The Effects of Decentralised Organisational Structures on the Adoption of Work Management Software in SMEs

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Glossary

- **CEO**: Chief Executive Officer
- **COO**: Chief Operating Officer
- **CRO**: Chief Revenue Officer
- **CTO**: Chief Technology Officer
- **CXO**: Chief Experience Officer
- **EC**: Electronic Commerce
- **ERP**: Enterprise Resource Planning
- **EU**: European Commission
- **FAO**: Food and Agricultural Organisation
- **HRO**: Human Resources Officer
- **IoT**: Internet of Things
- **KPI**: Key Performance Indicators
- **OECD**: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- **OI**: Open Innovation
- **R&D**: Research and Development
- **SME**: Small and Medium Enterprise
- **SaaS**: Software as a Service
- **TAM**: Technology Acceptance Model
- **TOE**: Technology, Organisation, Environment
- **TPB**: Theory of Planned Behaviour
- **TRA**: Theory of Reasoned Action
- **UTAUT**: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology
- **VPN**: Virtual Private Network

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A rising trend towards decentralised organisational structures can be observed as this structure is viewed to be carrying benefits in implementing change and transformations. The aim of this Thesis is to explore the effects of decentralisation on work management software adoption endeavours in SMEs, as the challenges of decentralisation have been largely understated and underexplored. Industry professionals may utilise this research to better understand and prepare their own organisations. The research deploys both modern and classical literature and theories to conduct and analyse qualitative interviews performed with four different industry professionals from four different SMEs in Denmark. The results have shown that these companies have put in effort to be more decentralised based on pre-established definitions, with some leaning more towards practically-established decentralisation than others. Moreover, in comparing organisational theories and technology adoption theories with the interview data, the particular relevance of Contingency Theory in analysing decentralised organisations can be seen. Modern Systems Approach has also been seen as highly relevant in drawing out the organisational design of these decentralised companies. TAM's results demonstrability has been shown to hold particularly high influence on technology adoption in these SMEs. The most pivotal findings on the effects of decentralisation on software adoption relate to the benefits it carries, its disadvantages, and the factors which grant a predisposition for these (dis)advantages. The findings on the advantages of decentralisation in organisations aligns with previous literature. These are quicker adoption, flexibility towards change, and higher intrinsic motivation (i.e. TAM's computer playfulness). Its disadvantages pose new findings: a propensity for lack of cohesion across teams, reduction in output quality, and inaccurate deadline handling. Another new finding is that the advantages of decentralisation for software adoption are at risk of being outweighed by its disadvantages when there are no or weak pre-established standardised procedures for communication, workflows, and professional alignment. Managers, entrepreneurs, and business developers looking to adopt new work management software should consider establishing these standards in their organisations before attempting to pursue the promised benefits of decentralisation.

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter acts as a prologue to the research paper, introducing the topic and most prevalent concepts, outlining its background and social relevance, and specifying the research questions.

1.1 Background

Digital transformations are the main catalyst for changes in the workplace in almost all companies (Gomes et al., 2019). Simultaneously, many companies, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), have been operating or shifting towards decentralised organisational structures (Panou, 2016; Poltorak, 2021; "The Rise of the Decentralized Organization," 2022). This shift has been predicted in 2012 by the Ricoh-sponsored research performed by the Economic Intelligence Unit which has found that the impact of new technologies in the workplace will force businesses into a new era of decentralisation by 2020, and further emphasised by a 2016 Deloitte Survey where 75% of respondents composed of 170 C-Suite executives believe businesses are "moving towards a more decentralised structure" (Park et al., 2016). This shift has also been referred to as a "quiet revolution in the workplace" by Snyder (2022). The ongoing phenomenon corresponds to changing social attitudes as well as literature and publicity. Decentralisation has been goaded as a positive revelation in business and management practices, carrying a number of well-recorded benefits, such as faster decision-making (Konadu Amponsah et al., 2014), flexibility towards sudden change (Swanson & Bhadwal, 2009), and a more efficient line of communication between stakeholders (Ebinger & Richter, 2016). However, this organisational structure is also plagued with some understated problems. One such problem is the expectation that people will readily start using unfamiliar technological tools that are necessary for work management and performance. This expectation often goes awry as it is hindered by the complications and challenges that arise due to not only the general challenges of adopting innovations and technology but also the more fluid, unguided, and unstandardised nature of decentralised organisational structures

(Altamimi et al., 2022). In order to have a crisper picture of what enacting such a structure actually entails and the challenges it poses to digital transformation and technology adoption[1] efforts, it is vital to have a critical approach to the assumed benefits of decentralised organisational structures on these efforts and theoretically-founded research on organisational behaviour and technology adoption within these organisations.

1.2 Social and Scientific Relevance

The challenges of technology adoption are not unique to SMEs, as societies have been forced to keep up with every oncoming wave of innovation and digital transformation that has rocked the public and private sectors alike (Verina & Titko, 2019). Large enterprises such as Deloitte and Mckinsey often pump out publications detailing their perspectives on how to best handle pervasive but indispensable digital transformations. Various factors, such as workplace culture, company age, size, mission and vision, and business sector are related to the potential challenges or ease of organisational change when adopting new technologies. However, the OECD notes significant gaps in digital transformation efforts between SMEs and large enterprises (see Figure 1).

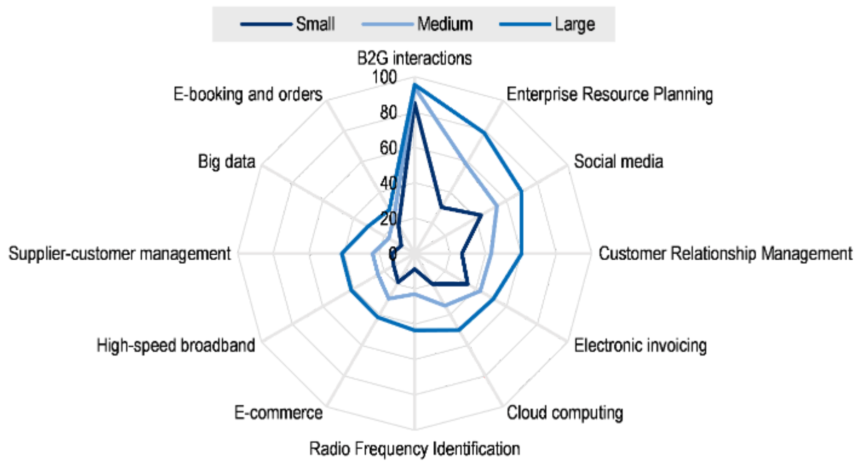

Figure 1. Average technology diffusion rates, OECD median, by firm size, 2015-2018 (OECD, 2021)

[1] Technology adoption here refers to the decision, by an organisation or individual, to utilise and implement a technology (Tatnall & Burgess, 2009)

The largest gap in adoption according to this figure happens to be within the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software area (30% diffusion at small enterprises versus 60% at medium ones versus 80% at large ones, showing a 50% gap between small and large enterprises). ERP system software are used by organisations to consolidate data and manage a large variety of day-to-day tasks. Considering the large scope of ERP systems, their adoption requires high levels of coordination, strategy, skills, capital, and time, and they are vital for larger organisations hosting hundreds of employees, but might not be as relevant to SMEs due to their lower levels of complexity. Nonetheless, knowledge and task management are key to any organisation, big or small, and SMEs face challenges in the adoption of software which is even less complex and convoluted than an ERP system. In order to better equip companies and individuals in their future digital transformation endeavours, the challenges of adopting simpler internal work management software require a deep dive, discovering their granularity and consequent opportunities. **Work management software** denotes business software and tools that can handle word processing, desktop publishing, account management, billing or payroll, database management, communication, and asset management. This includes Microsoft Word, Powerpoint, Excel, Google Suite, Jira, Asana, Trello, Basecamp, Slack, Intercom, AssetExplorer, Microsoft SQL, Oracle NetSuite, Xero, and Salesforce. With the limited financial and human capital, smaller companies and scale-ups may not always have the resources to research, hire, or take on all the large enterprise change management methods required for a smooth transition. These companies may also wish to enhance their operational decentralised organisational structures but lack the reference to do so. This research aims to produce valuable information which these companies can utilise to improve performance within their decentralised organisational structure and tackle challenges in the adoption of work management software and technologies.

1.3 Research Problem

This paper sets out to explore data on the most common patterns and challenges in the adoption of work management software in SMEs which have recently shifted to a decentralised organisational model and/or already operate on this model and have gone through or are going through tech adoption issues. Hence, the formulation of the following core research question and research objectives.

1.3.1 Core Research Question

How does a decentralised organisational structure affect work management software adoption in small and medium enterprises?

1.3.2 Research Study Objectives

1. Understanding the decentralised/centralised structure setup, its characteristics, behaviours, intentions, etc…
2. Identifying the pains of this setup and how they affect the organisation and its individuals, and specifying the most prevalent ones
3. Identifying the challenges of adopting work management software within this organisational setup
4. Identifying the current steps taken to mitigate risks of adoption and face its challenges
5. Determining the ways Academia and Industry may be able to support the organisation in its software adoption endeavours

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the bodies of literature as they pertain to the topic at hand. It explains the main focus points of the research as found in academia and industry, these points being: organisational structures and their types, decentralisation in research and in action, digital transformation and technology adoption's state of the art, relevant socioeconomic implications, and a number of their case studies. Specifically, this chapter answers the questions of "what does this mean?" (i.e., definitions) and "what is going on?" (i.e., examples, case studies, and literary records). The chapter expands on some concepts for clarification but does not go in-depth, as that is reserved for the Theoretical Background (see Chapter 3).

2.1 Overview of Organisational Structures

In their research on the relationship between structure and performance of an organisation, Dalton et. al (1980) find that the structure of an organisation is analogous to the walls, stairways, entries, exits, and roofs of a building, as the structure is the foundational element to an organisation and heavily influences the behaviour and activities of the people in it. This thinking is echoed and further expanded upon by including the analogy of a human system's structure, comparing the human body's organs to those individual but interconnected components in an organisational structure (Ahmady et al., 2016). So, organisational structures consist of not only the individual components and division of their activities within an organisation but also the dynamic interconnected relationships between them, namely jobs, systems, processes, people, groups (Hold and Antony, 1991, as cited in Ahmady et al., 2016), power and its relations, reporting, formal communication channels, responsibility, and decision-making delegation (Amold and Feldman, 1986, as cited in Ahmady et al., 2016).

Organisational structure, when formed from foundations of empirical and scientific origin, is the product of strategic design referred to as "organisational design", denoting a body of knowledge intended to inform on how to build an appropriately tailored organisational structure which would meet the overall goals (Galbraith, 2014). The different types of organisational structures that companies adopt, follow, or form may not always adhere to this kind of deep organisational design thinking (Zaridis & Mousiolis, 2014), especially in small and medium enterprises, but these companies can still display good performance results, as is found in the study of 1400 Dutch SMEs (Mosselman et al., 2002). Notably, there are complexities in drawing the line which defines SMEs, since the metrics could vary greatly, where some scholars and industry professionals focus on economic factors (i.e., annual turnover, total assets, revenue, etc…) and others opt to primarily look at the human factors (number of employees, locations of operation, size of the consumer market(s), etc…) (Zaridis & Mousiolis, 2014). For the purpose of this paper, the OECD metric is being used to distinguish SMEs from large enterprises, further expanded upon in the Methodology section (see Chapter 4). However, regardless of the foundations behind the organisation's structure, SMEs draw inspiration from society to design their individual structure, one which does not come from a binary set of choices but rather from a wide array of choices (Altamimi et al., 2022; Miles et al., 1978; Mintzberg, 1979). In order to better understand the different materialisations of organisational structures, an identification of the archetypes recorded in literature and industry is key.

2.2 Types of Organisational Structures

2.2.1 Definitions

There have been countless studies on types of organisational structures throughout academic literature with varying definitions, configurations, and applicability. However, there is general consensus that there are organisational types that lean towards opposite ends of the spectrum, i.e., mechanistic versus organic (Burns & Stalker, 1969) or centralised versus decentralised (S. Cummings, 1995). Academics define several types of organisational structures in between these opposing ends such as diversified (Gurianova & Mechtcheriakova, 2015), federated (Rychkova et al., 2013), reintegrated (Siggelkow & Levinthal, 2003), and moderately decentralised/centralised (Altamimi et al., 2022). There are also interchangeable synonyms for "centralised" (i.e., localised, hierarchal, bureaucratic, or mechanistic) and "decentralised" (i.e., delocalised, flat, horizontal, or organic), with nuanced differences between each of these synonyms based on the author's definitions and strategy (Ahmady et al., 2016; Bragg, 2018; Su et al., 2011). The ideal form of organisational structures or even just the ideal form of the 'classification' of these structures (i.e., which components should be deemed key) has been a topic of contention due to the high complexity of intersecting components. For the purpose of this paper, the opposing archetypes of “centralised” and “decentralised” structures are explored (see Chapter 3.1 for an in-depth exploration of the evolution of organisational theories).

2.2.2 Centralisation vs Decentralisation

Despite academic arguments and the plethora of contrasting perspectives, there is common ground in defining the most important identifying features of centralised and decentralised organisational structures within academia and industry (Gurianova & Mechtcheriakova, 2015).

Centralised structures include the following identifying features:

- Concentrated power of authority
- Top-down communication and decision-making
- Traditional hierarchy and pre-defined labour division
- Direct connection in the assembly line.

As a result the centralised structures often resemble a pyramid (see Figure 2)

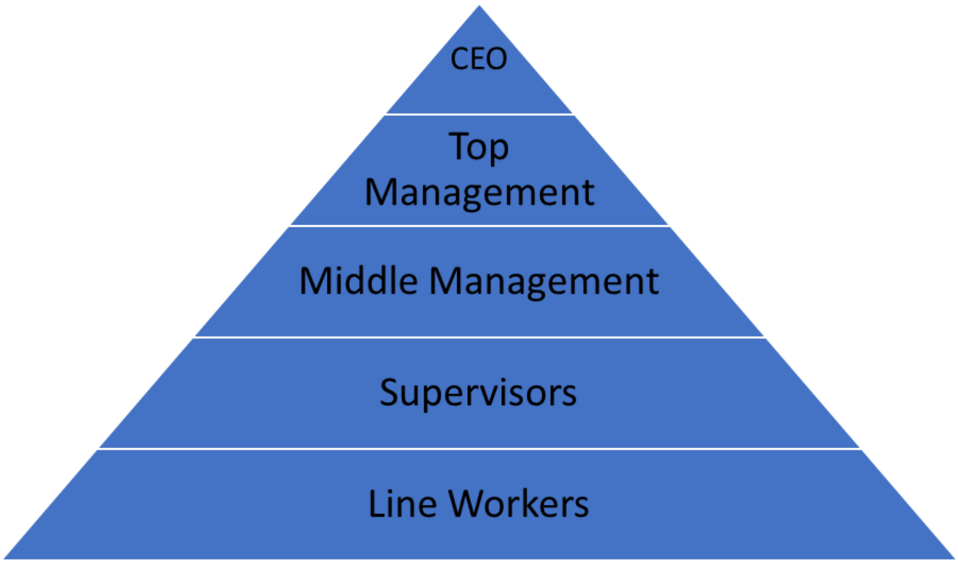

Figure 2. Centralised Organisational Structure Diagram

In contrast, decentralised structures include the following identifying features:

- Distributed authority
- Wider communication across the team (decision-making comes from lower levels)
- Labour division is fluid and cross-training is common
- Interdependent team, with high autonomy

Therefore, decentralised structures resemble flat networks (see Figure 3)

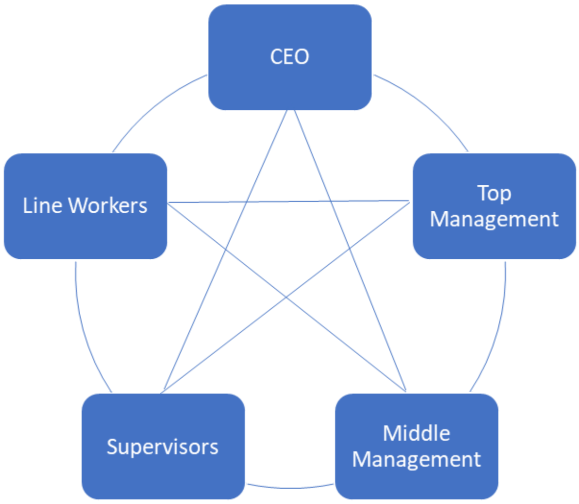

Figure 3. Decentralised Organisational Structure Diagram

The weight of responsibility and power for each unit within the decentralised structure is not necessarily dispersed equally and not all units are necessarily connected, however, Figure 3 is a basic representation of such a structure showing the typical network-like setup.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate several authors' notions of organisational structures, particularly decentralisation and centralisation (Altamimi et al., 2022; Ansell & Gingrich, 2003; Bragg, 2018; Faguet & Pöschl, 2015; Galbraith, 2014; Gurianova & Mechtcheriakova, 2015; Rychkova et al., 2013; Siggelkow & Levinthal, 2003).

2.2.3 Decentralisation in SMEs

As mentioned, these two types are often not found in their pure extreme forms, since the structure falls on a spectrum and does not adhere to a binary (Altamimi et al., 2022), so when an organisation defines itself as “classical”, “traditional”, or “centralised” as opposed to “contemporary”, “flat”, or “decentralised”, it is more often an indication of its management ambitions rather than the culmination of all its actual real-world practice and lived experiences of its employees. In the case of SMEs, inclinations towards decentralisation have been the more commonly found forms of management ambitions rather than the strictly hierarchical ones (Zaridis & Mousiolis, 2014). A practical example of these ambitions which falls on a spectrum would be the decision-making process. This could either be completely centralised and fall under the jurisdiction of a singular individual, usually the chief executive officer (CEO), or it could rest upon all employees to decide on all major decisions. However, different decisions may require a different set of expertise and involvement of CEOs, so not all decisions have to be made the same way within de/centralisation, and this variation can be an indication of a “moderately decentralised structure” (Altamimi et al., 2022, p. 3). The prevalence of one organisational structure type over the other (centralised over decentralised), is rooted in sociopolitical history and traditions, but the rising prevalence of decentralisation has opened discussions in both academia and industry regarding its suitable applications, benefits, challenges, and how it relates to innovation and subsequently to technology adoption.

2.3 Decentralisation in Research

Ample academic research is found in regards to decentralisation within public services and policy, (i.e., structure, impact, social effects, service design, etc…) as both academics and policymakers deem the form fruitful to public organisational design (Altamimi et al., 2022; Ansell & Gingrich, 2003; Faguet & Pöschl, 2015; Rychkova et al., 2013). Similarly, industry professionals, for example, CEOs and HROs, describe in detail how decentralisation affects particular organisations, departments, and individuals in the private sector (Bragg, 2018; Calcaterra & Kaal, 2021; Konadu Amponsah et al., 2014). Decentralisation is not only associated with management practices; on the contrary, it is often associated with open systems and delocalisation. The state of the art of decentralisation is extensive and reaches beyond its applications within organisational structures and into its applications in geographic delocalization (Karlsen, 2000), for example, that of educational institutions as well as technological and architectural design (Defiebre et al., 2022), the most well-known example of such design being "Bitcoin", a decentralised electronic currency blockchain technology.

Conversely, negative associations between a centralised organisational structure and performance have been reported for over half a century (Harrison, 1974; McMahon, 1976; Miller, 1967, Beck & Betz, 1975; Luke, Block, Davey, & Averch, 1973; Pennings, 1976; Sorensen & Baum, 1975; Tannenbaum, 196; as cited in Dalton et al, 1980), but the trend towards decentralisation is a newer novel (Rychkova et al., 2013), and so are its subsequent critical views. Researchers' remarks on growing trends toward decentralisation are especially evident in the public sector. For example, Ansell & Gingrich's (2013) research on eighteen OECD countries details the different levels and frequency of adopting decentralisation in governance, with some countries (Belgium, France, Italy, Japan) superseding others (USA, Canada, Australia). At the time of writing this paper, Denmark had recently just announced efforts to decentralise education by requiring universities in major cities to shut down some of their academic programs, in favour of reopening or refocusing them in smaller local towns. This decision which aims to proliferate development rather than centralise it has been controversial ("Why Does Denmark Want to Move Higher Education out of Main Cities?," 2022). Despite major concerns, the Danish government's decision can be supported not just in theory but also by tracing the successful applications of decentralisation as a deconcentration strategy. There are also well-recorded cases in which decentralisation as a management practice within organisations has proven to be conducive to efficient performance.

2.4 Decentralisation in Action

There are a number of case studies where decentralisation is the focus and in several different contexts and sectors, both in relation to management practices as well as systems or structures. Within political sciences, decentralisation is praised for its ability to increase and strengthen communication between citizens and policymakers as well as produce cost-saving economical outcomes (Ebinger & Richter, 2016). Additionally, as conservation districts in Canada have begun using a decentralised structure of governance, they have noted that these policies have provided “a flexible institutional framework” (Swanson & Bhadwal, 2009, p. 36) for improving their management of natural resources. At the intersection of information technology and social sciences, an experimental evaluation of the implementation of decentralisation in a “social internet of things” architecture project has yielded positive results as the system was able to function more efficiently (Defiebre et al., 2022). A study in Pakistan regarding the potential impacts of decentralisation on environmental protection agencies (EPAs) finds that this decentralisation can “reduce the workload of overburdened EPAs” (Khan et al., 2022, p. 8). These are only a few examples of the ample literature available on the benefits of decentralisation, but there are also critiques as, on the other hand, Altamimi et al (2022) argue that decentralisation within organisations could actually lead to a slower decision-making process rather than a faster process. Contrary to what other authors have remarked (Konadu Amponsah et al., 2014), Altamimi et al believe the necessity for the discussion to traverse all employees in order to make a decision inevitably prolongs the process. Moreover, some argue that centralised organisational structures better fit smaller companies. A study has been done on over 40 Chinese SMEs and the effects of centralisation on the effectiveness of open innovation (OI) practices. It yields results that “were different from the innovative literature in general and the OI literature in particular" (Gentile-Lüdecke et al., 2020, p. 15). The original hypothesis was that decentralisation would be a greater benefactor of OI, but their research leads to the implication that centralisation increases the effectiveness of both inbound and outbound open innovation as well. This opens up a granular discussion on innovation, digital transformations, and technology adoption.

2.5 Digital Transformations & Technology Adoption

In the digital context, innovation begets transformations. The latter relates to the integration of digital technologies into workspace environments, processes, projects, and businesses (Gomes et al., 2019). Since Gentile-Lüdecke et al (2020) infer that both decentralised and centralised structures potentially increase the effectiveness of innovation, a thorough look at the literature on the interrelated concepts of digital transformation and technology adoption is pertinent to better understand the opportunities and challenges facing SMEs in adopting work management software technologies.

2.5.1 State of the Art

Through a systematic literature review of 282 works of research, digital transformation is aptly defined as the "process where digital technologies create disruptions triggering strategic responses from organisations that seek to alter their value creation paths while managing the structural changes and organisational barriers that affect the positive and negative outcomes of this process" (Vial, 2019, p. 1). So, digital transformation is more of an idea, while adoption is the action that can trigger such a change. In studying these ideas in the business context, Verina & Titka (2019) investigate the extent of the importance of digital transformation. It is not only one of the policy areas of the EU and OECD but also a hot topic of interest within academia, as we are currently living in the fourth industrial revolution (see Figure 4).

