да ги привлича около него. И когато има един такъв център е много по-лесно притегателната сила да привлича още и още хора много по-лесно. Когато те са просто едни електрони и нищо не ги привлича един към друг те по-трудно идват на такива места и вземат участия. Има го момента той е там айде и аз ще отида.

И на четвърто място - много яки тиим билдинги. Една remote компания трябва да прави 4- 5 -6 пъти тиим билдинг и вече в зависимост от това колко е голяма компанията. Аз сега си мисля и за различните remote компании в Америка, които работят по целия coast и т.н. и е доста невъзможно всеки месец да се срещат заедно. Но една голяма компания 4 -5 -6 пъти е добре да правят такива събития, в които 2-3 дни компанията плаща за всичко, правят се игри и т.н.
Но нали такива активни тиим билдинги, а не от типа събрани в една гора и всеки си се разхожа нанякъде.

Петото е вече заплащането. Не най-важното, но също то значение. Работейки remote някой хора се отказват от определени неща, от социален кръг, от fancy офис, от не знам, най-вече работния си социален кръг. И от това много лесно на една ръка да учиш, защото когато си в среда ти много по-бързо учиш, когато чуваш някой неща дори и без да искаш. Докато когато си вкъщи трябва сам да апроучнеш някой, за да научиш нещо и е много по-трудно.

Всъщност повечето хора, които се отказват от всички тези неща го правят по една единтствена причина – флексибилити. Те искат да уползотворят това време със семейството си или повече да пътуват или еди кво си. За всичките тези неща те имат нужда от пари за да го правят. И в този случай ако те работя ремоут и получават малко пари те няма да могат да правят нещата, за които те реално работят ремоут. Так че парите тук отново са съществено важни.

/0:0:16:35/
**IN: Следващия ми въпрос е насочен малко повече към клиентите и това как вашите клиенти реагираха на ремоут уърк и как можеш да подготвиш и предпазиш клиентите от реакцията към ремоут уърк?**

**VK:** Аз не мисля че съм най-правилният човек да отговори на този въпрос, защото аз не поставих клиентите си под тези условия, а пандемията им ги постави и за мен беше много лесно. Не мога да си представя ако я нямаше пандемията и просто бях решил да кажа на клиента че вместо да пътувам по половин час за да отида до офиса им сега вече ще се срещаме по зуум. Мисля че щеше да бъде поне 5 пъти по трудно отколкото сега се случи, дори смятам че за българският манталитет щеше да е много трудно и почти неуспишно. Просто България изобщо не беше готова за това. Просто тая пандемия я пушна в много добра посока на това всички хира да си ценят много повече времето и да видят колко мреме могат да спестят и да станат малко по-дигитални. Сега вече нямат проблем да видят колко повече работа могат да свършат по този начин и че работата която вършат е икуаи гууд. Защото преди когато им говореше по този начин те си мислеха че не из обръщаш достатъчно внемание и си казват че не съм достатъчно важен за тях и мако ме претупват. Докато това просто ги форсна, и нямахме клиент които да се ръзсърди или да настоява за срещи на живо. Всички днаеха и бяха притиснати от обстоятелствата и факна че собствените им служители ни искаха да се срещат с външни хора.
Трудно беше в началото на едни срещи в които по 10 мен им се обясняваше ка да влязат в зуума, как да си шернат екрана и т. н. но всичко друго беше сравнително лесно.
Ако трябва сега вече виждайки как хората реагираха психологически на ремоут уърка да го въвеждам със сигурност първото нещо което бих им обърнала внимание щеше да е времето което ще си спестим. И щях да им предложа дайте един месец да го правим като и после ако прецените ще се върнем към стария начин. Щях да им дам шанс на избор и бих им изтъкнала предимствата, а не просто да им заявя свършен факт.

/0:0:20:12/
**IN: Последния ми въпрос е малко по-тясно свързан с макетинга. Какви туулове и програми бихте използвали за да дигитализирате изцяло маркетинг процеса освен хубспот?**

**VK:** Освен всичко, което използваме до момента, това е едно много добра система за диджитъл маркетин от типа Socialbakers, Marketo etc буквално social media managers. Там си събираш всички компании и различните канали в които те са активни и от едно място можеш да постваш публикации в различните социални медии, да вкърваш конкурентите на компанията и да ги следиш по метрики. Но тези платформи са много скъпи и имат нужда от дедикейтнат човек да ги разучи и на следи използването им. За момента ние нямаме такава възможнжст, бихме го направили когато Нели живот и здраве се върне от майчинството. Това ще е стъпка която ще предприемам ако тя оправдава инвестицията си разбира се. И липсва ни още платформа за подписане на документ онлан, но с вени вече работим о това и до края н годината ще го въведем и това. Друго мисля всичко си имаме.

**IN: Добре, благодаря. Това бяха вичките ми въпроси.**

*** Standard Verbatim Transcription**
Standard Verbatim is probably the most popular transcription style out there. It involves detailed transcription with by light editing, creating a transcript that is highly accurate yet not overloaded with unnecessarily detail.

## Appendix 9 – Job shadowing agenda

| Date | Person - position | Topics | Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15/02/2021 | Ivan Bondokov – co-founder | Topic for graduation Project, Job Shadowing schedule | Remote work topic outlined, Job shadowing schedule agreed upon |
| 18/02/2021 | Cvetelina Koilova – account manager | Job shadowing, Marketing tools, Account management activities | Facebook ads<br>Content creation<br>Account Management |
| 01/03/2021 | Georgi Hristov – sales associate | Job Shadowing | Leads sourcing<br>Email building in HubSpot |
| 02/03/2021 | Jenny Pazstorska – Digital marketing Specialist | Job Shadowing | Video concepts and editing, Content creation, |
| 05/03/2021 | Liliana Taskova – sales specialist | Job Shadowing | Lead generation, Sales remote tools |
| 24/03/2021 | Mariya Dalemska - Event Manager | Job Shadowing | Event organizing, Clients communication, Career development |
| 01/04/2021 | Ivan Bondocov – co-founder | Project Update | Challenges for remote work |
| 14/04/2021 | Kaloyan Kalinin – account manager | Job Shadowing, Survey details | Account management activities, Survey review, Survey scheduling and target group |
| 20/04/2021 | Donika Miteva – Web Administrator | Job Shadowing | Website building, Website administration |
| 21/04/2021 | Valentina Kutseva – Co-founder | Job Shadowing, Interview | Management responsibilities, Marketer responsibilities, Interview recorded |
| 21/04/2021 | Vaneta Babikova – administration Manager | Job Shadowing, Interview | Administration procedures, History of Limacon, Interview recorded |
| 22/04/2021 | Alexandra Rusekova – Strategy Analysist | Job Shadowing | Teamwork implementation,<br>Organization procedures |
| 23/04/2021 | Samuil Zlatarev – Digital Marketing Specialist | Job Shadowing | Online advertisement |
| 28/04/2021 | Ivelin Banchev – Web Administration Manager | Job Shadowing | Security& Cybersecurity, Appropriate Tools suggestions, |
| 29/04/2021 | Silviya Rangelova – Digital Marketing Specialist | Job Shadowing | Content Creation,<br>Article Writing,<br>Client's communication |