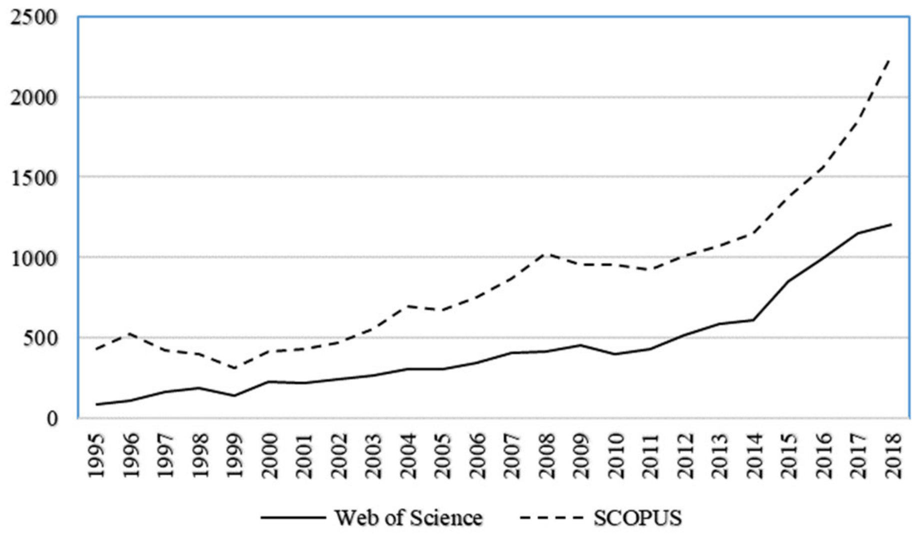

Figure 4. Number of publications devoted to Digital transformation: results from Web of Science and SCOPUS scientific databases 1995–2018 (Verina & Titko, 2019, p. 3)

Additionally, the table below showing the results from the years following Verina & Titko's research indicates that digital transformations continue to be a topic of interest and high relevance.

Year	SCOPUS	Web of Science
2019	3761	3529
2020	4822	3707
2021	6504	4537

Figure 5. Number of publications devoted to Digital transformation: results from Web of Science and SCOPUS scientific databases 2019–2021 (this author's contribution)

In seeking to describe Digital Transformation, Vial's (2019) study shows the building blocks of this phenomenon and the overarching sequence of relationships found in literary work. The focal point of these relationships is the changes in the value creation paths of an organisation, which are enabled by the use of digital technologies (on a macro level) and affected by the organisational structure and its barriers. Digital transformations in this case pertain to a strategic response which is triggered by the disruptions that follow the use of digital technologies in society and industry (see Figure 5).

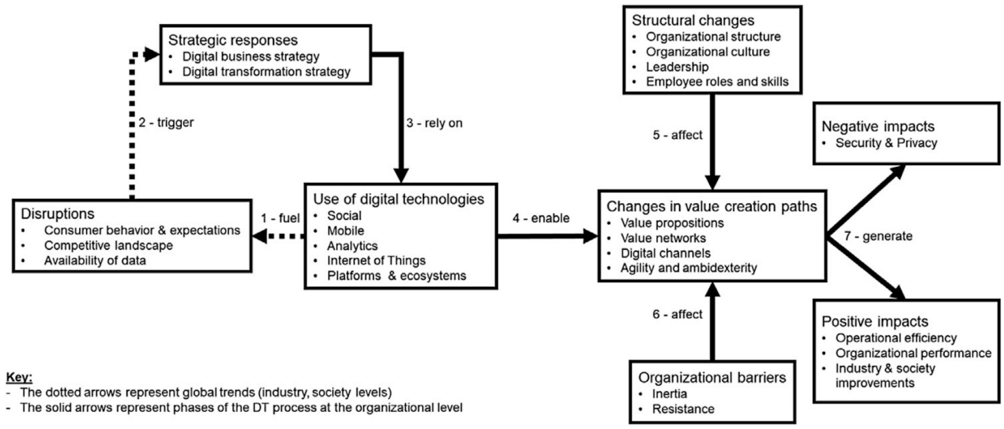

Figure 6. Building blocks of the digital transformation process (Vial, 2019, p. 5)

Despite Vial's well-researched intersectional approach and literature-heavy foundations for describing digital transformations, when compared to organisational structures, digital transformations carry the characteristic of being highly more conceptual and cannot be as easily measured or defined (Berman, 2012; Rueckel et al., 2020; Verina & Titko, 2019). The state of the art of 'digital transformations' is varied, complex, and dynamic, and it does not adhere to a static theoretical spectrum of applications, but rather a number of different individual but correlated applications and relationships, each with their own implications and case studies. A grounded approach to exploring the effects of digital transformations is to look at the impacts of the action of integrating digital technologies (Gomes et al., 2019; Hausberg et al., 2019). This action leads to a myriad of social and economic implications, the effects of which differ depending on the level it is applied to (i.e., organisational vs industrial/social), the object on which this is applied (e.g., process, project, department, business model, etc…), the sociocultural context, business sector, and the specific goals of this adoption.

2.5.2 Social and Economic Implications

The socioeconomic implications being highlighted here are some of the most prevalent and relevant ones, but this is far from being a comprehensive list. These are implications reflected on either the micro-organisational levels or macro-socioeconomic levels.

The first of these is openness and collaboration. Digital resources are accessible and modifiable by entities beyond their own programming or platform. This openness in the technological architecture of digital technologies permits users to collaborate and co-decide on governance and organisational strategies (Nambisan et al., 2019). This relates to the 1-to-many model of relationships, “where ‘many’ implies a number of potential collaborators that could hardly be reached by personal and un-mediated relationships” (Gagliardi, 2013). However, it stands to reason that with the expectations to collaborate comes a deal of complications, as collaboration requires clear communication, unity, and common goals. So, colleagues in SMEs may find a higher level of productivity and general work efficiency in adopting technologies, but it also comes with another layer of responsibilities, learning curves, and trialability concerns (Rogers, 1983).

The second implication concerns labour market training. The survivability of SMEs and their ability to contribute to the economy, subsequently keeping the economy strong, hinges on their employees’ competencies in keeping up with market demand and the ability to use digital technologies. So, EU policies are being discussed and implemented to answer the request of training the labour market on the use of new technologies, particularly IoT (Assante et al., 2018). Additionally, with the wealth of workshops, courses, literature, and videos that can be accessed in order to hone professional and technical skills, the labour market joiners suffer from information overload and require training and expertise in digital information literacy (Bartosz, 2022).

The third implication is regarding network effects. When the benefits of adopting a technology increase because other entities are utilising it as well, this is referred to as the network effect (Knieps, 2015). SMEs are more likely to benefit from certain technologies not only when the technology can be of use for their internal work management processes but also when it includes them in the “network effect” as they can derive value from having other participants using this technology, being familiar with it, and contributing to its development and utility (Corrocher & Fontana, 2008). However, there are also potential negative network effects such as congestion due to a high number of users on a network; cloud-based work management software may be of particular vulnerability to this negative effect due to limited server capacities (Knieps, 2015).

The fourth implication is about international competition. Digital technologies contribute to the internationalisation of an SME, and this is a factor that can increase competitiveness. When referring to the implications of adopting technologies, the opposite is imperative. So, in taking a look at SMEs not investing in adopting technologies that aid internationalisation, research has shown them suffering a competitive disadvantage. "As the array of technological choices increases, the need for concurrent reconfiguration of existing processes and internal organisational changes thus become more important" (Cassetta et al., 2020, p. 23).

The last implication discussed here is the moral, ethical, and behavioural shifts. Organisational values need to advance and reflect societal values. This is one strategic challenge SMEs have faced, especially in developed countries where humanitarianism and eco-friendly alternatives are sought by citizens and found by different providers. One example pertaining to digital technologies is the societal drive to adopt sustainable designs and tools. The growing need for sustainable solutions, as well as the societal value shift towards power-efficiency, waste reduction, and mindful usage has obliged organisations to provide value propositions that are congruent with society's moral, ethical and behavioural values, which includes introducing sustainable work and technology practices (Matt et al., 2015).

2.5.3 Case Studies

In searching for factors that influence technology adoption, several case studies are presented here, with varying degrees of relevance, impact, limitations, and conclusions. These nationally variable cases need to be looked at from a critical viewpoint, as the overarching institutional, governmental, and regulatory context is within itself a notable influence on SMEs' digital transformation efforts (Vial, 2019). Additionally, these instances represent cases of digital technology adoption, digital transformation, and innovation diffusion, but not specifically the adoption of work management software as this research aims to explore. The cases are divided based on the level of the studied factors, where the micro-level (Malaysia) focuses on the individual worker's readiness to adopt new technology, the meso-level (Palestine, Italy and Denmark) focuses on the impact and approach of the organisation's management, and the macro-level (Indonesia, England, Bangladesh, South Korea) widens the study scope to include the cultural, political and geographical aspects surrounding the SMEs and their impact on technology adoption.

Malaysia: Using Rogers's (1983) diffusion of innovation theory (see chapter 3.3.1), a paper has looked into the influencing factors of technology adoption in Malaysian SMEs. These SMEs have been willing to compromise on compatibility and ease of use of a technological tool if there is a perceived high relative advantage to adopting it. When gains are expected, for example, increased productivity, customer satisfaction, and sales growth, SMEs have been inclined to work through the challenges of adopting a technology which presents compatibility challenges or a level of high difficulty to learn. Trialability has also been shown to be unfavoured as it is time-consuming and expensive, so these SMEs have preferred to let the learning curve of adopting new technologies run its course (Ramayah et al., 2013).

Palestine: In an analysis of the factors that influence the adoption of electronic commerce (EC) technologies in Palestine, the highlights have been technological and organisational factors as follows: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, top management support, IT readiness, and technology trust. According to the authors of this analysis, these factors ought to be the focus of EC sellers, as well as being the main drivers for SMEs to adopt EC solutions (Herzallah & Mukhtar, 2016).

Italy: Beyond the standard innovation diffusion factors that are usually studied, one of the earlier studies in internet technology adoption has investigated the factors affecting the time of adoption of high-speed LAN networks in 128 Italian SMEs and has focused on network effects. Indirect network effects have been shown to drive enterprises to adopt speedier internet technologies at a faster pace, with larger ones being more likely to adopt them (Corrocher & Fontana, 2008). However, these findings do not necessarily apply to current technologies, such as 5G, as the study outdated the most modern IoT technologies.

Denmark: In taking close inspection at specific aspects of digital readiness and how they affect digital transformation efforts, Trischler and Li-Ying (2022) have showcased findings from surveying 207 Danish SMEs. Their research has dived into five main dimensions: organisation, people, technology, strategy, and market. The findings have highlighted two dimensions, strategy and technology, as the most important. The authors have concluded that "leaders should focus on developing a strong digital strategy and vision, embracing digital business models, replacing legacy technology with digital technologies, and building data analytics capabilities" (Trischler & Li-Ying, 2022, p. 26) and emphasising the importance of capacity to change in mobilising resources and deploying digital technologies.

Indonesia: In a study to investigate how organisational factors influence the adoption of Software as a Service (SaaS) technologies in Indonesian SMEs, top management support has been claimed to be the most pivotal enabler. However, this has been attributed to the cultural context of Indonesia with its "high power distance and strong hierarchies" (van de Weerd et al., 2016, p. 12). Additionally, organisational readiness is shown to reduce the likelihood of adoption, which contradicts other studies (Nugroho, 2015).

England: In an attempt to explore and develop a cloud-service adoption model grounded in the TOE (Technology, Organisational, and Environment) framework (see chapter 3.2.2), researchers have conducted a study on 15 SMEs in an SME-hub, North of England. This research has shown main factors of influence on adoption being "relative advantage, uncertainty, geo-restriction, compatibility, trialability, size, top management support, prior experience, innovativeness, industry, market scope, supplier efforts and external computing support" (Alshamaila et al., 2013, p. 17). The authors concede that evidence was lacking in order to indicate competitive pressure as being one of these factors. In conclusion, the authors suggest some strategies for cloud service providers such as considering trialability and the physical location of data centres, relating it to customer concerns.

Bangladesh: In a mixed qualitative-quantitative study, Hoque et al (2016) have interviewed 50 participants from 3 Bangladeshi SMEs. Their study has indicated that the key factors influencing ICT adoption are support from government and top management, financial aids, and awareness of benefits. Financial aid being a key factor here can be attributed to having done the survey in rural areas of a developing country.

South Korea: Using survey data, researchers have investigated factors influencing the adoption of e-business in Korean SMEs. The most important factors indicated were the CEO's competencies, the relative advantages, governmental support, having a globalisation strategy for market expansion, and sociopolitical factors (North Korea). On the other hand, company size, costs of adoption and pressure of industry competition have been dismissed as being unimportant for SMEs looking to adopt e-business in South Korea (Jeon et al., 2006).

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter offers an in-depth explanation of the theoretical background of the different concepts which are utilised in this paper. Specifically, this chapter explains the "How". How are organisations functioning according to theorists? How can their behaviour be explained? How do theorists explain the shift to decentralisation within organisations? How is technology adoption explained? How have theorists attempted to consolidate technology adoption theories? The underlying purpose of this chapter is that the theories which have been used here formulate the observational metrics that constitute the research design.

3.1 Stages of Growth of a Small Business

This first subchapter's goal is to detect a particular stage whereby decentralisation can be found within an SME. The theory of stages of growth of a small business has been designed to help small business owners and entrepreneurs gauge their development stage and aid in their decision-making process as they transition to the following stages of growth. However, this theory also explains how decentralisation is introduced into the organisational structure and at what stages. Scott and Bruce's (1987) five stages of small business growth are inception, survival, growth, expansion and maturity. They draw on the works of Lewis & Churchill (1983) who had outlined the same stages with slightly different semantics. In the Inception stage, the company's focus is to obtain customers and a minimum viable product. After the display of customer interest in what the company is offering, purchase channels need to be established, so the focus becomes not only to sell a product but also to ensure pleasant purchasing experiences and delivery. The business owner at this stage performs almost all tasks, making the majority if not all the decisions. In the Survival stage, the company focuses on staying alive because if the company does not get enough traction with customers there is a risk of going out of business due to running out of funds. In the Growth stage, the company does not just have a great idea or a minimum viable product but is actually an operational business entity with customers continuously buying products or services. Ramping up production to meet demands becomes essential as well as identifying the differences between revenue and expenses as profit becomes key. At this point, the organisation is still simple; it might include a few managers or a few people that are supervising others but it does not have a complex organisational structure yet. The growth stage is contingent on success and stability, but as success is an abstract concept and is arbitrarily achieved depending on subjective ambitions and goals, this stage can prove to be difficult. Founders at this stage begin to make decisions on whether they should stay the same size or take advantage of the marketplace demands for their products and services and grow the company larger. When companies reach this stage the owner is looking at their company as a growth platform; they are looking to see if they can continue to make average or above-average profits for their industry. Founders also have to adapt to changing circumstances now that the organisation is not only growing in profits and revenues it is also growing in complexity, as more employees are joining the organisation. This is also the stage when the owner and the company start to separate. After this comes the expansion stage, and the key issue becomes how to rapidly increase the scope of the company and how to finance that growth. The owner begins to delegate responsibility because the company has grown to a point where it has so many people that it can no longer have the day-to-day direct management of the operation. The structure becomes decentralised and now requires operational and strategic planning processes to be put in place. The last stage of development is the maturity stage. At this stage, the greatest concern of the organisation is to consolidate and control the financial gains brought by the rapid growth and also to include a flexible response and an entrepreneurial spirit to further the organisation's livelihood.

Stage	**Top Management Role**	**Management Style**	**Organisation Structure**
1. Inception	Direct supervision	Entrepreneurial, individualistic	Unstructured
2. Survival	Supervised supervision	Entrepreneurial, administrative	Simple
3. Growth	Delegation/co-ordination	Entrepreneurial, co-ordinate	Functional, centralised
4. Expansion	Decentralisation	Professional, administrative	Functional, decentralised
5. Maturity	Decentralisation	Watchdog	Decentralised functional/product

Figure 7. Enterprise Stage Model (Scott & Bruce, 1987)

3.2 Organisational Theories

This second subchapter is particularly important to answer and analyse the first and second research objectives pertaining to the setup of the organisation, behaviour and pains. In order to understand present-day social applications of organisational structures, it is pertinent to go back and look into the conceptual foundations that these applications have been founded upon. This exploration goes in-depth into the history of organisational theories and their evolution and explains the essence of each theoretical approach. Academic literature on organisational theories is constantly evolving and changing. Through following a publication by the FAO, there are different approaches to conceptualising organisations and classifying them. The three main approaches are Classical, Neoclassical, and Modern (Asopa & Beye, 1997). Each of these approaches involves different renowned academic exponents and theoretical variations, but the classical approach is the earliest one while the others are reactionary to it.

3.2.1 Classical Theory

The main exponents of the classical approach are Max Weber, Frederick Taylor, and Henri Fayol; their theories were published and popularised after their deaths. Weber's (1947) notions of traditionalism, charisma, and bureaucracy have been used to explain how authority may be displayed in order to better conceptualise organisational structures. According to Weber, traditional authority refers to power rooted in society's traditional or long-standing beliefs and practices and is assigned to specific individuals, either inherited by blood relations or bestowed upon someone due to religious dogma, for example, monarchies and theocracies. Charismatic authority refers to power beaming from an individual's magnetic social ability, such as that of successful sociopolitical activists and mobilizers. Lastly, bureaucratic authority refers to power derived from law and policy and given to a person or group through the measurement of merit to a certain extent; it is a hallmark of modern-day democracies. While Weber looked into the bigger picture, Frederick Taylor had a more micro-focused approach. Taylor's (1947) theory of scientific management argues that scientific analysis and professional cooperation are key to improving the performance of organisations, hence proposing strategic work task designs, training of employees, and maintaining a positive outlook. For example, labour-intensive activities within manufacturing companies like lifting raw materials can be managed on a scientific basis (i.e., optimising performance through studying time and motions of every single little task) rather than trial and error or top management judgement. Lastly, Fayol (1971) focused on management practices and produced the theory of administrative science (i.e., classical management). Fayol has pushed for a systematic approach to training managers, as he had not seen theoretical frameworks for this during his lifetime. Fayol's five main management activities are planning (i.e., managers possessing foresight and laying down directions for the organisation), organising (i.e., selecting and arranging people with order and efficiency), commanding (i.e., overseeing, leading, and driving process but without controlling the details), coordinating (i.e., harmonising and facilitating general activities of different groups or departments) and controlling (i.e., 'controler' in French, as in ensuring compliance on everything, from finance, accounting, to the technical side, quality control, by receiving feedback, analysing deviations, and adjusting accordingly). These three theorists have formed the foundations of the classical approach (or classical management theory), and they share the following commonalities: expressing a need for a clear hierarchy in an organisation, some form of division of labour, standardised work functions, centralisation of authority, and meritocracy (or at least competency and qualifications).

The classical organisational theory has been subject to a number of different criticisms. Its view towards organisations tends to be rigid and static despite the ever-changing nature of modern organisations. The focus of this theory is on the structural and technical aspects of an organisation which are studied based on oversimplified and mechanistic assumptions. This view, which assumes that organisations are closed systems that do not interact with their environment, completely neglects the human aspect present in organisations. A consequence of such neglect is the formulation of an incomplete view which cannot explain human behaviour within organisations. Because of this, experts consider the theory inadequate as it cannot manage the complexities within the structure and functioning of an organisation (Burns & Stalker, 1969; Johnson et al., 1963; Mintzberg, 1979; Pasmore, 1989; Trist & Bamforth, 1951). While the classical approach focused on the importance of mechanical structures within an organisation, it disregarded the influence of the workers' human aspects. However, formal structures interact with and are thereby affected by informal structures which exist within every organisation. The neoclassical approach focuses on a different set of principles, ones based on these informal organisational structures which aimed at filling the loopholes created by formal structures in order to satisfy the psychological and social needs of the individual.

3.2.2 Neo-Classical Theories

Neo-classical theories (also referred to as the behavioural approach) have been heavily based on the human relations movement, pioneered by Elton Mayo and co-led by his protégé Fritz J. Roethlisberger. In this approach, individuals are viewed as complex social beings who hold aspirations that go beyond the determined goals of their work within the organisation. The nine-year study dubbed the "Hawthorne Experiments" was conducted at the Hawthorne Works plant in Illinois, USA and included a large amount of data from hourly performance charts to interviews with thousands of employees. The study has emphasised social and human relationships among the operators (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1934). The conclusion they have reached states that changes in working conditions are not as significant as the changes in the social aspects of a worker's environment. The latter proved to have a higher effect on their overall productivity. Workers who received more personal attention, thereby gaining a boost to their confidence and an improved emotional state, became more prolific as a result. Informal structures following the behavioural approach have applied decentralisation as a design to give individuals more autonomy and thereby more chances to take initiative even at lower levels and have created flat structures with shorter scalar chains that increased the impact of motivation as a product of direct communication. Motivating individuals is seen as both necessary for productivity and highly complex since it is impacted by several socio-psychological factors. From this standpoint, individuals cannot be treated as an infallible tool and expected to function perfectly; they must be recognized for their distinctions in order to reach their maximum potential. Doing so requires reconciling their individual goals with those of the organisation, with the understanding that not all human behaviour is rational especially when seeking rewards from work (Maslow, 1943). This also introduced the importance of considering the synergy and discord which result from group dynamics, since these informal organisations offer their own set of benefits and hardships. Neoclassical theories argue that organisations must actively work towards bolstering healthy group dynamics and good teamwork which cannot be expected to flourish on their own in every scenario. In order to apply these considerations in the organisation, participative management becomes necessary to ensure increased productivity as it allows workers to participate in decision-making and further integrates them into the function of the organisation. Participative management gives individuals the ability to solve problems and make improvements more efficiently since they are the ones most directly affected and involved in their settings (MacGregor, 1960).

However, neoclassical theories are not without their weaknesses. These theories do improve on their predecessors, but since they lack a unified theoretical approach, it becomes evident that such theories are based on modifying the classical organisational theory. While they offer several varying organisational structures, there is not a single structure which can serve the purposes of all organisations nor can they be applied to all situations. Furthermore, neoclassical theory adopts many assumptions and considers them true although that might not always be the case. For example, it is not always possible to find a universal solution which satisfies every party involved in a problem, yet it is assumed that such a possibility exists.

3.2.3 Modern Theories

There are many academic exponents of modern theories, just as there are many variations of the theories themselves. Some of the most notable theories and theorists include the systems approach (à la F.E. Kast, J.E. Rosenzweig, R.A. Johnson, E. Bakke), the social-technical approach (à la E. Trist, K. Bamforth, W. Pasmore), and the contingency approach (à la T. Burns and G.M. Stalker, P.R. Lawrence, J.W. Lorsch, J. Woodward, H. Mintzberg).

■ 3.2.3.1 Systems Approach

The systems approach views organisations as systems composed of interconnected, mutually dependent sub-systems. These subsystems can in turn have their own derivative sub-systems (i.e. sub-sub-systems). Thus, the organisation consists of the following three basic elements: components, linking processes, and goals of the organisation (Bakke, 1959). The first of these elements, "components", can further be broken down into more basic and interdependent parts: The individual (i.e. the smallest of these parts, with varying attitudes, motives, and expectations), the environment (i.e., the individual's physical surroundings), the status and roles of individuals, the 'formal organisation' (i.e., the interrelated pattern of jobs designed to manage the activities and resources in the organisation) and 'informal organisations' (i.e., the behavioural conformities the individual adheres to during their social interactions with informal groups as well as the following behavioural modifications). Once these base components are identified, the second element of the system becomes evident: the linking processes of these components. This includes the manner by which such components are required to operate in order to maintain organisation and correlation. Their interaction relies upon communication, balance, and decision making which together constitute the linking processes. Communication between the parts elicits certain courses of action. It allows for a degree of control to be exerted upon them which then affects the coordination of these parts. The aim of such communication is to link the system's decision centres into a singular compound form. For such links to be maintained, balance between the parts becomes necessary. This balance is obtained by reaching a state of harmony between the different parts based on an equally structured relationship with one another. The third type of linking process depends heavily on the individual's relationship with the organisation and is based on the decisions of the individual. Individuals may choose to only produce and follow an attitude which aims at meeting the demands of the organisation. Alternatively, an individual may make the decision to participate in the organisational process and engross themselves in its demands. These decisions are swayed by the expectations placed on the individual and the extent by which they are allowed to participate in decision making as well as the rewards they are offered from doing so. The third and final element is the goals of the organisation. While goals may vary, they are most commonly considered to be continuous positive growth, long term stability and interaction between the members of the organisation with the goal of reaching mutual advantage (Johnson et al., 1963; Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972).

Similar to other organisational theories, the Systems organisation contains a number of discernible flaws. This theory is not based on modernity as it mainly acts as a synthesis of older theories and their research contributions. In addition, its abstract nature makes it difficult to apply in a practical setting as there is no specified or precise relationship between the organisation and the surrounding social systems. As such, its framework cannot be generally applied to all organisations. It does not offer a unified applicable framework and it does not specify the precise relationships between interacting social units within the system(s) and the organisation itself.

- 3.2.3.2 Socio-Technical Approach

Trist and Bamforth (1951) have conducted a study of the coal mining industry in Britain to try and understand how the social and technical aspects of coal mining work together. At that time, new mining technology was transforming the industry, as well as bringing on social changes. Their findings state three key elements. First, is the idea of responsible autonomy by giving workers more agency over their own work which depletes boredom and encourages a harmonious relationship between the worker and their technological tools. Second, is the idea of adaptability in the workplace by changing up tasks and schedules and redistributing labour to fit the psychosocial needs of the workers. Third, is highlighting the meaningfulness of a given task by decreasing the repetitiveness of work and keeping morale and the feelings of value creation high. So in short, the Socio-Technical approach explores the relationship between workers and technology within an organisation, how humans and technology form a cohesive system, and how the social and technical aspects of a workplace fit together. This theory highlights the strategic consideration of both the technical and the social aspects of an organisation, thinking of these two features as entangled and posing an ideal scenario of joint optimization (Pasmore, 1989).

The socio-technical approach is not without its own critiques, as Dillon (2000) remarks that freedom of choice and responsibility are both its strongest spot and greatest weakness. Organisations relying solely on the best judgement of their employees may find themselves facing consequences too grand, as not all employees may be the best fit to handle all situations. This is exemplified in task differentiation, which refers to the "extent to which the group's task is itself autonomous forming a self-completing whole" (T. Cummings, 1978, p. 5). This differentiation is difficult to attain because every group task is still a part of a wider context. A lack of a balanced differentiation can damage the organisation, and the socio-technical approach offers no rules or guidance for this balance to be achieved. Another example is that of Task Control which "refers to the extent to which employees can regulate their behaviour to convert raw materials into finished product" (T. Cummings, 1978, p. 5), for the exact same issues mentioned before. These problems could be avoided if the team is made up of specialists, but not every team is equipped to deal with complicated scenarios.

- 3.2.3.3 Contingency Approach

The contingency approach or situational approach, as its second name suggests, rejects the idea of universal guidelines suitable for all situations. This approach was pioneered by Fiedler (1967) while studying the personality of leaders. It suggests that problems are situational and affected by different environmental factors, including legal, social, political, economic, and technical. So solutions need to be catered to those situations (Burns & Stalker, 1969; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Mintzberg, 1979; Woodward, 1967). Nevertheless, theorists following the contingency approach have suggested several different organisational structures based on the most common patterns that they have observed, and then note that these structural configurations would only fit if particular environmental factors are present and situational factors are satisfied. Lawrence and Lorsch's approach can be referred to as the "if-then" model because they argue that the ideal organisational design is contingent on the variable factors in its surrounding environment (i.e., "if this" exists, "then this" must happen). They also added that organisations should adapt as their environment changes, so their structure needs to reflect the degree of uncertainty in their environment. Burns and Stalker have a similar approach. Burns and Stalker (1969) have coined the terms 'mechanistic' and 'organic' organisational structures, and they explain that "The first type, mechanistic, is appropriate to a firm operating under stable conditions and is characterised by a strong specialised hierarchy with vertical lines of communication familiar from organisation charts. The second type, organic, has a far less formal structure and is characterised by constant redefinition of roles and strong lateral communications networks… the first type cannot adapt itself to rapid technological change" (Burns & Stalker, 1969, p. 3). Because of their emphasis on job specialisation and specification, highly formalised set of procedures and protocols, and centralised authority and accountability, mechanistic structures are considered to be extremely complex. In contrast, the organic structures are relatively simple as they de-emphasise job specialisation, are more informal with a freer flow of information, and include decentralised authority by sharing the decision-making and goal-setting processes at some or all levels. However, Burns and Stalker ascertain that "mechanistic structures are effective only in conditions of low rates of technological and market change, whereas high rates of such change require the organic structure for the organisation to be effective" (Burns and Stalker, 1961, as cited in Donaldson 2001, p. 21). Therein lies the contingency approach with their mechanistic and organic structures. Similarly, Woodward's (1967) studies on industrial firms in England and their used technologies, processes, and systems, have concluded that there was no one singular best way to manage a firm, rather the best way is contingent on both internal and external contexts (e.g., dominance of R&D, marketing and production; variations in the status and roles of employees, and different metrics of measuring success, etc…)

Mintzberg (1979) has been inspired by Burns and Stalker, Lawrence and Lorsch, and Woodward's work. He went even further to suggest that an organisation could be broken into five building blocks: Strategic Apex (i.e., senior level of management), Middle Line (i.e., the middle management), Operating Core (i.e., the workers of the organisation), Support Staff (i.e., the admin support and indirect services), and Techno Structure (i.e., the analysts who plan and control the work of others). Mintzberg's (1979) organisational structures can be arranged into five generic structures: Entrepreneurial, Machine Bureaucracy, Professional Bureaucracy, Diversified, and Adhocracy. He explains these five structures as the following:

In the Entrepreneurial structure, the Strategic Apex role is ensuring that the organisation serves its mission in an effective way by making strategic management decisions for the organisation and feeding this information down to the Middle Line. Middle Line's role is to delegate these decisions down the chain of command to the operating core. The Operating Core consists of workers who perform the basic work related directly to the production of products and services. This format is fast, flexible, and lean which fits the Entrepreneurial structure, but as an organisation grows, this structure may become inadequate; decision makers can become overwhelmed leading to incorrect decisions. This is when power sharing becomes vital and would therefore require more specialist Support Staff and Techno Structure. The addition of these blocks constitutes the structure known as the Machine Bureaucracy. Whereas Machine Bureaucracy is standardised, such as mass production or government agencies, Professional Bureaucracy refers to firms where each job is different and professional expertise is required, such as lawyer and accountancy firms, clients' experiences are unique, the organisation is decentralised and relies on highly trained individuals who demand control of their own workload. Diversified structures may be used by large corporations who have different business units and product lines with a central headquarters and a number of independent divisions. This type of structure is often found in large well-established organisations that have a variety of brands. Adhocracy, or innovative structure, is common in new industries or companies that want to become innovative leaders. Innovative organisations hire and give power to experts and develop decentralised decision-making (Mintzberg, 1979; Mintzberg et al., 1976).

Of course, contingency theory has its own limitations as well. This theory is highly complex and there might never be enough literature to cover all situational bases. Additionally, empirical testing can be difficult because of the high number of variables, and while the theory does pose some conditionals that managers can look at to strategise, the theory pushes a reactive narrative rather than a proactive one because it does not offer comprehensive solutions. Lastly, this theory does not explain behavioural or psycho-social patterns within individuals, so it misses a big aspect of the dynamics of organisational structures.

3.2.4 Organisational Theories Table Summary

Theories / Determinants	Classical	Neoclassical	Modern		
			Systems Approach	Socio-Technical Approach	Contingency Approach
Main Contributors	M. Weber, F. Taylor, H. Fayol	E. Mayo, F. Roethlisberger	F.E. Kast, J.E. Rosenzweig, R.A. Johnson, E. Bakke	E. Trist, K. Bamforth, W. Pasmore	T. Burns and G.M. Stalker, P.R. Lawrence, J.W. Lorsch, J. Woodward, H. Mintzberg
Focus	Work tasks, structural and technical aspects	Human relations, behaviour, social groups, emotions	Systems, subsystems, and their interrelationships	Intersection of social and technical aspects	(Any and all) situational factors
Structural Designs	Rigid, mechanical, strict, and socially detached	Human relationship-based social system	Interrelated, interdependent units forming cohesive groups	Interacting social and technical units	Variable, determined by environmental factors
Strategy	Objective principles derived empirically	Participatory, motivational, human-goal oriented	Concepts focused on achieving a collective goal	Joint optimisation of sociotechnical via freedom of choice	Observational, reactionary, environment-based
Criticisms	Static and inflexible, mechanic assumptions, does not consider changing environmental factors	Lacks a unified theoretical approach and adopts many assumptions and considers them true	Highly abstract nature which is difficult to apply in practical scenarios, does not specify relationships of social system and organisation	Freedom of choice can be detrimental in case of lack of specialties and bad strategy or decision making	Highly complex, empirical testing can be difficult reactive, and does not explain behavioural or psycho-social patterns

Figure 8. Summary Table of the Organisational Theories discussed in this paper

3.3 Technology Adoption: Theories, Models, and Frameworks

This final theoretical subchapter amalgamates the most prevalent technology adoption theories in order to answer and analyse the third, fourth, and fifth research objectives pertaining to technology adoption challenges. There are a number of prevalent technology adoption models; some have been operationalised more often to explain adoption at the firm level, such as Technology-Environment-Organisation framework, others have been used to explain adoption at the individual level, such as Technology Acceptance Model, Theory of Planned Behaviour, and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, while Diffusion of Innovation has been used for both individual and organisational levels (A. Khan & Qudrat-Ullah, 2021). Although this paper is particularly keen on exploring and understanding the challenges of adoption of work management software within the company at the individual level, it is pertinent to get an overview of technology adoption models at the firm level in order to better understand the operational context of those used to explain adoption at the individual level.

3.3.1 Diffusion of Innovation

Rogers's (2003) theory seeks to explain how new ideas and technology spread through a culture and from one group to another. Rogers noticed that when certain ideas and technologies first appeared, they were not just utilised by certain cultures but also became an integral part of that culture. Rogers began by studying how farmers in Iowa, USA adopted new ideas. Rogers saw that the level of adoption rises through time, first gaining growth slowly, then rising rapidly, and with the final levels of adoption plateauing and taking an extended amount of time to achieve. This model "integrates three major components: adopter characteristics, characteristics of an innovation, and innovation decision process" (Taherdoost, 2018, p. 4). Rogers identified five stages in the adoption decision process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. In the knowledge stage, individuals learn about the existence of an idea or innovation and seek information about it. This process can further be broken up into three main types of questions, ones that ask what, how, and why. Sahin (2006, p. 4) relates the first type, “what”, to awareness-knowledge that represents the knowledge of the existence of innovation which potentially motivates the individual to seek information. Sahin relates the second type, “how”, to how-to-knowledge, representing comprehension of the correct usage of an innovation. Rogers remarks that this knowledge type is a vital variable in the decision process, as the higher the how-to-knowledge is, the more likely this innovation is to be utilised well in the trial period and eventually adopted. Sahin refers to the third step, “why”, as the principles-knowledge which relates to the functioning principles that describe why an innovation works. This knowledge step visualises the future use of an innovation, and this foresight leads to more effective adoption. With regards to characteristics of an innovation, Rogers states five categories: relative advantage (i.e, the degree to which an innovation is perceived to be better than its predecessor or existing practices), compatibility (i.e., referring to compatibility with existing values, past experiences, and the needs of potential adopters), complexity (i.e., the learning curve associated with adoption or the level of difficulty to understand and use an innovation), trialability (i.e., whether the innovation can be tried, tested, and disposed of easily), and observability (i.e., visibility of the proper function and relative advantage of an innovation to those who have not yet adopted it).

Rogers also coined terms for adopters at different stages of the adoption lifecycle: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Innovators are gatekeepers as they introduce innovations from outside the status quo, risk takers as they are willing to cope with unsuccessful ventures, and enthusiasts or geeks who have a higher degree of technical knowledge with the ability to navigate untraveled grounds. Early adopters are likely to take on leadership roles and thus act as role models for later-stage adopters. Their opinions are highly regarded and “put their stamp of approval on a new idea by adopting it” (Rogers, 2003, p. 283). Early and late majority adopters are referred to as such because of their impact on adoption rates. By the time the late majority adopts an innovation, it would have already garnered critical mass support of 50% of the population. The early majority are pragmatic and seek improvements in the innovation, while the late majority are more conservative as they focus on maintaining security. Laggards refer to the slowest adopters. They may never fully embrace the innovation as they are sceptics and are sometimes willfully blind. Rogers states that the first three classes of adopters, innovators, early adopters, and early majority, constitute the "earlier adopters" while the last two, late majority and laggards, constitute the "later adopters". Rogers also identifies differences between these two groups in terms of communication behaviours, social and economic statuses, and personality traits in relation to innovativeness and adoption (e.g., undereducated and poor individuals being the last to adopt an innovation, despite the possibility of needing it the most). Rogers's theory has its fair share of critiques. One argument is that it "has less power in explanatory and less practical for prediction of outcomes compared to other adoption models" (Taherdoost, 2018, p. 5) as it is a linear model which focuses on innovation diffusion among members of a similar social system.

3.3.2 Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) Framework

The TOE framework was developed by Tornatzky and Fleisher. As the name suggests, this framework relies on contextual factors of technological, organisational, and environmental nature in order to describe the process of technology adoption in firms (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). This theory was developed based on the Contingency Approach of organisational theories (explained in chapter 3.1.3.3). Within the TOE framework, technological aspects represent the technologies accessible to an organisation. The organisation context outlines the characteristics of the firm or companies (e.g, size, scope, degree of centralisation, complexity of its structure). The environment context refers to that of the business field, which consists of competitors, regulations, industry, and relationships with the state (see Figure 9)

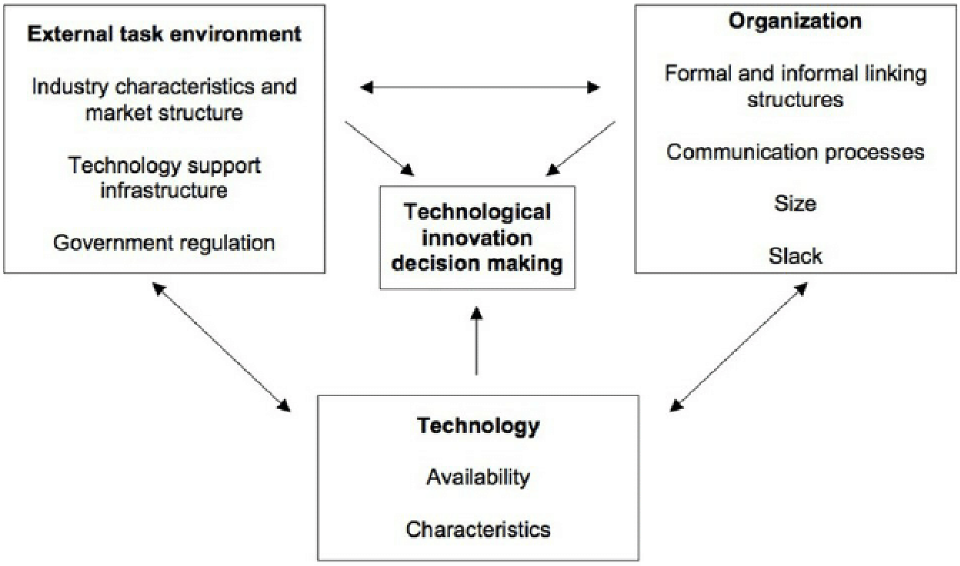

Figure 9. Illustration of TOE Framework

One of the limitations of the TOE framework is its assumptions that it would be more applicable to larger organisations than to SMEs. Thus, operationalising the TOE framework while integrating models such as Technology Acceptance Model, "with each adoption predictor offering larger number of constructs than the original" (Okorie Awa et al., 2012, p. 4) offers a more comprehensive theoretical lens for understanding adoption challenges.

3.3.3 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

Ajzen (1991) evolved TPB out of the Theory Of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977) which states that intentions are the best predictor of behaviour. The main premise of this theory is that if one plans to do something then one is more likely to do it. According to TRA, intentions are the product of two different processes: behavioural attitudes and subjective norms, with TPB adding a third predictor, perceived behavioural control. Behavioural attitudes relate to how a person thinks and feels about the behaviour and reflects their expectations and evaluations of the behaviour. This can be split into two different aspects: effective attitude (i.e., whether a person believes the behaviour to be enjoyable or unenjoyable) and instrumental attitude (i.e., whether the behaviour is believed to be beneficial or harmful). These are not always clear-cut and an individual might have a mixture of affective and instrumental attitudes. Subjective norms relate to the support given or not given by the social circle of the individual including family, friends, or significant others. This predictor can also be split into two different types: injunctive (i.e., whether others encourage an individual to do the behaviour) or descriptive (i.e., whether others in a person's social group engage or don't engage in the same behaviour). Perceived behavioural control relates to the extent to which a person feels capable and has confidence in their ability to execute the desired behaviour. This plays a central role in their intentions and actual behavioural outcomes. This could be likened to the perception that a person has the capabilities to overcome potential barriers and challenges. Overall, TPB states that individuals form stronger intentions and are more likely to engage in an activity when this person perceives an activity to be enjoyable, having good benefits, when they have the support and encouragement of others, including members of their social group that already engaged in the behaviour, and feeling that they have the ability to meet the demands of the task.

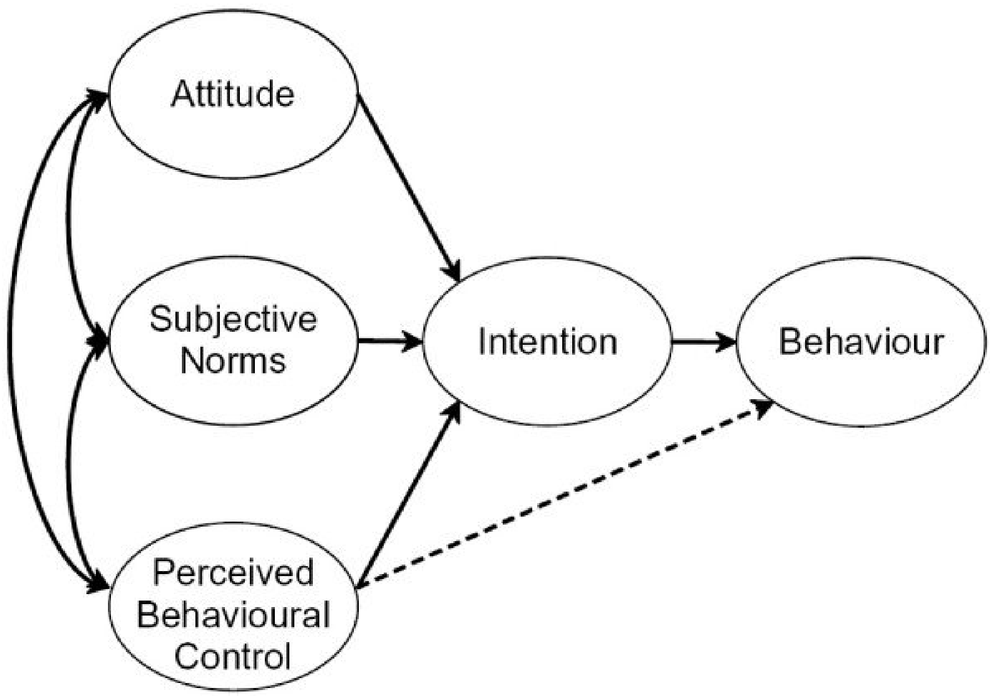

Figure 10. Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)

3.3.4 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

TAM aims to explain why people would choose to use a particular technology in a work context. The theory was developed by Davis (1989). At the time, technologies such as email and word processing systems had the potential to replace systems or tools such as hand-writing. Perceived usefulness can be defined as the future user's personal view towards how much an application system can facilitate and improve their work performance within their organisation. Perceived ease of use can be defined as the user's expectation of the target system's effortlessness. However, this perception changes with age and experience and varies with gender, background, culture, ethnicity, etc… Before even beginning to test new technologies, people tend to formulate preconceptions regarding their use. This formulation of a bias affects their attitudes towards learning how to use new technology and therefore either decreases or increases their perceived ease of use before any practical testing. Perceived usefulness can then be affected as well, since a technology that is seen as harder to use will require more effort and therefore become less useful to the user. The formulation of these biases can be referred to as external factors (shown as x1, x2, and x3 in Figure 11)

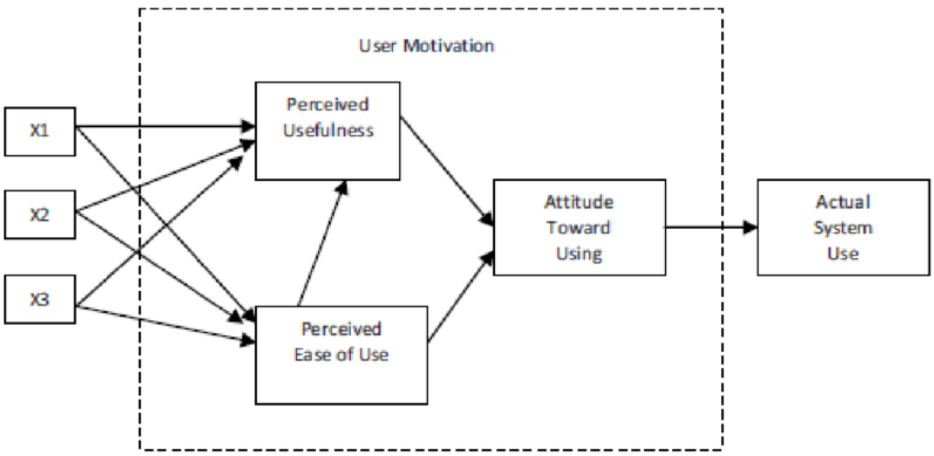

Figure 11. Original Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989)

3.3.5 Extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM2)

TAM2 is a revision model of TAM. Venkatesh and Davis (2000) sought to provide a more detailed explanation of the factors that affect technology implementation over three points in time: pre-implementation, one month post-implementation, and three months post-implementation. So, this theory adds to TAM voluntariness, social influence (image, subjective norms), and cognitive instrumental concepts (results demonstrability, job relevance, and output quality). The additions can be explained as follows. ‘Voluntariness’ has been defined as the "extent to which potential adopters perceive the adoption decision to be non-mandatory" (Agarwal and Prasad 1997, Hartwick and Barki 1994, Moore and Benbasat 1991, as cited in Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). ‘Subjective norm’ follows TPB’s definition, which refers to the person’s perception of whether most people who are important to them think they should or should not perform the behaviour in question (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, as cited in Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). ‘Image’ has been defined as "the degree to which use of an innovation is perceived to enhance one's status in one's social system" (Moore & Benbasat, p. 195, as cited in Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). ‘Job relevance’ has been defined as “an individual's perception regarding the degree to which the target system is applicable to his or her job” (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000, p. 8). ‘Output quality’ refers to the user’s perception of the system's ability to perform specific tasks (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Result demonstrability refers to the production of tangible results of using an innovation (Moore & Benbasat 1991, p. 203, as cited in Venkatesh & Davis, 2000).

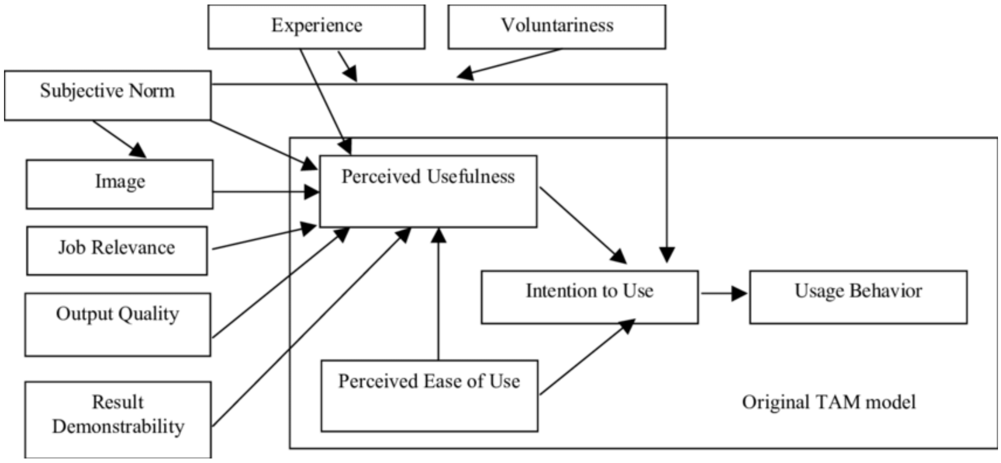

Figure 12. Technology Acceptance Model 2 (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000, p. 5)

3.3.6 Technology Acceptance Model 3 (TAM3)

The final TAM version is TAM3. Venkatesh and Bala (2008) proposed additional determinants, referred to as anchors (computer efficacy, perception of external control, computer anxiety, computer playfulness) and adjustments (perceived enjoyment, and objective usability). 'Anchors' are the general beliefs about computers and their usage, while 'adjustments' refer to the beliefs that are shaped based on direct experience with the technology. Each of these can be explained as follows: Computer Efficacy refers to the individual's control beliefs regarding one's personal ability to use a system (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008, p. 11). Perception Of External Control has been defined as "individuals' control beliefs regarding the availability of organizational resources and support structure to facilitate the use of a system" (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008, p. 11). 'Computer Anxiety' has been defined as "belief that inhibits forming a positive perception of ease of use of a system" (Venkatesh, 2000, as cited in Venkatesh & Bala, 2008, p. 11). 'Computer Playfulness' has been defined as " represents the intrinsic motivation associated with using any new system" (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008, p. 11). 'Perceived Enjoyment' refers to the extent to which "the activity of using a specific system is perceived to be enjoyable in its own right, aside from any performance consequences resulting from system use" (Venkatesh, 2000, as cited in Venkatesh & Bala, 2008, p. 56). 'Objective Usability' has been defined as "comparison of systems based on the actual level (rather than perceptions) of effort required to complete specific tasks" (Venkatesh, 2000, as cited in Venkatesh & Bala, 2008, p. 56).

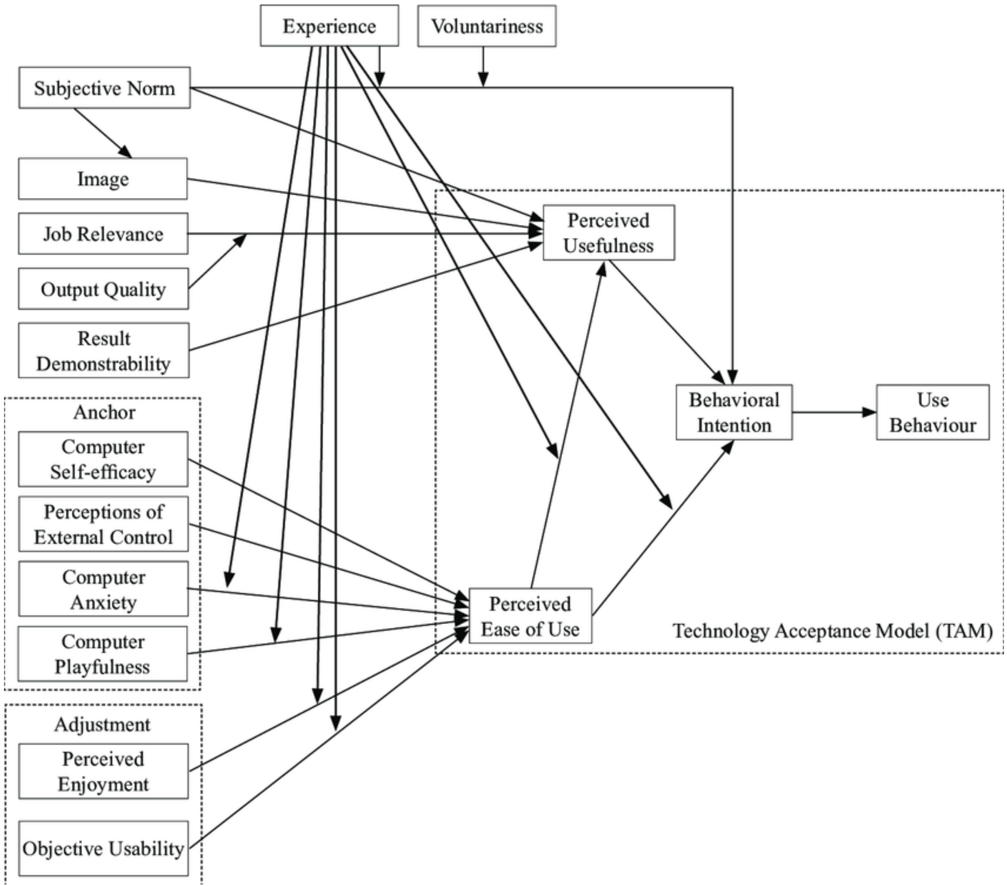

Figure 13. Technology Acceptance Model 3 (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008, p. 66)

3.3.7 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

In an effort to improve on TAM2 and unify several innovation diffusion theories, Venkatesh et al (2003) took into account prior experience, age, and gender as well as unified eight influential acceptance models: TAM, DOI, Theory Of Reasoned Action, The Motivational Model, The Theory Of Planned Behaviour, The Model of PC Utilization, and Social Cognitive Theory). UTAUT includes four moderators of key relationships: gender, age experience, and voluntariness of use, and has four core determinants of usage and intention: performance expectancy (i.e., the degree to which the technology is perceived to be useful), effort expectancy (i.e., the degree to which using the technology is perceived to be easy to use), social influence (i.e., the degree to which using the technology is appreciated in the social network), and facilitating conditions (i.e., the degree to which the individual believes to be in a position of the resources to use the technology)

Despite its strong unified nature which makes it one of the most comprehensive technology acceptance models and adds more nuance and variables, it has faced criticism. The most prevalent criticism is the idea that it is too focused on formal learning and too concerned with the organisation at the expense of the individual. Venkatesh and co-authors attempted to address these concerns with the formation of UTAUT2.

3.2.6 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2)

This iteration of the original model aims to address some of the first one's perceived shortcomings as there was some doubt about UTAUT's ability to explain individual technology acceptance decisions (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In addition to the first model's constructs, the intention to use technology is influenced by hedonic motivation (i.e., degree to which the technology is perceived to be enjoyable), price value (i.e., cognitive trade-off between perceived benefits and monetary costs of technology value), and habit (i.e., defined as the passage of time from the initial technology usage).

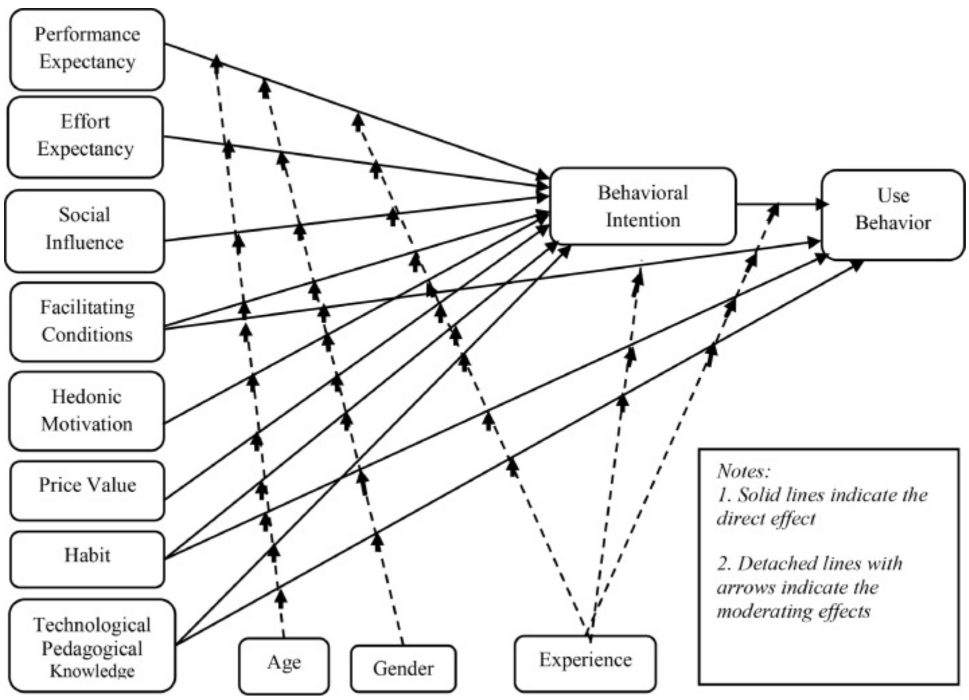

Figure 14. UTAUT Model (Venkatesh et al., 2012)

4. METHODOLOGY

This section's goal is to explain all the research methods used in order to answer the research questions. The chapter achieves this goal by giving a basic understanding of the research context, displaying the literature and theory search methods, disclosing the data collection procedure, and explaining the research design and data analysis.

4.1 Research Context

As this research has been conducted in Copenhagen, Denmark, it is important to note that the definition of a "small" or "medium" enterprise might be different under the colloquial sociocultural context of Denmark. This is taking into consideration the population of Denmark as well as the typical number of employees in multinational Danish firms as opposed to startups and scale-ups. However, as this study has the potential to provide international implications, the Danish definition of an SME will be disregarded at the discretion of the author.

This research does not target a singular industry. The findings displayed may have deeper implications when diving into the industrial context. However, this is another point of contention which is being disregarded in order to more easily fulfil the interview criteria and thus secure participants in the study.

The author chose to do this thesis on the challenges of adopting work management software in decentralised organisational structures based on personal interest, personal experience (as a professional in management consulting), and recognition of recent trends towards decentralisation and digitalisation. Essentially, the author could see a rising trend in organisations shifting away from hierarchical and strict/rigid structures. This type of organisational structure is especially popular among growing SMEs and particularly within the Danish context.

4.2 Documents and Papers Searching Strategy

Considering the research context and main research questions, a select choice of <u>keywords</u> have been used in order to find relevant papers, such as organisational theory, organisational structures, organisational design, decentralisation, centralisation, innovation, technology adoption, adoption theory, digital transformation, management practices, SMEs, etc… Aalborg University's VPN has been used to access the most trusted academic research databases (Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect) and several publisher websites. Primary filters have been used for industry (i.e., Business, Management, Social Sciences) and year (i.e. between 2010 and 2022). Moreover, searching and reading scientific papers has been performed more effectively using Open Knowledge Map[2] and Inciteful[3]. These two tools have been used, respectively, in order to create a visual knowledge map of the topic and to build a network of papers (see Figure 15) and literature connections for interdisciplinary research (see Figure 16).

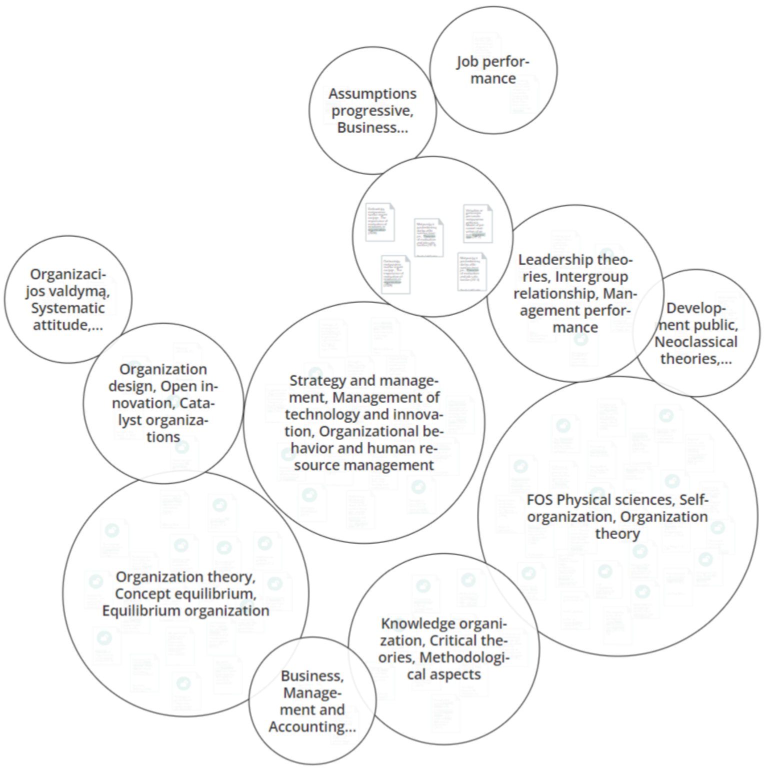

Figure 15. Demonstration of Open Knowledge Map for "Organisational Theories" each circle in the map consists of relevant papers based on this keyword

[2] https://openknowledgemaps.org/
[3] https://inciteful.xyz/

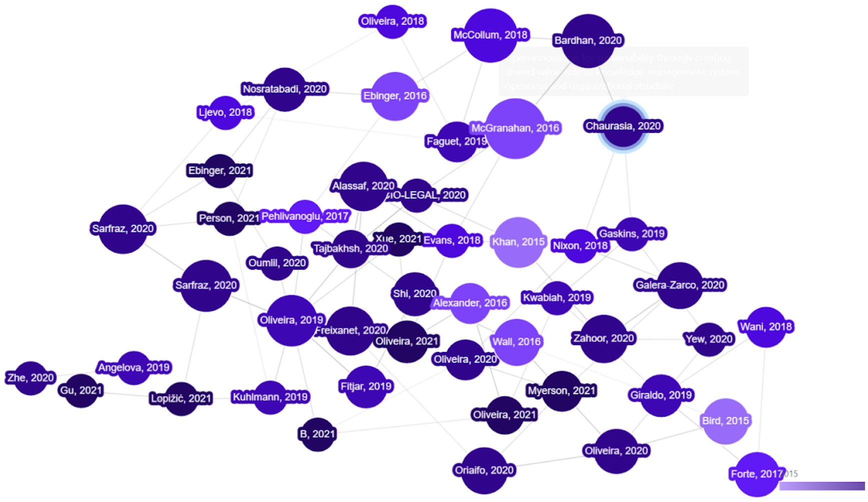

Figure 16. Demonstration of current and potential literature paper connections from Inciteful, papers are connected with citations and highlighted according to perceived importance

4.3 Data Collection

The primary goal has been to gather empirical evidence in the form of interviews with professionals that fulfil the following criteria:

- Working in SMEs with under 250 employees
- Have worked at this company for over 1 year
- Are in a managerial position or have been heavily involved in the adoption of work management software

Seeing as how this target group is rather niche, a tailored approach to finding and reaching out to participants was necessary. Therefore, recruitment entailed scoping the Danish SME scene via websites such as Linkedin and TheHub. Around 25-30 hours a week for one month were dedicated to researching and contacting potential participants. After eligible SMEs were identified, emails were sent out (using the author's company email) for collaboration. Over 40 emails were sent out. Additionally, the author used his professional network to reach out to eligible interview participants. Only seven participants agreed to be interviewed. Three of these participants later dropped out or stopped answering. The following table illustrates the four participants which have gone through the interview process. Some info has been redacted for privacy and the names have been changed.

Participant's Name	Company Name	Company Size	Role in Company
Sheldon	*Redacted for Privacy*	40-50	Chief Experience Officer
Jo	*Redacted for Privacy*	110-120	Head of Solutions
Miriam	*Redacted for Privacy*	25-30	Founder/Chairperson/Host
Sally	*Redacted for Privacy*	30-40	Marketing Manager

Figure 17. Participating Industry Professionals

The following includes QR codes for each interview video. The videos are hosted on the Sonar platform. In order to access the videos, you need to log in to the platform using the link: https://my.sonarapp.com/account/login

and inputting these credentials:

Username: [Redacted for Privacy]

Password: [Redacted for Privacy]

You will then be able to view the videos using the following QR codes.

Figure 18. Sheldon's Interview

Figure 19. Jo's Interview

Figure 20. Miriam's Interview

Figure 21. Sally's Interview

4.4 Design and Analysis

As Callaghan (2022) points out "Rigorous research requires structure. The structure of any research is influenced by the phenomena or objects under study, as well as the researcher's position concerning the nature of reality and how one may come to access or understand that reality through methods of investigation" (p. 81). This subchapter's goal is to formulate a clear operational research design. The research takes on a qualitative study. This subchapter concretely shows how the theories are being used and ensure a direct link between the theories and the interview questions. In order to consolidate the theories, the relation to the research question needs to be addressed.

4.4.1 Operationalisation of Theoretical Background

The theories introduced in this paper operate on a three-layer basis. The first theoretical layer (stages of growth of small business) suggests that decentralisation within the organisational structure begins and proliferates from the growth stage. Hence, this directs the research recruiting criteria towards SMEs that are operating within those stages. This may not be translated to a direct numerical value for the organisation's age. However, the interview will begin by ensuring that the participants fulfil this criteria by asking about the history of their operations and whether they consider themselves past the "survival" stage of the business.

The second theoretical layer (organisational theories) points towards specific variables that affect organisational design and behaviour. The participants in this study may not necessarily fall under one specific organisational design or approach. However, each organisational approach focuses on different variables which need to be considered during the interview and analytical process. These variables are human relationships (neoclassical approach), common goals of units within the group/team/organisation (systems approach), freedom of choice and decision-making (sociotechnical approach, which ought to be especially relevant for decentralised structures), and the mechanics of hierarchy (classical approach, which ought to be especially relevant in centralised structures). The contingency approach also points to overarching variables that affect organisational behaviour. As this research is limited to the author's local network, the predetermined variables are the location, national government style, economy, organisation size, and growth stages. These contingency variables and others that may arise during the research are to be accounted for in the analysis.

The third and final theoretical layer (technology adoption theories) shows a myriad of workable models that can guide this research. The most recent of which are the TAM3 and UTAUT2 models. Both these models may be useful in the analysis, however, UTAUT2 may be applied to the organisational level only. TAM3 can be applied at both the individual level and organisational level. Hence, TAM3 has been chosen as the model of operation for this research design at the discretion of the author.

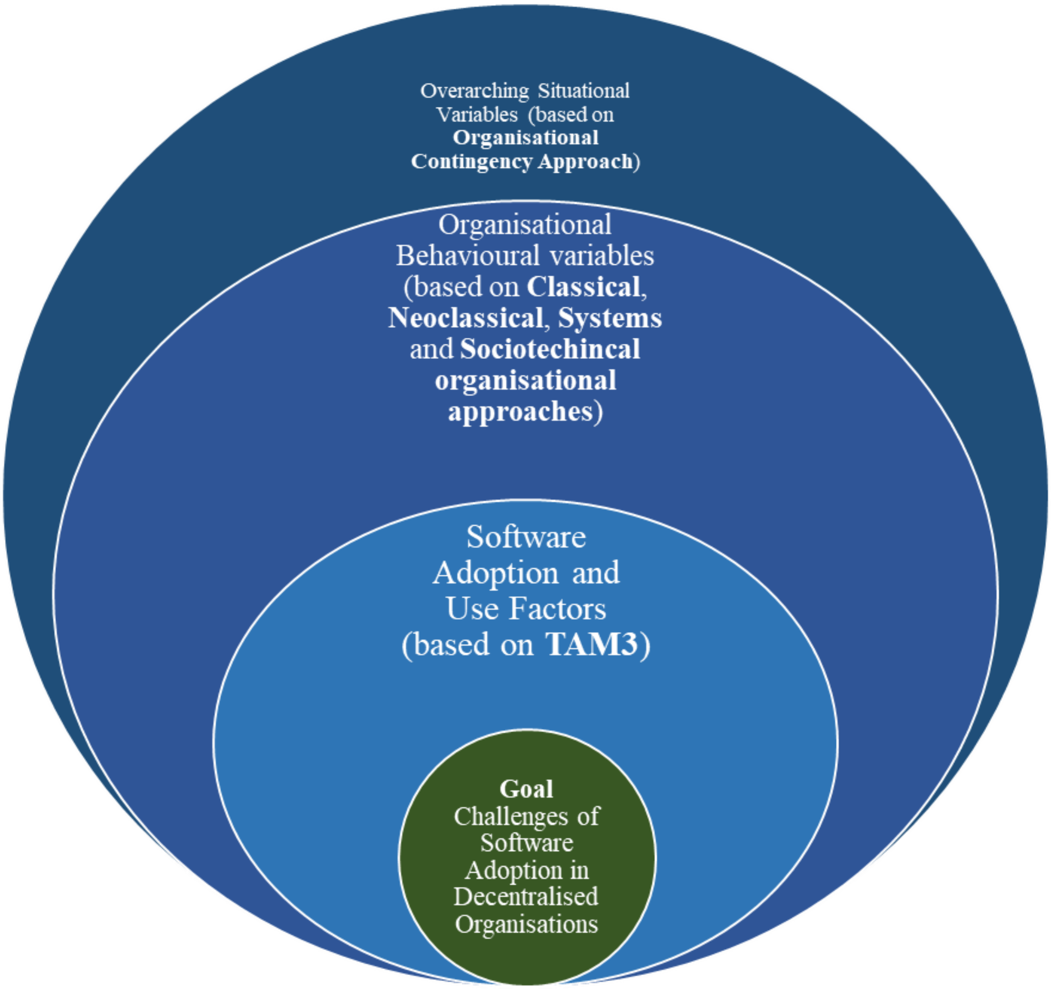

Figure 22. Diagram illustrating the layers of analysis based on the theoretical layers in this paper.

Figure 23. Diagram which further expands on each layer, illustrating the variables found in each one

4.4.2 Study Design and Interview Questions

This study has been designed to achieve the following study objectives:

1. Understanding the decentralised/centralised structure setup, its characteristics, behaviours, intentions, etc…
2. Identifying the pains of this setup and how they affect the organisation and its individuals, and specifying the most prevalent ones.
3. Identifying the challenges of adopting work management software within this organisational setup.
4. Identifying the current steps taken to mitigate risks of adoption and face its challenges.
5. Determining the ways Academia and Industry may be able to support the organisation in its software adoption endeavours.

Within each study objective, there are between 2 and 7 interview questions (25 questions overall). This number of interview questions has been deemed ideal for qualitative research done via 45-60 minute qualitative interviews based on the author's professional experience analysing qualitative studies as a Strategy Consultant. The first two study objectives are utilising the second theoretical layer to guide the questions (i.e. asking about hierarchy, decision making, etc…), while the third objective utilises the third theoretical layer (i.e., indirectly asking about TAM3 variables), and the fourth and fifth study objectives utilise the first theoretical layer (i.e. asking participants on variables contingent to their personal and professional experience, background, location, etc…). The questions are open-ended to encourage elaboration and hold a neutral tone. The following table explains the formulation of each question.

Interview Question	Goal/ Reason	Theory Layer
How would you define your organisation's structure?	Open-ended question to get a full description of the organisation (departments, communication, etc.)	2
How has the organisational structure evolved throughout the years?	Following and verifying Stages of Growth of Small Business Theory	2
Do you think your practical organisational structure corresponds to how it is supposed to function in theory? Why…	Delimitation to get the real life lived practices as empirical findings rather than theoretical foundations.	2
Who handles most of the decision making process within this structure? Can you give me examples?	Key element in identifying level of decentralisation in the organisation (decision-making factor)	2
How would you describe the level of freedom of choice and autonomy in your organisation? Can you give me examples?	Key element in identifying level of decentralisation in the organisation (autonomy factor)	2
Do you think your current organisational structure makes it easier to adopt new technologies, or would you prefer more/less hierarchy/strict standards?	Getting a high level insight on how decentralisation/centralisation is perceived to affect technology adoption	2 and 3
What's a typical challenge/difficulty faced on a regular basis in your organisation?	Identifying pains to compare to organisational approaches and technology adoption responses	2
What are the most difficult challenges your organisation has faced so far? Who or what was affected the most?	Identifying pains to compare to organisational approaches and technology adoption responses	2
How did you deal with these challenges? How has the (de)centralised organisational structure helped you deal with these challenges?	Identifying management approaches to these pains	2
Please describe how you have altered your organisational structure in response to these challenges.	Following and verifying Stages of Growth of Small Business Theory	2
Can you please recall a time when you adopted a work management software?	Getting high level picture of software	3

Why was this software adopted (response to something, etc)? How did your organisation go about adopting?	adoption including drivers and overall journey	
What kind of challenges/barriers did you face during adoption?	Deeper insight into the software adoption journey (challenges)	3
Do you think the challenges/barriers you faced are reflective of those faced by the front line?	Delimitation to get the real life lived practices as empirical findings	3
Did you have expectations of the challenges?	Gauging the expectations (to be related to organisational design)	3
How do you think your organisational structure at the time encouraged or impeded that software adoption?	Delimitation to ensure the answers align in terms of timeline and experience	3
How did the individuals in your organisation perceive the usefulness of the software? Can you please share a story or example of this?	Direct TAM analysis related question (perceived usefulness)	3
How did the individuals in your organisation perceive the ease of use of the software?	Direct TAM analysis related question (perceived ease of use)	3
How did you manage the adoption challenges? *Flexible questions: responses of challenges, proactivity, assessments, trials, ... Preemptive strategies?*	Open ended and non-rehearsed questions relating to the specific software adoption scenario discussed in the interview	3
How do you think being in Denmark has helped your organisation in general and specifically with technology adoption?	Overarching socio political contextual understanding	1
What external resources do you use often in order to deliver your products/services or get your work done?	Contextual understanding (industry influence)	1
How does your organisation utilise industry resources?	Contextual understanding (industry influence)	1
How do educational institutions influence your organisation and its activities?	Contextual understanding (Academia influence)	1
Can you think of ways Academia or Industry may be able to support your organisation further?	Contextual understanding (necessary and desired support)	1

5. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This section illustrates the results of the research. The goal is to answer the research questions posed by this paper. The "Empirical Findings" display the collected data which can answer the interview questions, thereby answering the study objectives, and consequently the overarching research questions.

Please use the following diagram for guidance on interpreting the findings.

Figure 24. Diagram for Interpreting the Layout of Empirical Findings

5.1 Organisation Structure, Evolution, and Characteristics

Study Objective 1: Understanding the decentralised/centralised structure setup, including its characteristics, behaviours, and intentions

Most industry professionals have described that their organisations are divided into teams or departments, with each handling different functions

- Sheldon has described the structure as less hierarchical attributing this to being in Scandinavia, with executives on top, management teams under them, followed by heads of departments for each team, and noting some cross-functional teams (i.e., different jobs in one team)
- Jo has stated that the organisation is in the scale-up phase and past working through a rigid hierarchy. However, he has mentioned the division is traditional within the organisation (different teams handling different functions). There are no CCOs, CFOs, or COOs. The structure is naturally flat without the middlemen (c level); each department has to run itself.
- Miriam has mentioned that there are different departments set up, with her being the founder, then presidents, then a CXO layer, with heads of each department, then an operational layer i.e. associates. Miriam has highlighted that the organisation focuses on personal drive and passion
- Sally has described the organisation's "central team" including experts within different areas. She has stated that the central team can be part of the decision-making among different involved startups which utilise this team's expertise. She adds that input from individuals is taken into account as "everything was flat". The central team influenced the decisions on marketing budgets, corporate strategy, plans, etc...

"Customer support is structured & works in a very different way to product & development, & same goes for the marketing & communication team"
-Sheldon

"Of course some of the functions will overlap with each of the overall departments. So, for example, marketing has to coordinate marketing activities across both students & professionals & to make sure that we come across externally as a united brand."
-Miriam

Most industry professionals have expressed that their organisations needed to evolve in order to solve structural issues or improve productivity

- Sheldon has mentioned that the organisation was more hierarchical and became less so. He has stated that the management team was becoming too big to be effective and that a smaller executive team responsible for key decisions or strategy needed to be put in place
- Jo has stated that the organisation had a much more rigid hierarchy in the beginning, but needed to become more mobile and adaptive, shifting towards a fluid and flat structure. He has noted that although the labour division is fluid and there aren't always strictly defined roles, there still needs to be enough structure to control the chaos.
- Miriam has mentioned that there were fewer internal structures in the beginning, and trial and error was commonplace, in addition to ad-hoc practice. There had been no need to document but meetings and meeting notes became required as the organisation grew in order to increase coordination; this included using specific systems and organisational tools (e.g., folder structures, software, etc…). Additionally, she has mentioned that there was a focus on delivery in the beginning (i.e., client happiness) rather than employee satisfaction. This was due to the need to get through the survival stage.
- Sally has described the organisation as very agile and lean throughout due to the tech background of its members. She has mentioned that changes were easy because people were tech-savvy. Sally has also mentioned that working with startups obligated being agile and being productive (due to small budgets).

"Given the size and the need to be incredibly mobile when you're building a company, having a very sort of rigid hierarchical structure in terms of making decisions, slowed us down." *-Jo*

"The need came from the bottom part of the organisation. It was a decision that we took to increase the level of transparency and communication and involve them more in what was going on." *- Miriam*

"No matter what, there is a need for someone to gather the team or even the organisation to set long- & short-term plans." *-Sally*

Communication with C-level was described as direct and easy. However, she has added that priorities needed to be set because there was no manager, which created problems because of time/effort spent on tasks that did not fit well with the bigger picture, thus the organisation felt the need to move towards more structure and guides.

Most industry professionals mention high levels of bottom line employees' influence on decision-making, as they may contribute directly or indirectly to the overall strategy. However, key decisions that shift organisational direction are ultimately decided upon in the C-suite or top levels of the organisation.

- Sheldon has stated that the decision-making is faster within the flatter hierarchy, but that it depends on the decisions. He has also stated that teams have particular decisions that they can decide on, but executives may overrule some decisions if they do not align with the overall organisation's strategy.
- Jo has mentioned that depending on the type of decision, teams and individuals can decide for themselves what to do, for example, day-to-day decisions are majorly made by individuals/heads of departments. However, strategies or decisions that affect the company as a whole sit on the higher-ups, e.g., the CEO, but involve input from the heads of departments.
- Miriam has mentioned that the decision-making is mostly from the top-up, as most decisions involve overall organisational strategy, but that the bottom line is listened to and the leads speak on behalf of the team.
- Sally has stated that there is quite a lot of influence on the decision-making of the employees. However, she has added that the expected growth for different startups

"We recently made some changes to our parental leave policy. The process in that case was to open it up in the management group to get as much input as possible from everyone. We decided it was ultimately a decision that the CEO had to make."
-Sheldon

"They have a lot of autonomy within the organisation. You could basically propose everything and if it makes

could not change because C-Levels decide the goals (e.g., overall budgets cannot be influenced from the bottom line, but smaller initiatives started by said employees can be taken into account within these budgets).

sense, and if it seems like a good idea, then you can just go fly with it." -Miriam

Industry professionals indicate varying degrees of autonomy within their organisations, with some stating that a level of trust in employees is necessary to grant higher degrees of autonomy

- Sheldon has stated that there is a considerable level of autonomy as the organisation is open in terms of how goals would be achieved but there is involvement from management to ensure goals are met. Specifically, there's a mandate for teams to set a common goal, with some structures being introduced to some teams using organisational principles and guides plus a performance-based review.
- Jo has described high levels of autonomy. He has given an example of when he first joined the organisation and came into the sales process; he took on the initiative to implement a CRM system as he was keen on optimising and developing the way things were done, and of course, this was possible because the more fluid structure allowed this.
- Miriam has mentioned that people have autonomy over their own tasks and may introduce new ways of working as long as they can make a strong case for it. She has given the example of one employee who wanted to translate or convert one product (a podcast) into English to appeal to a wider audience. This was given the green light, pursued, and implemented.

"I think it's a pretty open company in terms of how it is you wanna work on a daily basis. Uh, but we're also putting some expectations on what we assume is being done. " -Sheldon

"the more day to day operational decisions are being made by whoever is responsible for that particular area." -Jo

"I think we are quite good at providing people with autonomy. So you really have a lot of opportunity to do what you want, but

- Sally has mentioned that there is a considerable level of flexibility but that this was contingent upon the employee proving their abilities and skills because investors' money is involved.

just make a good case for it" -Miriam

Upon reflection, most industry professionals believe that a more fluid structure is better for technology adoption, however, some mention that there is a tradeoff and there's no clear-cut solution, rather a balance is necessary

- Sheldon has stated that he believes tools are purpose-driven and that teams should adapt in order to use the proper tools. He has encouraged a bottom-up approach to the process of adopting tools and attributed this to the "infectious" nature of this approach.
- Jo has mentioned that theoretically, a more hierarchical/rigid structure is conducive to easier technology adoption, but that the input from users using the system could be lost. He sees a need to ask people whether the tool works with their workflow, so a flatter structure would practically make this easier to achieve. However, he has added that there's always a tradeoff, so there isn't necessarily a correct answer, and it depends on the needs of the individuals and the organisation as a whole.
- Miriam has stated that pragmatism is more important than structure and rigid stress-inducing tasks for the sake of administrative control and that too much management can kill motivation. She has further elaborated her opinion using an example: one company lead saw a lack of transparency and wanted to oversee all tasks, so Monday was implemented because of that need. However, employees then felt that everything became

"I think sometimes with the tools, you really need a little bit of a bottom-up approach… it'd be a little bit infectious" -Sheldon

"having a much more flat hierarchy allows you to have a much greater understanding of the different workflows that one would have in a particular unit" -Jo

"if you drive things too harsh and too sort of management ish and too strict, then it kills the motivation in people" -Miriam

about reporting on Monday. So this backfired because people felt like they were doing extra work and the focus became about check listing administrative work rather than achieving the common goal.

5.2 Organisational Pains and Challenges

Study Objective 2: Identifying the pains of this setup and how they affect the organisation and its individuals, and specifying the most prevalent ones

Several industry professionals point towards communication and alignment across the organisation being a common challenge, with one also adding training of new employees

- Sheldon has pointed at an ongoing challenge of communication, as ensuring changes or decisions are communicated well. Additionally, he has referred to location-based challenges, as working from home has become more commonplace following covid, so it can be difficult to align when colleagues are spread out in different locations.
- Jo has mentioned that with a flat hierarchy, the ability to pivot is easy and change happens fast, but high levels of responsibility comes with this power. He has added that sometimes the organisation was too eager to change if something is not working and trying something new quickly, rather than spending more time, or doing more experiments, optimising the structure, or testing other methods. These could improve the quality of these rapid changes.
- Miriam mentions that her organisation includes many volunteers and many team members are doing other things outside work, so time management issues arise

"some of the challenges that we had with that was that the management team was perhaps a bit too big, to be effective in making some key decisions in the business." -Sheldon

"Our main pain point is sort of the resource allocation at times when we are super busy, that can be difficult to plan from." -Miriam

"there is always a need for a person

due to the external responsibilities of employees. Additionally, as the organisation grew and added more people, the workflows and hiring processes became fragmented.

- Sally has mentioned that communication between stakeholders who don't know the logistical challenges but are still overseeing the work and requesting that changes or goals be met has been a challenge. Constant input from non-operational people can disrupt the workflow and make the goalpost difficult to get to if ever

that can actually accept the direction and said priorities, otherwise. it just gets scattered around and people just spend time on things that don't matter. And there's no coordination between teams." -Sally

Industry professionals highlight different challenges as the biggest, depending on the organisational structure and company goals

- Sheldon mentions that ensuring communication is being clearly delivered is the biggest challenge. It is not top of mind to update everyone all the time. It has been tedious to find the right time or best time to transfer updates, as constant communication all the time leads to information overload. Tools can aid with these challenges, but there still needs to be a strategy and balance to this approach.
- Jo states that with challenges comes opportunity. Finding the ideal market fit or target was a difficult challenge. He has highlighted strategic challenges on forming the company identity and setting the goals, especially due to the labour-intensive nature of deliveries.
- Miriam mentions that the knowledge gap between experienced and inexperienced employees creates challenges, especially when difficult work functions need to be done by new employees. Some students need more training than others. Despite the overall good flow

"we're changing because we've learned if you're not doing that, then you are in fact taking two steps back. But the idea is that you want to take two steps forward, one step back all the time so you are constantly moving forward." -Jo

"some of the people were there for the first Asana failed implementation…. they would have

of doing this training, deliverable quality can be impacted.

- Sally has mentioned that the biggest challenge is organisational growth, including achieving requested targets for different stakeholders. Hitting targets is a big challenge because if targets are not hit for startups, her own company gets more heavily involved. The involvement was high and with high involvement of too many people and numerous stakeholders, communication became an issue.

negative emotions around the system. So I think it's good to take the history of the organisation into perspective to plan accordingly, but also take the current capacity." -Miriam

Each industry professional deals with these challenges in different ways, with several professionals mentioning that effective, constant, and concise communication is essential

- Sheldon has mentioned that a smaller executive team means more pressure to communicate often and communicate more impactful things. A larger management team means more people to align with, and a question arises of who needs to take on the responsibility to communicate. This is fixed by working on being concise and clear, not leaving room for misinterpretations or miscommunication.
- Jo has stated that a flat structure helps with the organisation's challenges, but it's a double-edged sword because a consistent narrative becomes difficult to maintain as the lines of communication are perpetually active.
- Miriam has mentioned that guidance from senior or more experienced members or using professional networks to get expertise helps with training challenges. Additionally, a flat organisation allows for asking

"When is it the right time or the natural time to communicate something? I think that's a challenge for most people to understand because if you're communicating everything that's going on all the time, then you are information overloading people" -Sheldon

"from a top leadership position in a company that is

outright, speeding up training, as there is no need to traverse or navigate a certain systemic communicational structure.

very flat with you changing quite a lot, maintaining a consistent story and vision for the company is critical." -Jo

- Sally has described the organisation as open and that raising issues with concerned parties was easy. Additionally, adding structure helps with setting boundaries. She states that sometimes people should not be stepping in if it is out of their operational scope, including C-level. But she adds that ongoing communication is key and that the organisation was responsive to change. It was easy to go to management directly and suggest change. She adds that this is a perk of flat organisations.

"you have to set the boundaries but that comes down to identifying what your role is, what your tasks are." -Sally

5.3 Work Management Software Adoption: Cases and Challenges

Study Objective 3: Identifying the challenges of adopting work management software within this organisational setup

Regarding the reason and methods of adopting work management software, all the industry professionals go through with adoption as they encounter a need for documentation, communication, or growth. This adoption is carried out via different strategies across the respective organisations, including gradual implementation, highlighting the tool's benefits, and integrating user feedback.

- Sheldon has stated that the adoption of Notion began as there was an initial need for documentation. The company was previously using google sites but it was not sufficient. They needed a tool that was adaptable across different departments and easily used for collaboration. Sheldon has stated that after one team started working with it, tested it out, and learned about

"I think that inspiring versus 'you must now go and use this tool,' I think it's a better approach." - Sheldon

its limitations, it was deemed a good fit. Thereafter, the company gradually added more departments to it and then made it official. Heads of departments organised the workspace. Sheldon has noted that 'full' adoption has not been achieved yet as some people might not be inclined to use it regularly, but it has been a good transition as most are using it. Sheldon adds that as more people join, more are likely to follow.

- Jo has mentioned that the transition towards a new CRM system occurred because the previous tool was limited and couldn't handle the workload. Going for Salesforce was a decision made by the board, so it was a top-down decision. In terms of adopting it, a team was created. Five individuals, each from a different part of the business, were allocated to start with the transition. One extra individual took on all the feedback from these five and integrated their needs into Salesforce. Each of these individuals tested it with their respective department and it was a co-creation exercise.
- Miriam has described a need to streamline things across the organisation; file sharing and cross-sectional communication between finance, marketing, operations, networks etc. were necessary. After an initial failed attempt at adopting Asana, the organisation opted to adopt Monday. Miriam has mentioned that most people know how to use Microsoft suite, so the focus with adopting Monday was on how to use it, in which particular situations it works best, where to input and find data, and when it is vital.
- Sally has mentioned that the company started using Jira "properly" 2 months after her joining the company. There

“we didn't have a resource dedicated to changing the software as we were growing and changing things, I think especially back to having a very flat hierarchy where things are changing quite often, then you need somebody to also be there to change this set up and the software as you change the business.”- Jo

“Everyone should report in Monday, put all the documents in, all the files. Everything was about creating transparency and making everything available that it actually backfired a bit because people…. felt a little bit micromanaged even though that was not the intention.” -Miriam

was no similar software in place. It was necessary due to weekly meetings being messy as people would forget what had been discussed and there was a common misalignment with others due to lack of documentation. Sally has stated that she introduced Jira personally and that it has been vital for time management and deadline watching. An explanation of the benefit as well as the operation of Jira was necessary for adoption. Sally opted for Jira due to a familiarity with it from her previous company.

"Once people are used to seeing the platform….they know where to go but they don't necessarily have to use it for themselves, but they know exactly where to find it." - Sally

All the industry professionals state that as far as challenges during adoption, getting people to see the benefits and learn how to use the software proved to be difficult. Some also mention 'timing' as an influence on the ease of adoption and 'maintenance' as a post-adoption challenge.

- Sheldon has mentioned that some people are still not joining in the adoption or only feigning participation. He attributes this to different methods of working, as some people don't want to document, and would rather be engaged during meetings rather than type. Some may also not feel the need to adopt. Another challenge Sheldon has mentioned is that managers cannot dictate behaviour, but rather direct it. He adds that the adoption has to come from personal conviction, otherwise it will not be a full commitment.
- Jo has stated that during the adoption there were challenges in convincing people of the benefit and simplicity of the tool as well as too many requests to integrate elements into the company-tailored design of the software. He adds that there needed to be a change management facilitator to smoothen this transition, but

"I think over time it becomes less and less the problem because once the majority of people start using the tool in a certain way, you get that broader adoption by more people because they just engage with something that's there."- Sheldon

"Every time that we built a new module in the CRM system, then we put that out

there was a misalignment on whose responsibility it was to facilitate this. Moreover, Jo has mentioned that maintenance of the software was another challenge, as there was no dedicated resource to maintain the software in keeping up with the business's growth. Finally, he has stated that these issues slow down productivity due to the learning curve and extended amount of time required for the transition.

- Miriam has mentioned that there was a lack of willingness to use the software and difficulty to understand the software's benefits. Additionally, Miriam has elaborated on why Asana's adoption was not a success. She has mentioned that the implementation was bad because the training was not sufficient as well as bad timing because the employees were busy with other engagements and tasks. Finally, she adds that although Monday has been successfully adopted, some people still found it tedious as they felt like the focus was on reporting rather than something that helps them with their goals.
- Sally has mentioned that onboarding people to the new software was difficult, especially in the beginning as there was no drive for it and no clear structure that aided in the onboarding, so "everyone was doing whatever". People were not interested in the tool, although the tool could actually help them.

in the sandbox to each of the five individuals that were a part of that process. They could then test it and essentially ask individuals in those departments, whether it made sense, come back with requested features that they want changed, which was then incorporated and then we pushed out that particular module. That's how we did that. So very much a co-creation exercise across different units."- Jo

All industry professionals point at pragmatism being a pivotal element in the adoption process, as focusing on results achieved by the software convinced more people to adopt. Plus, some highlight that a balance of autonomy and oversight is necessary for better adoption, as some might find it more difficult than others or not be inclined to join in if they deem it unnecessary.

- Sheldon has mentioned that "leading by example" is the technique he has used to overcome the adoption challenge. In order to rectify the nonuniform perception of the software's benefits, employees in the bottom line who acted as ambassadors were encouraged in order to lower resistance. This was done by exemplifying successful use cases.
- Jo has stated that limiting the amount requests by requiring a "value" field to be filled has eased the challenge of keeping the software simple and easy to use. Otherwise, there would be too many requests that add complexity but might not be integral. These requests are reviewed and potential contingencies are discussed.
- Miriam has stated that what helps overcome the challenges of adoption is to focus on how the tool actually helps fulfil the required work functions, communicate this effectively, and exemplify it, rather than emphasising the actual tool's range of capabilities or full functionality.
- Sally has mentioned that she began by asking people to perform small tasks using the software. If they didn't do it on their own time, they would be asked to do it during the weekly team meetings as this made it easier to help people who did not know how to use the software as well as exemplify the usefulness of the software.

"I think it really is about pointing or finding those ambassadors in the business and really encouraging them to take it all the way and holding them up as examples of what can be done in the tool."- Sheldon

"we would actually do it in the meeting and then we would basically just go through the whole backlog together…. I think that was the key. The moment we started doing it as a whole team."- Sally

Despite some industry professionals being aware of the risks of adoption, when it comes to expectations, most of them were not fully prepared for the challenges, as they undermined or underestimated their severity. Only one mentions expecting this level of difficulty, but only because she had been on the other end of the adoption process before (i.e., being asked to adopt).

- Jo has mentioned that the extent of the problem of adoption was a surprise. Jo adds that the system may be difficult to use if it is implemented badly, but it might also be the ways of working that need improvement. Leaning into a system and adjusting management strategies can rectify this problem. e.g., bonuses for integrating. KPIs and incentives need to be introduced otherwise habits are hard to change.
- Miriam has stated that managers in the organisation did have some expectations towards the challenges of the transition, as they had read about change management and resistance and were aware of pitfalls. However, Miriam has stated that she did not see this transition being as much of an issue as it was because the organisation is relatively small and employed young people who were tech-savvy. The lower number of people and their youthfulness was assumed to have made the adoption easier. Nonetheless, the challenges persisted.
- Sally has mentioned that she expects the adoption to be challenging, as she herself was a part of the resistance the first time the software was introduced to her in her previous company. She adds that it felt like an extra workload and it took time for her to discover the usefulness of the software and how it can be best integrated into her workflow.

"People tend to look at the system and say, if it's difficult to use, then it's because it's been implemented in a bad way. Nobody is taking a step back to say, 'perhaps it's my existing ways of working that suck, so I should probably adopt a new way of working'"- Jo

"I got introduced to Jira and I remember in my first reaction, I was like, 'Oh, it's another task on top of my tasks. Now, I also have to think about filling it in, updating it'. So, to me, it felt like an extra workload."- Sally

Industry professionals all note hesitancy to adopt the work management software, with most finding the perception improving as time went on due to demonstration of improved productivity.

- Sheldon has expressed an initial hesitancy towards the

"I don't think there was the overall

software. He has mentioned that he learnt about it through his network. This perception was due to a lack of knowledge of the software's capabilities and how greatly it can reflect upon productivity.

- Jo has stated that perception of both usefulness and ease of use were deemed low at the beginning. He also adds that ease of use was lower in the beginning due to the initial simplicity of the software, but as more data was added and maintenance was not being performed, employees started fixing symptoms of the wider maintenance problem. This was reflected in the comments of employees in the organisation. Another indication of this problem was the lack of ability to use data to strategise (e.g., forecasting revenue)
- Miriam has mentioned that the variations of personality types affected the perception. Some employees felt a need for systematic organisation, structure, and transparency, and these people were happy with the software. Others were not so interested as they may have not regarded those values as highly as their peers.
- Sally has stated that there was a shift of perception. When employees started seeing that the software helps with work and keeping track of deadlines, their perceived usefulness increased. However, she has noted that the software was always seen as easy to use. She attributes this to the tech background of people and their skills in being agile.

perception that Monday was better than Asana. I think that would have probably been the same, but they found, at the time, Monday more useful because they had the capacity and there was also a need in that period of time to update stuff and get that streamlining." *-Miriam*

"People will start producing their own small systems, so they'll start going back to the Excel sheets that you wanted to remove... You create a pretty vicious cycle where you're back to square one because you haven't maintained the system."-Jo

5.4 Learnings & Future Strategies for Technology Adoption

Study Objective 4: Identifying the current steps taken to mitigate risks of adoption and face its challenges

Industry professionals state several different strategies for successful adoption, with some specifically saying that there needs to be a balance between giving employees the freedom to choose their own workflows during the adoption of technologies and a rigid structure that includes KPIs.

- Sheldon has stated that there needs to be a balance between enough structure and giving enough freedom for people to be able to use the software as they see fit and that the more people use it, the more are willing to join.
- Jo has mentioned that the flatter organisational structure influences the ease of adoption as high autonomy helps in terms of getting feedback, but the actual deployment will cause chaos due to the nonuniform way of working. He has mentioned that there is a tradeoff there.
- Miriam has mentioned several different techniques to mitigate risks of adoption, including having a good training plan, facilitation workshops for explaining the software's added value, setting it up correctly with a functional and tailored design for company needs, taking into consideration past negative experiences (bias), and choosing the proper implementation timing by considering the current workload.
- Sally has expressed that she is unsure why it takes as much time as it does to adopt new software, but that baby steps and a softer introduction lead to better results. She adds that she started using the software for herself, updating it with data, and then showing it to colleagues. Finally, she has stated that when people see it working they will be encouraged to adopt it, and even if they don't contribute to it themselves they are at least able to utilise it for better overall team structure.

"Functional design of it is also quite relevant. Um, If we talk about the functionalities that it's set up in a way that it makes sense to the people who are using it. What we did was that we actually did the framework, but then we actually asked them to set it up themselves."
-Miriam

"I do try, I guess, to get people to see the lights on certain tools and help them understand why it's good and not tell them they have to use it." - Sheldon

5.5 National, Sociocultural Context and Support Channels

Study Objective 5: Determining the ways Academia and Industry may be able to support the organisation in its software adoption endeavours

All industry professionals see merit to being in Denmark, as it is highly digitalized and developed, lending its residents the quality of being tech savvy

- Sheldon has stated that Denmark being a country with a higher level of digitalisation, it is easier for businesses to perform executive and administrative tasks such as signing contracts, as there are more systems to tap into that make these tasks frictionless. He adds that culturally, Denmark involves transparency and being open to giving and receiving feedback which has helped identify problems quickly and work to resolve them.
- Jo has mentioned that since Denmark is a relatively well-developed country, people are used to using technology on a daily basis for most things they do. This makes adoption easier, but it is also a matter of access to the right resources, developers, partners, etc... This is afforded more in western countries due to a generally higher tech savviness.
- Miriam has stated that her employees consist of young people who are tech-savvy and privileged in terms of the availability of opportunities and resources for education. As they have been exposed to tech from a young age and education is free in Denmark, if they are willing to learn, they have everything they need. This lends itself to the organisation as it can utilise this educated body of human capital.
- Sally has mentioned that in Denmark everything is digital, and the startups tend to be early adopters of innovation. She adds that this culture has also changed

"In more developed countries such as Europe, Western Europe, you'll have a lot of these offers available leading to more competition, leading to perhaps better services at lower prices. So I think the availability of support that you can get to succeed with these things are also enormous " -Jo

"I want to use the tool for anything happening in my life. Very personal and not. And then you have to kind of be digital and be very techie. I feel everyone is techie in Denmark and the companies are very digital as well."

the way she navigates her personal life, using digital tools to be more productive.

-Sally"

Regarding external resources and educational institutions, industry professionals list several different resources that they use, with most of them relying on freelancers and external contractors for several different job functions.

- Sheldon has stated that his organisation utilises external data providers, contract booking systems, less hassle friction, a tool for managing contractors externally, and Danks Industri (DI) for legal questions and advice. He has also mentioned that internships turn into full-time positions, but that he misses active engagement from education institutions as there is no direct outreach.
- Jo has mentioned several different resources that the organisation utilises, including consultancies to deliver client projects and review strategies, marketing agencies, outsourced IT development teams, and a big freelance network. He has also pointed out that any educational institution will influence any company because of the academic background and credentials required for most positions that load students with an understanding of different areas and their foundations. However, he adds that reviewing literature during work is not common practice.
- Miriam has described the organisation's product as being knowledge-based, as they deliver consulting services. So she has mentioned that they use news, both national and international, review journals, and market trends. She has also mentioned that speakers come in from the industry, (e.g., BCG, Bain) to give workshops and lessons. She

"We're always trying to figure out how we can work smarter and create more impact with the knowledge that we gain. But it's quite iterative, so it's always like building on and getting smarter every day and improving already existing products all the time." - Miriam

"We were actually very open to using freelancers a lot. And just for a couple of hours, finding someone to work some and then getting things done so we did that a lot. So we use different platforms for

has also mentioned that psychology and human behavioural sciences are integral to the organisation, so educational resources from universities are utilised for this information.

- Sally has mentioned that the organisation relies heavily on freelancers, especially for design and content creation. She adds that it was easy to find people for these tasks and that the hiring process was made simple in Denmark due to the established digital, legal, and logistical institutions. However, she has noted the very limited influence of educational institutions over her line of work.

that….and for different reasons. Like, for developers' needs, design needs, and then content needs. " -Sally

Industry professionals reflect on the channels of support they receive and would like to receive, mentioning the availability of hefty discounts from big suppliers, and the need for more support in expanding their networks with regard to human capital as well as market reach.

- Sheldon has discovered that big suppliers are very willing to give hefty discounts for smaller companies and startups when directly asked. However, he has mentioned desiring more support and resources for finding foreign employees and helping in scaling the company internationally.
- Jo has mentioned an ecosystem of SMEs which includes conferences and events where investors can be reached. However, he has noted that in the adoption of technology, building the "best tool" should not be the focus, rather the focus should be on implementing the best management practices which facilitate adopting these tools.
- Miriam has mentioned that the organisation needs more

"A lot of people mistake implementing new software for building the best tool, that's not what it's about. It's about implementing it in the right way. It's about making sure that you are, from a management (and leadership perspective), enforcing, deploying and encouraging the

IT professionals and help with expanding internationally, as these competencies are not currently present internally and might be difficult to attain for a small organisation.

use of the ways of working that the system accommodates." -Jo

6. ANALYSIS

This chapter describes how the empirical findings match the theoretical background using comparisons, and produces insights using deductive reasoning. First, each industry professional's interview is analysed to see whether their organisations can be considered "centralised" or "decentralised", according to definitions in Chapter 2; an explanation is provided using the theoretical foundations in Chapter 3. Second, these industry professionals' approaches to looking at *how* their organisation functions are viewed, matching the relevant organisational approaches from Chapter 3 and identifying their applicability and relevance. Third, a high-level analysis of all interviews is conducted to draw conclusions on the relationship between decentralisation and the adoption of work management software. Fourth, the individual anecdotal pieces of each interview on the adoption of work management software are inspected in order to detect the most prevalent factors influencing software adoption and to guide the discussion around managerial implications (see Chapter 7.2). Lastly, the available and desired support in the sociopolitical context of Denmark is highlighted and summarised.

6.1 Organisational Analysis: Dissecting the Decentralisation

Each interview yielded a significant amount of qualitative data whereby a deductive reasoning approach can be applied to establish whether these organisations can be considered centralised or decentralised. All the organisations claim to be "flat" (i.e. decentralised). However, this still needs to be determined according to the definitions established in this paper according to the Literature Review. Firstly, to reiterate, centralised organisational structures include: i) Concentrated power of authority; ii) Top-down communication and decision-making; iii) Traditional hierarchy and pre-defined labour division and; iv) Direct connection in the assembly line.

While a decentralised organisational structure includes: i) Distributed authority (decision-making comes from lower levels); ii) Wider communication across the team; iii) Fluid labour division and common cross-training and; iv) An Interdependent team, with high autonomy. These key factors differentiating the two structures are at opposing ends. However, from the empirical findings, we can see that these factors are not found in radical forms, as all the participating industry professionals point towards a continuous evolution within their organisations, making these factors shift and change along the spectrum. Considering that all the organisations are self-described as “flat” and “open” and the fact that these factors are not static or radically present, we can see how the organisations compare relative to each other using these factors. Thus, the levels of decision-making influence of the operating core (Mintzberg, 1979), individual freedom of choice and autonomy, the shape of communication channels (horizontal or top-down vs. vertical or wide), and the fluidity of labour divisions are used to draw conclusions on the level of decentralisation within each organisation. This comparison is illustrated below.

Figure 25. Diagram Dissecting Decentralisation Level of Each Participant

From the comparisons in Figure 25, we can see that Jo's organisation is relatively the most decentralised, while the other organisations are more closely aligned in terms of the levels of decentralisation. This can be attributed to the sizes of the organisations as well as the stages of growth. Jo's organisation employed over a hundred employees, while the others ranged between thirty and fifty. Jo's organisation is at a more advanced growth stage than the others as he has mentioned that they are well past the survival stage while Sheldon specifically mentioned that they are "not quite" past the survival stage yet, but on the edge. Additionally, Miriam mentions that the organisation still relies on volunteers for its operational layer, and Sally mentions that budgets and deadlines are tight for her organisation as it relies on investors' needs and requests. However, this also points towards a limitation: the lack of centralised organisations in this participant pool. This limitation is further discussed in Chapter 7. The analysis of how each industry professional looks at their own organisation (i.e. their individual approach to organisational theories and design) will therefore be a comparative one between these four different decentralised organisations.

6.2 Organisational Analysis: Comparing Theoretical Approaches

In order to understand which organisation approach may best fit decentralised SMEs, the following is an analysis of how these industry professionals look at their own organisations. All these industry professionals describe their organisations as interdependent teams that work towards a common goal that follow certain guiding principles. This type of rationale follows two approaches, the classical approach from Weber (1947), Taylor (1947), and Fayol (1971), as well as the modern systems approach from Bakke (1959), Johnson et al. (1963), and Kast & Rosenzweig (1972). These approaches can be used to analyse the intricacies of these organisations' operations and functionalities. However, the guidelines and principles are not stressed in these organisations, so the applicability of the classical approach is less emphasised compared to the systems approach. Additionally, Sheldon specifically emphasises that work management software tools are purpose-driven and that their adoption can be made easier when teams are adapting around them; this infers the applicability and relevance of Trist and Bamforth's (1951) and Pasmore's (1989) socio-technical approach as Sheldon refers to the relationship of the technological tool being used and the person using it. Jo specifically mentions contingencies in analysing the organisation's characteristics and when reflecting on best case scenarios for technology adoption. This adheres to the theoretical foundations of the contingency approach. This comparison can indicate that the more decentralised organisations may benefit more from looking at the theoretical foundations derived from the works of the likes of Fiedler (1967), Lawrence & Lorsch (1967), and Woodward (1967), and particularly that of "organic" organisational structures by Burns & Stalker (1969) and "Professional Bureaucracies" or "Adhocracies" by Mintzberg (1979). On the other hand, the neo-classical approach seems to be the least relevant organisational approach in these particular cases, as the relationships between individuals and the general social system in the organisation was never brought up. This lack of reference is further discussed in Chapter 7.

6.3 Intersection of Decentralisation and Software Adoption

Before diving into the granular differences in each of the cases, it is important to highlight the high-level similarities across the interviews. There were some clear patterns across the interviews deriving from the needs which prompted adoption and how decentralisation affected the adoption. All the industry professionals have found a need to seek work management software tools which can aid in the documentation and communication of their organisation. The nature of the tools used are different for each industry professional, as Sheldon's organisation adopted Notion, Jo's adopted Salesforce, Miriam's adopted Monday, and Sally's adopted Jira. All the industry professionals have mentioned that giving the bottom line (i.e. operating core) a considerable level of autonomy and freedom is important to encourage the adoption, as highly rigid or strict rules stifle motivation, also known as computer playfulness (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). This is exemplified in Sheldon, Miriam and Sally's software adoption journeys, as employees felt like the adoption of the software does not align with their personal desires and professional needs due to the constant checklisting and data input requirements. However, Jo also highlights the tedious tradeoff in this scenario, as the adoption process is quicker but messier with higher level of decentralisation and slower but more organised with a higher level of centralisation. Additionally, Sally highlights how working in a "flatter" organisation is much nicer due to a lower need to "checklist" and keep up with administrative responsibilities, but that ultimately a strong structure to the workflows is necessary to reach high quality results and fulfil deadlines in fast-paced environments. Although all recognise the benefits of decentralisation, the cases point towards the need for structure which arises when there is a higher number of laissez-faire policies in the organisation. This leads to the formulation of two conclusions concerning the intersection of software adoption and decentralisation, with the first conclusion adhering to presumptions in the Literature Review while the second furthers the understanding of how decentralisation affects software adoption.

Conclusion 1: The advantages of decentralisation in organisations are quicker adoption, flexibility towards change, and higher intrinsic motivation / computer playfulness. Its disadvantages are a propensity for lack of cohesion across teams, reduction in output quality, and inaccurate deadline handling.

Conclusion 2: The advantages of decentralisation for software adoption are at risk of being outweighed by its disadvantages when there are no (or weak) pre-established standardised procedures for communication, workflows, and professional alignment.

6.4 Work Management Software Adoption Reflections in light of Technology Adoption Models and Theories

Upon deep diving into each industry professional's interview, data is found which can highlight and explain the most prevalent factors of work management software adoption. Firstly, in reference to TAM, usability (and the perception thereof) has not been brought up as an issue in any of the interviews, as Miriam has mentioned that both the successfully adopted Monday and the failed Asana were deemed equally user friendly. Sally has also mentioned that Jira was deemed easy to use by her colleagues and the organisation's employees. Jo has mentioned that Salesforce was deemed easy to use in the beginning, but as it gained complexity due to rigorous data entry and use, it became less so and more frustrating for users to navigate and for the organisation to maintain. Sheldon did not directly comment on the usability, but he did bring up the issues of information overload as a risk arising from inefficient communication or maximalistic software design. A common thread between Miriam and Sally's interview is that they both reference the age and experience of employees playing a role in the perception of ease of use of their respective programs. This indicates merit for the UTAUT technology adoption model, as these two factors are seen as indirectly influencing the adoption process, by proxy of moderating other factors like performance/effort expectancy, hedonic motivation, and habit (Venkatesh et al., 2012).

Despite these sentiments towards usability, another pattern noted has been that all the industry professionals have mentioned not expecting the willingness to adopt new software to be so low, and they all pointed towards the perception of usefulness to be the culprit. Sheldon has mentioned that employees did not perceive the documentation to be essential for their work, while Jo, Miriam, and Sally have mentioned that employees were reluctant to disrupt their workflow in order to input data into their respective programs. This perception started fading away over time as the employees were detecting the productive benefit, also known as result demonstrability (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008) of the software. Employees, over time, started noticing a benefit to having extra documented data and better tools for communication. This opens up a layer of managerial implications to be discussed in Chapter 7.

Moreover, there were some external forces that acted as unexpected variables which influenced the technology adoption process for both Miriam and Jo. Jo's organisation had overlooked the need to maintain the software and did not expect that with more use (i.e. more data input and functional additions) the program would become more difficult to work with. Miriam pointed towards the factor of timing having essence in the failure and success of her organisation's software adoption endeavours; timing here relates to the workload of employees at a given time. These two factors (timing and maintenance) were not discussed at all in the literature or theories, but they bring forth yet another layer of implications and open up avenues for discussion in Chapter 7.

6.5 Available and Desired Support

The industry professionals all recognise the advantages of being in Denmark, as the country is well developed, provides educational resources for its citizens, and has a high level of both public and private digitalisation. This leads to the expectations that technology adoption would be easier in Denmark than in other, less developed or not as digital tech-enabled countries. Moreover, some industry professionals infer that Scandinavian based companies are more likely to be flat, as this is cultural. However, this cannot be verified due to the smaller sample size. Furthermore, the industry professionals highlight the need for support in expanding beyond Denmark's market as well as finding and reaching freelancers outside the country, especially freelancers who are skilled in IT. Lastly, Sheldon highlights that discounts for growing companies and startups are "out there" and not many know about it as they require direct requests. Overall, the external factors do not play a highly influencing role on the software adoption process, but may have further implications that can be discussed in Chapter 7.

7. DISCUSSION

This section reflects upon the whole research and analysis in addition to highlighting future implications and limitations. Theoretical Implications compare and contrast the empirical findings to what has been mentioned in the literature and theoretical background. Managerial implications point to what managers can learn from this study, what managers can do as a means to analyse their organisations and ease technology adoption, and which practices may be best avoided or are the least preferred according to this study. Lastly, limitations exist in any research and are brought to light here in order to fulfil full transparency and scientific integrity.

7.1 Theoretical Implications

The first layer of the analytical framework confirms the claims of Altamimi et al (2022) regarding "moderately decentralised" organisations, as the organisations interviewed here show that organisational design takes on attributes of both centralised and decentralised organisations in order to create a productive and efficient structure, tailored workflows, and goal-fulfilling strategies. Moreover, it confirms the research of Scott and Bruce's (1987) & Lewis & Churchill (1983) regarding how decentralisation occurs as the business grows since the SMEs transition towards decentralisation as they are passing the survival stage. Upon analysing the interviews further, all the approaches to organisational theories were used by at least one of the interview participants, with the exception of the Neo-Classical approach (i.e. human relationships and a social system). The lack of reference to human relationships could be an indication of little influence of social systems on organisational behaviour in decentralised organisations or on the context of software adoption. On the other hand, this might be due to the nature of the study, as the participants are speaking from personal perspectives and have limited visibility (i.e. they cannot look at the entire social system from a bird's eye or observer's point of view because they are within that closed system). Lastly, Sheldon's comments regarding introducing new information wisely so as to avoid information overload goes in line with Bartosz's (2022) notions.

Regarding TAM and UTAUT, it is not a surprise that they have high merit and applicability when discussing software adoption, as these models have been used and cited in a large number of scientific research papers, as well as having been developed over the years due to feedback. However, UTAUT's model has been deemed too complex for this particular study and the only factors in that model which have been mentioned were age and experience. Despite the expectation that young and tech-savvy workers would have an easier time adopting, the industry professionals found that these two factors were not enough to counter the initial resistance due to a low perception of usefulness. Moreover, the factors in the UTAUT and TAM model are not ranked on the basis of importance and there are no indications of which factors ought to be focused or worked on for easier adoption. However, this study shows that result demonstrability has been the leading driver of adoption (by increasing the perception of usefulness). This suggests that a software adoption may be influenced more by certain factors than others within these two models. Additionally, timing and software maintenance were some additional factors put forth. These two factors have had a high influence on the adoption despite not being mentioned in the literature. Rogers's Diffusion of Innovation did not come up within the findings or analysis. This is not surprising as the theoretical model is geared towards a higher level analysis, involving external factors, rather than the low level individual and organisational detailed level.

7.2 Managerial Implications

Reflecting on the case studies in the Lit Review, the theoretical background, and the analysis of the empirical findings there are several notions that managers in decentralised SMEs can explore, learn and apply. Firstly, the highly influential effect of results demonstrability on the success of the work management software adoption is clear. Managers should consider highlighting results demonstrability to their employees and showcasing how the software will be utilised before beginning the deployment of any tools in order to boost motivation for adoption. Managers should also consider formulating strong communication standards that will be fruitful for the team as well as ensure that the workflows of the different members complement each other. All these considerations should also be done so that the employees do not feel overloaded with information or extra work. Thus the timing and dispensation of the information should be handled tactfully.

7.3 Limitations and Future Research

The most glaring limitation of this study is the lack of centralised organisations within the interviewee pool. This was due to happenstance, as the organisations who agreed to participate and were analysed turned out to be decentralised. The presence of centralised organisations would have further strengthened the empirical findings and conclusions. However, considering that these organisations are continuously evolving and have gone through transition periods. All these industry professionals have worked in a more "centralised" organisation. Sally has even suggested adding structures and guidelines to de-transition back to a slightly more centralised structure. So the conclusions derived through the analysis of the empirical findings can stand on their own, given the background of the industry professionals and the data they provide on how decentralisation has affected their organisations and the software adoption processes. However, it is still important to note that the presence of centralised organisations in order to contrast would have yielded further evidence to add to the conclusions or create additional ones.

Another limitation in this study is that the questions regarding the perception of usability and usefulness of software adoption were asked to the managers. It might be a point of contention whether their opinions truly reflect what was experienced by the front line. However, one key question was added in the interview guide in order to counter this point. The interview question which acts as a delimitation is the following: "Do you think the challenges/barriers you faced are reflective of those faced by the front line?" This question ensures that the interviewees reflect on the feedback they've received from the workers and confirm that their outlook is indeed verified. Some industry professionals even gave specific examples to verify their perspectives.

The final limitation discussed here concerns the paradox presented in the conclusions. The conclusions suggest adding decentralisation policies while also maintaining a strong structure for the workflows to achieve better adoption. This presents a line that needs to be drawn to find a balance, but this line does not have a clear spot nor a direction to find its best-case spot. In order to find a solution for which policies need to be enacted when, the change management and organisational design needs to be handled on a case by case basis. However, the strength of this study is the conclusions on how decentralisation may affect the execution and which factors are central to this effect.

8. CONCLUSION

This research set out to explore the effects of decentralisation on the adoption of management software. The general notion that initiated this study was that there was a rising trend in organisations shifting away from hierarchical and strict/rigid structures. This type of organisational structure has been seen as especially popular among growing SMEs. These more fluid structures promise to be more flexible and conducive to innovation and adopting new tech/tools. However, the true effects and challenges there have been unexplored.

The research question “How does a decentralised organisational structure affect work management software adoption in small and medium enterprises?” has been answered through interviewing industry professionals working in SMEs who have been directing or heavily involved in the implementation of work management software. A clear relationship between decentralised organisational structures and the adoption of work management software has been shown. Some initial presumptions of the benefits of decentralisation have been verified, disadvantages have been highlighted, and strategies to mitigate the risks have been suggested. As presumed, decentralisation can indeed lead to a quicker adoption process, arm organisations with more adaptability and flexibility towards change, and equip employees with higher intrinsic drive to test and explore new software. This is due to the reduced centralisation of authority, flatter communication, high autonomy, and distributed decision-making. This research adds that some disadvantages of decentralisation are difficulty in establishing cohesion across teams, decrease in product or service output quality, and missing deadlines. The disadvantages are a result of open communication channels which do not update relevant employees and stakeholders on pressing issues, product or service quality being left up to the interpretation of the bottom line / operating core, and unprioritised team goals. However, this research also points towards mitigation strategies that can deter the disadvantages of decentralisation. The key to averting problems in software adoption include establishing standardised procedures for communication, workflows, and professional alignment, as these procedures will ensure that team goals are being prioritised properly, relevant employees and stakeholders are being updated consistently and constantly, and that any transformation or change (including the adoption of new software) has been designed to target the needs of the organisation and improve efficiency and output quality. Lastly, the theoretical and analytical methods used prove to be sufficiently applicable for a study that seeks to explore the adoption of work management software, and they also point towards some key managerial implications. The most important managerial implication is that results demonstrability, i.e. showcasing the practical improvements of adopting the software, is the most important factor in boosting adoption efforts within the organisation.

Different theoretical and analytical methods not used in this paper may point to other theories and models which could also be of particular relevance, however the core conclusions here apply regardless. Hence, professionals, managers, and entrepreneurs should consider applying these suggestions through establishing the proper structures and systems in their organisations before attempting software adoption, as well as consider preparing for the disadvantages that could arise while chasing the promised flexibility, efficiency, and speed associated with decentralisation.

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APPENDIX

I. Interview Questions

Context Questions:

Introduction to organisation / interviewee / stage of growth of organisation

1. **Understanding the decentralised/centralised structure setup, its characteristics, behaviours, intentions, etc…**
    a. Please tell me about your organisational structure: How would you define this structure?
    Describe different units/departments in your organisation.
    b. How has the organisational structure evolved throughout the years? *Which elements have worked great in the past but needed to change as the organisation grew?*
    c. Do you think your practical organisational structure corresponds to how it is supposed to function in theory? Why…
    d. Who handles most of the decision making process within this structure? Can you give me examples?
    e. How would you describe the level of freedom of choice and autonomy in your organisation? Can you give me examples?
    f. Do you think your current organisational structure makes it easier to adopt new technologies, or would you prefer more/less hierarchy/strict standards?
2. **Identifying the pains of this setup and how they affect the organisation and its individuals, and specifying the most prevalent ones.**
    a. What's a typical challenge/difficulty faced on a regular basis in your organisation?
    b. What are the most difficult challenges your organisation has faced so far? Who or what was affected the most? (department, individuals, productivity, etc…)
    c. How did you deal with these challenges? How has the (de)centralised organisational structure helped you deal with these challenges?
    d. Please describe how you have altered your organisational structure in response to these challenges.
3. **Identifying the challenges of adopting work management software within this organisational setup**
    Work management software *denotes business software and tools that can handle word processing, desktop publishing, account management, billing or payroll, database management, communication, and asset management. This includes Microsoft Word, Powerpoint, Excel, Google Suite, Jira, Asana, Trello, Basecamp, Slack, Intercom, AssetExplorer, Microsoft SQL, Oracle NetSuite, Xero, and Salesforce.*

   a. Can you please recall a time when you adopted a work management software? Why was this software adopted (response to something, etc)? How did your organisation go about adopting this software?
   b. What kind of challenges/barriers did you face during adoption?
   c. Do you think the challenges/barriers you faced are reflective of those faced by the front line?
   d. Did you have expectations of the challenges?
   e. How do you think your organisational structure at the time encouraged or impeded that software adoption.
   f. How did the individuals in your organisation perceive the usefulness of the software? Can you please share a story or example of this? *Relating to image, job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability*
   g. How did the individuals in your organisation perceive the ease of use of the software? Can you please share a story or example of this? *Relating to computer playfulness, anxiety, self-efficacy, objective usability, perceived enjoyment & external control.*
4. **Identifying the current steps taken to mitigate risks of adoption and face its challenges.**
   a. How did you manage the adoption challenges?
   b. *Flexible questions: responses of challenges, proactivity, assessments, trials, ... Preemptive strategies?*
5. **Determining the ways Academia and Industry may be able to support the organisation in its software adoption endeavours.**
   a. How do you think being in Denmark has helped your organisation in general and specifically with technology adoption?
   b. What external resources do you use often in order to deliver your products/services or get your work done?
   c. How does your organisation utilise industry resources?
   d. How do educational institutions influence your organisation and its activities?
   e. Do you think there is an SME network? How has it supported your organisation?
   f. Can you think of ways Academia or Industry may be able to support your organisation further?

II. Interview Transcripts

A. Sheldon

[00:00:00] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. So, um, I guess just to do a quick recap, uh, like I said, I'm doing a Master's in Technology and management and my master thesis project is about exploring the challenges of adopting work management software in decentralized organizational structures. Um, which is why, uh, I'm interviewing you now, uh, because [redacted] is, uh, an SME that uh, would be able to, uh, give me some insight on how these challenges work.

[00:00:38] Or if you didn't have challenges, uh, success stories are also great to hear about. Um, so, uh, could you please introduce [redacted] before I start, uh, grinding you with my interview questions, ?

[00:00:55] **Sheldon:** Sure. Fantastic. Yeah. Um, yeah, so my name is Sean. I'm the C of [redacted]. Uh, we are a FinTech startup, uh, going, going for about three years now, I believe.

[00:01:08] Um, and we are in the business of getting small businesses paid through our, uh, embedded finance service, which is, um, uh, it's, uh, what's called factoring, where we are taking over the debt of the invoice in order to, uh, help liquidity of small businesses.

[00:01:33] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Yeah. Nice. Uh, nice summary. It's very interesting.

[00:01:41] Um, so first I would like to understand how the organizational structure of [redacted] works. So could you please tell me about the organizational structure, how you would define it?

[00:01:55] **Sheldon:** Sure. Um, I

[00:01:57] **Rony Chaar:** guess. I'd

[00:01:59] **Sheldon:** firstly say that, you know, being a Scandinavian based company, it's, it's, uh, less hierarchical, more of a flat structure.

[00:02:07] However, if you wanted to, you know, use a traditional org chat approach, then we have the exec, uh, team at the top. We have a management team, which is made up of the exec team, plus some heads of, uh, departments you can say. Um, and then each of the departments, uh, most of the departments have like a head of the department who are, um, running that, that space.

[00:02:36] But we also have, especially in the product development space, we have, um, teams which are like cross-functional teams. So, uh, for example, you have, uh, one team where you have maybe three developers and you. And a product manager that's considered one team. Um, so, uh, yeah, the, uh, the different teams are perhaps structured in different ways.

[00:03:05] So for example, customer support is structured and works in the very different way to product and development. And same goes for, we have a kind of, uh, marketing coms team as well, which also works in a very different way than the others. Um, yeah, that's a sort of general introduction, I'd

[00:03:27] say.

[00:03:29] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Um, and, uh, would you say that the structure has evolved throughout the years?

[00:03:36] I don't know how long you've been at [redacted], but uh, was it more hierarchical before or less?

[00:03:43] **Sheldon:** Yeah, I think, yeah, it definitely has evolved and, uh, there's, in the time that I've been here, I guess we, we kind of, we started to evolve to awards, a flatter structure, I'd say, where we had just a management team and then the rest.

[00:04:01] Um, and we, uh, I guess some of the challenges that we had with that was that management team was perhaps a bit too big, uh, to be effective in making some key decisions in the business. So we tried to, uh, create a bit more structure around having a smaller team at, in the, at the exact space that could make some key decisions.

[00:04:27] And then have a management team, which was more, um, for alignment and for, um, taking some of the decisions which are, um, more operational perhaps or less, um, Less, uh, strategic perhaps. Mm-hmm. . Yeah. Uh, and I, I think that, I think that it has worked to a degree in the sense that we are more aligned on decisions we're making.

[00:05:01] Uh, and, um, we've also set it up in a way so that, uh, the members of the exec team are covering all the business in a way. So, um, for example, I am covering, uh, customer service, uh, um, communications, marketing and product. And then someone else is covering tech. So, you know, in within the exact team, we have full, uh, responsibility of the business.

[00:05:35] There's no gaps. Uh, you can say, um, yeah. Does that make sense, ?

[00:05:43] **Rony Chaar:** Yeah, it does. Um, and would you say that, uh, [redacted] is past the survival stage? Is it more in the growth expansion stage? Hmm. I'm not

[00:05:56] **Sheldon:** sure we are, to be honest. . I mean, I think we still have a little ways to go before we are profitable and I think that's where we define survival is profitability.

[00:06:08] Um, yeah.

[00:06:13] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Um, so, uh, back to the organizational structure, do you think that, uh, the practical application of the structure now reflects the theoretical way it's, uh, been put? So, um, when you guys decided how to, uh, make a smaller exec team so that they would focus more on the strategy and you know, the more, uh, Wider scope management with the operational stuff?

[00:06:45] Is it like it's set up or is it functioning differently from what it's supposed to?

[00:06:51] **Sheldon:** Yeah, so I think it, I think it is, uh, I think it's working to a degree in the sense that there is ownership within the departments, uh, a mandated ownership of what they're doing. But, uh, reporting back into the exec group for direction, um, I think that that is working.

[00:07:12] And also, uh, I guess from my own perspective, I feel it was important to, uh, to change them so that we could make decisions faster and be aligned with those decisions. And I, I can see that now that we have the exec group and management group as separate, that there, that we were able to move faster on decisions because especially in our kind of, uh, business.

[00:07:39] It is key that we can make decisions fast and uh, um, and not, you know, we, we cannot afford to have several management meetings in order to make a decision on something. Granted, of course, there are some issues that we actively do that, where we say, this is something that we want to get as much input from management as possible before making a decision.

[00:08:02] But there are other decisions where we just make a decision here and now inside that small team and then, uh, push those decisions down. Um,

[00:08:14] **Rony Chaar:** it's, uh, interesting. You mentioned decision making. That was going to be my next question, actually, right? and, um, It's also interesting you say that, uh, this structure is, uh, giving you faster decision making because there's a bit of, um, debate going on.

[00:08:29] Some say yes, a decentralized structure would lead to faster decision making because, uh, it's not going top down. So, you know, people can just decide what they wanna do at the bottom line. Um, and others are saying no, the, the ideas have to traverse all the employees, so it's still going to be slower at the end.

[00:08:50] So what do you think makes the decision making faster with this structure that you have?

[00:08:56] **Sheldon:** I think it's, I think in my mind it's really about understanding which decisions where, um, so if you take the teams for example, then uh, the product development teams have another mandate to decide what kind of features or how the features should be.

[00:09:14] Um, but that only works when the direction is quite clear from the top. That makes sense. So when I think about making decisions faster, I guess I'm referring to decisions, business decisions, which will have an impact on the teams, uh, however, uh, require someone to just take a decision. Do you know what I mean?

[00:09:37] Because there can be a lot of debate. Uh, and, and of course it's of course you need to make sure that you get the input from the teams or from, from different parts of the business. Um, but that in my mind is the responsibility of someone in the exact team to actually get that input and bring those insights to the, to the exec team to make the final decision.

[00:10:00] Um, yeah, and I think it also, um, I think it is really about just that, that, uh, uh, how would you say, um,

[00:10:15] Kind of curation of decisions and saying to say, what is it that we should actually be deciding on versus give mandate doubt. So, um, I'm trying to think of a, perhaps, I think perhaps a good example is, you know, we recently made some changes to our parental leave policy, and it's something that's quite important and quite, you know, had, there's sort of a lot of opinions in the business about it and a lot of different perspectives.

[00:10:45] Some very biased, some very unbiased. And the process in that case was to open it up in the management group to get as much input as possible from everyone. We decided it was ultimately a decision that the CEO had to make because we realized that we were too far away from each other, uh, in terms of what we thought was the right decision.

[00:11:10] And I think in my mind, it's something that we could have just decided in the exec group, but we already decided that we needed to open up to get more input on red. Um, so I think it is really about, uh, somehow making an assessment of the decision and figuring out where it should sit. Um, yeah, that makes

[00:11:34] **Rony Chaar:** sense.

[00:11:36] Yeah. Thanks for the example. Um, yeah. And so when it comes to, uh, personal decisions and day to day tasks, so freedom of choice and autonomy within the teams, um, how would you, how do you see that playing out in the organization? Are people. Given tools and ask to use them, or are they given free reign on what the tool is and as long as they get the job done?

[00:12:06] **Sheldon:** Yeah, I would say there's a, there's a mandate within the teams to work how work the way they want to work. Uh, that being said, I think we are kind of generally dictating the structure, for example, of the, of the product development teams, how they're working, because, um, we are in a way trying to centralize that because when we bring in new people, we want to have a kind of consistent way of working in the teams so that, uh, also that we can move people around the teams.

[00:12:40] Um, however, I would say that, you know, it's on a daily basis there's a lot of mandate in the teams to, to figure out how it is they want to work and the departments, um, that, that being said, I, I guess there's guiding principles and we're also. Having a regular dialogue with, with most, uh, about how things are going and trying to, um, uh, I wouldn't say keep an eye on performance, but we are also questioning, you know, what we're doing and why we're doing it in the teams, for the departments to try and help them understand, try and help them focus even better.

[00:13:26] Um, so yeah, I'd say we're not, I think it's a, it's a pretty open, uh, company in terms of mandate on how it is you wanna work on a daily basis. Uh, but we're also putting some expectations on, on what we assume is being operationally done as well. Um, yeah.

[00:13:50] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Would you say that the current organizational structure makes it easy to adopt new technologies or software within teams, or, uh, would you think that, uh, less or more hierarchy or rigid guidelines would make it easier?

[00:14:10] **Sheldon:** Um, yeah, I guess I am a bit old school in the sense that I think when it comes to tools that it is often purpose driven. So, you know, introducing a new tool to, as a way of working for one team may not make sense for the other team. Um, so, you know, you have a more operational team like, uh, customer care, uh, they are working in a very different way to the product development team.

[00:14:44] So when it comes to tools, I think it's very challenging to find tools which can work for both teams equally. Um, I would say that, you know, we are a FinTech startup and we are very adaptive to, to new tools. Um, uh, I, I think in terms of the structure and how that connects to tools, um, [00:15:15] I'm not sure that, I'm not sure that the structure itself, uh, lends itself that well to, to introducing new tools. Um, it's not that it's difficult to do, but um,

[00:15:33] I think sometimes with the tools, you really need a little bit of a bottom up approach. Like you really need some people to start working with the tool. And kind of be, it'd be a little bit infectious sometimes. I have noticed previously when you tried take a top down approach to new tools, that there is an initial, uh, resistance.

[00:15:55] Um, maybe just because someone is making a decision on forcing you at work in a way where I have seen, where we have, um, changed to a new tool then it's been mostly adopted. Well, if there is some kind of ambassador for that tool that's not in the management right, that's actively promoting the benefits of that tool, uh, at least myself, I find it's much, it's more effective if someone else can phrase the tool than, than myself.

[00:16:31] **Rony Chaar:** Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense. Um, so next I have a few questions about, uh, the pains of your current organizational setup. Um, so do you think there's a challenge that you faced on a regular basis or that's been coming up regularly, uh, in the organization that you can attribute to the structure?

[00:16:57] **Sheldon:** Mm, I think, I think there's probably an ongoing challenge around communication, uh, ensuring decisions are communicated, uh, well enough or changes being communicated well enough.

[00:17:16] Um, and I'm not sure if that's due to the structure or the people in the structure. Uh, um,

[00:17:29] I, if I think about structure as a hindrance to those challenges that we're facing with communication, I would say maybe it's more like, you know, lo location based structure, structural problems that, you know, we're not all in the office in one place every day. So the, the, the chances of miscommunication or the chances of things not being communicated well is, is, is, is higher.

[00:17:56] Um, because you do just generally get that communication that happens in a, in a physical office environment. Yeah. Does that make sense?

[00:18:07] **Rony Chaar:** Yeah, it does. Yeah. Um, remote working is, uh, definitely a new challenge for all organizations nowadays, especially after Covid. Um, do you think there are tools that have made that easier?

[00:18:22] And, uh, when I say tools, I mean work management software, so like Microsoft Teams, which we're using right now or any other tool?

[00:18:32] **Sheldon:** Hmm. Yeah, I mean, I definitely think that, uh, the more modern, uh, meeting tools like Zoom and Google meets, et cetera and Slack have made it easy for us to, you know, jump into conversations.

[00:18:48] Um, we're also using Notion, and I think Notion is a, is a good. Of helping break, you know, spread, uh, information quickly, but also make it, uh, findable and accessible, uh, in other contexts, um, other software? Yeah, I would say Slack is obviously one of the, the, the best tools, uh, in a, in a way that is less formal, uh, than email.

[00:19:20] Um, and, uh, also like our collaboration with outside or our collaboration with partners is made much easier by Slack. Having this informal ability to just jump in to a channel which is connected to another organization, um, that's really, really valuable.

[00:19:44] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Um, I have a few more questions about the challenges.

[00:19:48] Uh, so you mentioned communication. Would you say that's the most difficult one or is there another challenge that you would think is more difficult than that and uh, how did it affect the departments or, or individuals or productivity?

[00:20:06] **Sheldon:** I think, I think with the communication aspect, I think it's more so, um, well the challenges there I think is figuring or ensuring that things are communicated, uh, all the time and more than once, if that makes sense.

[00:20:24] So, you know, something might be changing. There's many people that are aware of something that's going to change, uh, but it's not always top of mind for them to think, to communicate that to others. Um, and, uh, perhaps, um, I think about those situations. I don't think it's, it's because there's like a lack of transparency or anything like that.

[00:20:53] I think it's more the, um, when is it, when is it the right time or the natural time to communicate something? I think that's a challenge for most people to understand. Uh, because also if you, if you, if you're communicating everything that's going on all the time, then you are also, you know, information overloading people, right?

[00:21:13] So it has the opposite effect. Um, so I think it's like trying to find that right balance of when should we be communicating something and what should we be communicating and how much information is needed right now versus. Um, yeah. Uh, and I just don't think we, we have the tools for it, but um, maybe it's the structure of the communication that's, that's, uh, that, that doesn't exist right now.

[00:21:41] You know? Um, for example, we have like a release channel in, uh, slack where we post information about releases or updates or changes in the system. Um, but in reality we probably need a separate channel, which is more like decisions in the business or something, right? Separate from, you know, because when things are going live, it's sometimes too late, or sometimes, at least to some people, it feels like it's too late to be communicating about that change.

[00:22:15] It would perhaps be better to communicate that change before it went by or things like that. So, yeah. And I think the tools themselves don't lean, don't, um, actively help people with communication. It's like you have to decide that you wanna communicate something, whereas, you know, if you think about all the tools that we have, the tools should be almost be able to indicate to us that we need to communicate something, you know, all the information is there in our way.

[00:22:48] Um, yeah.

[00:22:52] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Uh, you touched upon a lot of different, uh, notions that were actually interesting and, um, I've, uh, found in my research, like information overload and, uh, figuring out how to manage this communication properly. Um, uh, so how, how do you deal with these challenges? Uh, has the organizational structure, uh, helped in any way?

[00:23:24] **Sheldon:** Yeah, I guess, um, I guess it has helped in a way, like having, having a smaller exec team I think has helped us under put more pressure on us to make sure that we are communicating often and communicating some bigger things. Whereas before, when we had that broader management group, we perhaps had too many people we needed to align with and then communicate afterwards and perhaps decisions that were being made.

[00:23:56] It was a little bit unclear who should be the one to actually communicate these decisions. So I think it has, the structure has helped perhaps. And also, um, having this structure of, you know, it is actually a bit more of a hierarchical structure than normal, but, uh, it also means that, um, uh, we can have some very simple communication from the exec group to the.

[00:24:21] The management heads off, and they can kind of go down from there, which I think is actually, uh, good because it means that, or at least I feel I have a responsibility to communicate everything to, to the heads, um, and then that they take it forward. Whereas before, I think there was too many people who perhaps heard one thing but thought another thing.

[00:24:45] And so now having a smaller group, you can be really concise on what it is that is, uh, that needs to be communicated and how to approach it. Uh, there's less room for interpretation perhaps, which, you know, it causes the Chinese whispers effect, right? Like, and, and I think that, you know, uh, having a smaller group to, to answer any questions from anyone is also beneficial.

[00:25:11] Um, you know, as, as I mentioned, um, you need to get the same answer from. From, uh, from management. You cannot have 1, 1, 1 manager. Answering in one way, in another, in another way has to be corrected. So I think the structure, structure helps, but there's less room for interpretation. You have less people, basically.

[00:25:38] Yeah.

[00:25:41] **Rony Chaar:** Makes sense. Um, there's a bit of noise, uh, around you. Yeah. Should I see if

[00:25:47] **Sheldon:** I can move one sec? I'll just,

[00:25:51] **Rony Chaar:** if Yeah. If that's possible.

[00:25:54] **Sheldon:** Maybe it's, do you mind if I take, uh,

[00:26:01] yes. Just 10 minutes?

[00:26:15] Yeah.

[00:26:21] Okay. That's better, right?

[00:26:22] **Rony Chaar:** Yes, much better. Thanks, Sean. . Great. . I was worried about the transcription getting confused. . Yeah, yeah, of course, of course. Yeah. Um, so, uh, now that we've spoken quite a bit about the organizational structure and it's pains and challenges and how it evolved, uh, I'd like to jump into the challenges of adopting work management software.

[00:26:46] So just to recap, uh, work management software, kind of a broad term, it denotes business software and tools that can handle word processing, desktop publishing, account management, billing, payroll database management, communication, asset management. So, It could be pretty much anything. Um, okay. So, uh, could you recall, uh, a time or several times when you have, uh, adopted a work management software?

[00:27:17] Uh, so why was this software adopted? Uh, was it in response to something or, uh, and how did the organization go about adopting it? Hmm,

[00:27:30] **Sheldon:** yeah. I guess I can use the latest example with notion that we, that we tried to move. Well, moving to notion, uh, and I guess, um, it was in response to a need. The initial need was around documentation, uh, a more centralized way of having good documentation for the tech development space.

[00:27:54] Um, and also product as well, and. Weit, we, we previously were using, um, Google sites with a kind of wiki there to do documentation. And then it sort of didn't, it wasn't sufficient for us cause it was not version controlled very well. And, you know, um, and then we also, you know, while exploring notion also saw the, the opportunity that it is a tool that can be adapted in many different ways to support different workflows in different departments.

[00:28:28] And also has that benefit of, uh, being very easy to overview and search and, and, uh, sent and it's kind of centralized, like you are able to, to, to easily tap in and see, uh, what different workspaces there are and what's going on on those workspaces. And also collaborate inside the, the, the documentation.

[00:28:51] And yeah. So I think we saw a lot, a lot of benefits. Um, the approach that we took was we, we got one, not one team, but like one area to start working in it first, um, and really, uh, I guess test it out and, and learn about its, uh, um, limitations. Um, and then slowly I actually sort of been bringing in, uh, more departments into, into, into notion.

[00:29:26] Uh, and then we also made a kind of like an official kind of communication that we are moving to Notion and it's going to be a transition. And at some point in time we're going to very soon close down the existing Wiki. Um, and then sort of, uh, The head of department in each area has just been taking responsibility for setting up their space in, in notion, and I guess we've also been supporting the process by like just me sitting with one of the heads and figuring out a structure that would work in their department and sort of supporting that.

[00:30:05] But also we had like a dedicated session where my colleague sort of just introduced the tool in general and showed people around how it works a little bit. Um, I don't think we are there yet in terms of a full adoption that we really want. Um, I know there's gonna be some people. Uh, we're not gonna be forced to work, uh, like, like we want them to in, in motion.

[00:30:35] But, uh, I think it has been a fairly successful transition in the sense that most teams are actively using it. Uh, and I think again, it's about, you know, leading by example. So, you know, for example, I also work with partnerships and I think setting up the partnership space in, in notion, uh, together with my colleague, then using that as an example, we can hold up through the rest of the organization and say, Hey, you can actually do really cool things with workforce in this tool.

[00:31:08] So I think that inspiring versus, uh, you must now go and use this tool. I think it's a better approach.

[00:31:19] **Rony Chaar:** Interesting. So you said that, um, you perceived benefits of using not, um, where does this, where did this perception come from and um, was it like one person came up with the idea and shared it, or was it like a study, a strategy? Where did this come from? Yeah,

[00:31:42] **Sheldon:** so I think it was, I mean, I, I guess we were first exposed to it some time ago, you know, by someone mentioning it on LinkedIn or something like that.

[00:31:52] And initially that time it was like, oh yeah, this looks kind of interesting. Um, we didn't really act upon, you know, changing anything at that time because it also, you know, changing into another tool. It's not a tool. The immediate reaction from people is, oh, what is this tool and what is it for? And yeah, so I think initially was like, okay, this is interesting.

[00:32:15] Let's sort of follow it a little bit. And uh, and then as I mentioned, there was like, um, we actually had a new, uh, like cto, uh, come in and, um, right away kind of identified that we're not, you know, doing documentation in the teams and the projects that well. Um, and also as I mentioned, we were using Google, uh, which wasn't performing well enough for us.

[00:32:44] So it was a kind of in that tech group decision to say, let's just try out motion, because they'd already previously used it. Um, so that was, that was sort of how it came about. And then slowly bringing more people in. And now we kind of, I also think it's gonna important to say that we need to make the final push now.

[00:33:07] You know, so I'm actively planning to sort of, you know, some different techniques I'm gonna try, but like, uh, randomly see if people are, are using it, you know, and if they're not, you know, encourage them to use it somehow and try to remove all other tools. So for example, we have previously worked on monday.com a little bit.

[00:33:33] We've had some different teams working in that and which is transitioning them outta there. And I think the sort of final plug will be actually just closing those accounts. So that notion will really only place that you can do these, these things, things. Um, yeah.

[00:33:51] **Rony Chaar:** So you mentioned that you expect that some people might not be so inclined to be using it as much as you'd like them to.

[00:34:01] Why do you think that is? So what kind of, uh, barriers are there that people that stop people from using Notion or any other?

[00:34:11] **Sheldon:** Yeah, I think there's an aspect to it that, um, obviously everyone works in different ways, but there's some people that are not um Hmm. Naturally led to, you know, sitting in a meeting and documenting everything that goes on in that meeting, that they feel much, that's much more valuable for them to be engaged in the meeting and not, you know, sitting and typing.

[00:34:38] But then again, there's also just the, uh, more physical barrier that, like, if I think about that meeting context, that not everyone is capable of that, you know, . Um, so I think it is about individuals and, and, and, and encouraging and inspiring how you could use the tool. Um, but also being aware that you're not gonna be able to dictate people's behavior.

[00:35:06] Um, you can only direct it perhaps. So I don't think it's gonna be a huge problem. I think over time it becomes less and less the problem because once the majority of people start using the tool in a certain way, you get that broader adoption by, by, by more people because they just engage, uh, with something that's there.

[00:35:31] And if it's easier to engage with, then they will over time engage with it. Um, yeah, and I think it's, um, I think it's really down to us pushing, uh, the usage from a kind of, you know, like you see someone's creating a document somewhere, then you can, you know, Say, well, okay, you could actually, you know, create this emotion in this way, and then it would be really dynamic and everyone would be able to see it really easily.

[00:36:07] And you'd also be able to add some like, reminders to it all, you know, so trying to encourage them, and I don't know, maybe my encouragement gets interpreted as, as, uh, directive, but , but it has worked so far to, uh, to, to get people to, uh, convert, so to speak their, their tool. Um, I still, I do see there's some people who, who perhaps Noa have to change.

[00:36:33] They change, but they don't necessarily use it in the way that they could be using it. Right. So they, they're sort of sort of tick the box of, yeah, I've moved my stuff there, but I haven't really spent time really thinking about how I want to use it. Um, But

[00:36:50] **Rony Chaar:** yeah. Why do you, why do you think that's, so, I think that is, you, you mentioned it's, uh, based on, you know, people's individual, uh, maybe comfort with, uh, using computers to take, uh, the document Yeah.

[00:37:05] Or whatnot. But yeah. Why, why, why do you think they didn't go that extra, you know,

[00:37:12] **Sheldon:** extra step? Yeah. I think they honestly need to feel the, the pain and a friction or a problem before they'll actively try and seek a better way of doing things in that tool. Um, so, you know, I can have a hundred ideas around how you could organize your work using this tool, but I think it needs to be self-realized.

[00:37:36] Um, otherwise, as I said it, it becomes a direct. From management rather than a, you know, uh, some sort of, uh, idea, which comes from exploring how to solve a problem that they're facing. Um, so I think over time that will just, that will change because that would just be inspired from other people. And then it's best if they themselves say, Hey, I found a new way of doing this in Notion and it's gonna be like this and this.

[00:38:12] And then, you know, I can in the back of my head think, yeah, well I could have told you that months ago, but you need to have come to it yourself. You know? Yeah.

[00:38:26] **Rony Chaar:** This, uh, definitely adheres to the theories behind technology adoption. Um, yeah, the, the theories in literature focus on perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness and, uh, there's different factors, uh, under these two kind of, uh, variables. Um, so how do you deal with the challenge of adoption when this perception is not uniform?

[00:38:56] How do you manage to, uh, make sure that the tools are being utilized efficiently and correctly, if not everyone is perceiving their usefulness or ease of use? You know, on the same basis,

[00:39:11] **Sheldon:** I think it is again, about just trying to really nurture and encourage those ambassadors out there that are not management.

[00:39:23] Um, so for example, uh, I'm lucky enough that new we have a new, uh, sort of team leader in the customer service space who has previously worked about this nation. And, um, you know, for me it's a much bigger win that she comes in and designs notion how she wants it to be, and the team will follow. If I come in and say, this is how I want it to be, then there's gonna be a lot of resistance.

[00:39:54] Right. So I, I think it really is about, you know, pointing or finding those ambassadors in the business and really encouraging them to take it all the way and holding them up as examples of what can be done in the tool or Yeah. That kind of approach. Yeah.

[00:40:16] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Have you, um, is, is this strategy that you have, uh, to mitigate the risks of adoption, is this something you've tried to do before and you've seen that it worked or, uh, is it something you came up for this particular scenario?

[00:40:35] **Sheldon:** Yeah. Um, I would, yeah, I would say I have seen this work before. Um, and this, yeah, there, there's been other tools where I've known how useful they are and how good they are, but I've learned that, you know, someone else, uh, praising the tool or, you know, selling the tool has led to a much easier adoption.

[00:41:05] Yeah. So something that I've never experienced a few times before. Um, but I also like, I guess previously I've, in other positions I've. Tried to be the one who's been that ambassador in introducing the tool. And I guess I've learned that that ambassador role, the more you can inspire people, uh, the more excited they become and they start getting, getting into it.

[00:41:30] Whereas I think where I have tried to introduce a tool before and try to be very prescriptive about how to use the tool, uh, that's where I've seen that it hasn't been adopted as well. Um, yeah, and I think, you know, the moment there is any new tool, there's a tendency for people to want clarity on exactly how to use it.

[00:41:54] Like, how is it that we're gonna use this? And I, I kind of try to push back a little on this, you know, because I know, again, that if we prescribe how it should be used, then it's also going to not be adopted very well. So I, I try to sort of be clear about, you know, Trying to show some examples of how it could be used or, um, but really trying to make sure that the, the, you know, the leaders in the, in the teams are the ones that are designing, if you like, just their own ways of using.

[00:42:24] I think that is kind of the future of tools, right? Like you can see it, the way that notion is designed is that like no structure is structured in a way, you know, like, and so I, I think that's, that's, you know, it's the same if you look at Slack and Teams and the other, you know, you, you try to have some structure in these groups, but ultimately you end up with a whole bunch of random, little conversations happening in different corners, because that's also like a reflection of reality and the real, real world, right?

[00:42:57] So it's that balance between some enough structure that people sort of know where to go, but making sure that there's enough freedom for people to use it how they want to. You said, you know, and I think it was, I mean, the same goes for Slack. Like, you know, we add some random apps into Slack to, to, uh, to do different workflows or whatnot.

[00:43:20] And at some point maybe we need to standardize them, but at MAP for now, it's fine if we just have some different ways of doing things. Um, yeah, I guess I'm, I have a bit of the principle of, you know, uh, like this old, like, you know, like, do what you need to do to get shit done. Kind of, you know, so like, if you can demonstrate that this tool over here is going to help you with your work and a hundred times faster than go for it.

[00:43:57] If it's a tool that you think is going to improve your work, but it doesn't and it costs a lot of money, then of course, Don't do it. Right. But I don't know, I'm not the, I'm not the sort of tool dictator type. Um, but I do try, I guess to get people to see the lights on certain tools and help them understand why it's good and not tell them they have to use it.

[00:44:25] Yeah.

[00:44:29] **Rony Chaar:** Do you think that this, um, technique or strategy or, uh, the structure of, you know, how people are adopting these tools in [redacted], do you think it's, uh, like what are the benefits when compared to, uh, let's say a more strict, rigid, you have to adopt this right now, you know, it's, you know, uh, yeah. How do you think this compares?

[00:44:58] I'm not sure if you've had experiences with, you know, different structures,

[00:45:01] **Sheldon:** but. Yeah. I think how it compares is, is that, I think the other approach, um, I think it leads a little bit to this need for a lot of support in using the tools or a lot of maintenance if you like. You know, so if you're, if you're telling people that you want something done in a certain way, in a certain tool, uh, inevitably I think they're going to, um, how I say it, like, um, turn their brains off a little bit and start asking a lot of questions because they believe it needs to be done in a certain way and they're not really going to think for themselves.

[00:45:48] They're just going to ask for a guide or, you know. So I think the explorative way of adapting a tool is much, uh, much better the more, um, Also, um, I'm thinking about some examples. Um,

[00:46:14] one area of the business tried, tried to introduce a tool, um, for their own team. I think it kind of failed because it was too dedicated to their team. Whereas if, if they really wanted broader adoption, they needed to really get other people in there and understand why it should work for them. Um, so I guess the, the top down authoritative implementation of tools could lead to ultimately those tools not being used.

[00:46:50] Um, at least I've seen that. Um, and also I think, um, It obviously creates a lower sense of, uh, of, of mandate in the team. So really, you know, culturally feel like they don't have that much decision making there in their role, even though, you know, it may be a false sense of decision making, right? I mean, if you are designer for example, then sure you can use Sketch or Figma or Framer or whatever, but ultimately there's only a few good options out there anyway, so you'll end up, you know, choosing that tool anyway.

[00:47:32] So yeah, , I think it's better if you decide yourself, but that's the best tool than being told that we only use that tool, you know. Cool.

[00:47:45] **Rony Chaar:** Uh, thanks for answering my questions so far. I only have one more, um, area and to ask about. So, uh, it's very broad, um, area. So, uh, I wanna determine the ways academia and industry may be able to help organizations with their, uh, adoption.

[00:48:05] So how do you think being in Denmark has helped [redacted] in general and specifically with technology adoption?

[00:48:14] **Sheldon:** Hmm,

[00:48:16] **Rony Chaar:** sure. I mean, I guess, you know, there's,

[00:48:18] **Sheldon:** uh, as a country there's obviously a higher level of digitalization, um, which I believe has made, made it a little easier as a business to, you know, um, something small like contracts can be signed with a national id.

[00:48:43] Uh, tool, for example. Um, or, um, yeah, there's just more systems we can tap into, which just makes it a little more frictionless to have employees and to work with employees. Um,

[00:49:07] I think culturally, you know, Denmark is also, you know, transparency. Um, also in, I think that the, the cultural, um, behavior of giving feedback or, uh, being open towards people's opinions, I think, I think that has helped in a sense that you are able to quickly understand if there's problems, because people are very willing to tell you that those problems exist.

[00:49:36] Right? I think, you know, if I compared. To some other, um, places, people just culturally would not, uh, would not stand up against, uh, or point out the issues that they're facing because they were perhaps in a, in a more hierarchical society would, uh, would be worried that it's not their place to give input or give feedback or question something.

[00:50:04] So I think, you know, culturally we are, uh, coming across problems faster, perhaps.

[00:50:17] **Rony Chaar:** Um, that's interesting. So, um, although communication might be, uh, a challenge, uh, it still seems like there's more, uh, leeway to what people can say and do. Yeah. Uh,

[00:50:32] **Sheldon:** cool. Yeah, sure. Yeah.

[00:50:36] **Rony Chaar:** Um, uh, so what external resources do you often use in order to deliver your product, uh, or to get work done within the company?

[00:50:47] **Sheldon:** Hmm. When you say external resources, you mean like people or, um,

[00:50:57] **Rony Chaar:** yes. It could be people, um, specific tools, uh, partners, um, uh, maybe previous history or data that you already have.

[00:51:10] **Sheldon:** Yeah, sure. I guess there's like, you know, on the product side, there's a whole bunch of external data providers that we use in order to fulfill products like API based. Then in terms of the business we have, uh, yeah, I guess as I mentioned before, a. Like contract book for example, which, you know, just help like removes the sort of hassle and friction around making contracts and getting contracts signed, uh, et cetera.

[00:51:40] Then we also use, for example, deal, which is, uh, for managing our contractors like externally, they not, who are not based in Denmark. Um, that's sort of like a HR slash hiring tool that, that makes it easier for us to hire outside than um, uh, what else? I think we're going to adapt this. Another HR tool actually called Bob.

[00:52:12] I'm not sure if you've heard of that. Um, , it's, uh, going to be, you know, to manage the, the people administration you can say. Um, then obviously all the communication tools like Slack and I mentioned notion, um, Google obviously for our like, emails and people administration and we actually actively use that a lot.

[00:52:41] Like, for example, we have a internal, a back office tool where we just use Google Login for that because then we can control it with easily the access. Right. Um, tend to use Google a lot for, for access to tools in terms of the company. So it's really easy to add people, remove people without having to worry about, you know, all these individual tools that we have to administrate uses.

[00:53:11] Um, Yeah.

[00:53:15] **Rony Chaar:** So, uh, it seems like a lot of the external industry resources that you use relate to, um, recruiting or signing contracts. Uh, yeah. Is there any other area, uh, that you also use External industry resources?

[00:53:33] **Sheldon:** Hmm. Yeah, we sometimes, I think we actually stop that membership though. There's a, there's di the dance can sleep and that's like a resource where if you are a member, for example, if you, if you have a legal question or something that you can just sort of call them and they can give you advice.

[00:53:54] Um, um, then we also, I guess, work quite closely with the FinTech. I recommend FinTech lab. Um, resources wise there, we don't necessarily, we, we more so use them in a promotional way, you know, where they have events that we can be a part of and et cetera. Um, that's all I can think of on the top of my head.

[00:54:22] **Rony Chaar:** You said you stopped using di

[00:54:26] **Sheldon:** Yeah, I think we felt we didn't get enough out the membership. And even though the funny thing is that I think like the day our membership expired, we actually really needed them for something . So that was, that was a mistake by that. Yeah.

[00:54:47] **Rony Chaar:** So do you feel like there's a, um, gap that, uh, perhaps the industry or Denmark could fill when it comes to legal questions or legal advice?

[00:55:02] **Sheldon:** Yeah, I mean, I guess. I guess, um, when it comes to dispute handling with, with, with people, I feel like there's not not a great amount of resources for employers. Um, again, like we were using di in that case. Um, then I would say, um,

[00:55:29] also I guess we struggle to get resources or like the ability to scale outside of Denmark, right? It's like you're really on your own and, uh, you know, from a business perspective, if you really want Danish startups to really succeed and, and flourish outside them, then you also kind need to make some kind of effort to support them in that.

[00:55:56] Um, other resources. Um,

[00:56:05] I do think we are using the hub for recruitment. I think that's a good resource. Um, but I do think there's like a lack of resources in helping employers understand how they can get foreign employers or foreign employees and how to, you know, go about that process and support that process. And, you know, the reality is if we advertise a job in Denmark, we rarely get good enough candidates for that, that role in Denmark.

[00:56:35] So we are often looking abroad and then there's a whole bunch of issues that, you know, you need to deal with that, you know, resource-wise is not, not necessarily always available instantly. Yeah.

[00:56:52] **Rony Chaar:** Interesting. Um, how, how do you think besides industry, what about educational institutions? Uh, how do they influence [redacted] and your activities?

[00:57:04] Do you get any kind of, um, resources or benefits? Hmm.

[00:57:10] **Sheldon:** Yeah, I mean, and just quick, I don need to go in maybe a minute or so,

[00:57:13] **Rony Chaar:** but yes. , sorry. But, uh, that's fine.

[00:57:17] **Sheldon:** I would say that, um, yeah, we have previously, uh, had, uh, internships, um, that were conducted the [redacted] that have turned into full-time employment actually.

[00:57:28] So there has been a kind of a good success story that I wouldn't say though that, um, you know, it's been us actively trying to seek that out. Right. And I do, I guess, kind of miss a kind of active engagement from educational side. Like literally no one has ever approached us to say, Hey, we're. Dtu or something, and we are trying to understand a bit better how are fintechs working with this or that, or you know, and, you know, trying to actively place some internships, for example.

[00:58:05] I mean, that doesn't, you know, my email, my inbox is not flooded with, uh, you know, requests to, to chat or anything from, from the educational part of the society.

[00:58:21] **Rony Chaar:** Um, so I have two more questions, but one of them you kind of already answered. So for the sake of not keeping you too long, I'm just gonna ask one more question.

[00:58:29] Uh, do you think there wa, there's an SME network in Denmark and, uh, has it supported [redacted] in any way? Yeah, I guess. I mean, yeah,

[00:58:40] **Sheldon:** there is the di I guess it's kind of a, it's kind of kind of helpful for SSEs. There's also something called. Something central. I can't remember where it's called now, but like, um, which is, I think a place where, if you remember then you, you get a lot of like access, you get a lot of like discounts on digital services or, you know, if you're startup Central it's called Yeah's, um, where you can get like a lot of resources.

[00:59:12] I don't think we've actively used that. Um, I think if, if anything, we've probably used a FinTech lab as a kind, some form of an sme, uh, network or, you know, uh, we haven't used it probably to the full extent that we could. Um, one thing I will mention though is that we found out that a lot of the big suppliers for tech tools are very willing to actually give significant discounts to startups if you ask.

[00:59:43] You know, uh, for example, Microsoft, you know, I think they've given us a significant amount of credit on our BI tools or, you know, uh, all of them actually are very willing to help you if you are a start, uh, and you actively ask for discounts like that. I don't think that's really that common knowledge out there, but I think it really depends on what the definition of startup is, I guess.

[01:00:11] Cool.

[01:00:13] **Rony Chaar:** Well, Sean, I'm not gonna keep you any longer. I'm sure you've got some more meetings to get to, but Yes, thank you so much for this interview. It's, it was very enlightening and, uh, yeah, you will, you gave me a lot to work with, so, okay, great.

[01:00:28] **Sheldon:** But yeah, if you, uh, if you ever have any other topics you wanna dive more into, then let's just get a coffee or something.

[01:00:34] It's all good.

[01:00:36] **Rony Chaar:** Sounds good. Remind me again where you from?

[01:00:40] **Sheldon:** I'm originally from Australia,

[01:00:42] **Rony Chaar:** so. Right. Actually, my colleague here is also from Australia, so. Oh, really? Yeah. Maybe, maybe you guys would like to meet, I don't know, like ,

[01:00:53] **Sheldon:** the network. Yes. Since I lived in Australia, so, you know. Yeah. But I do go back fairly often.

[01:00:59] Yeah. What about you?

[01:01:02] **Rony Chaar:** I'm from Lebanon. Ah, okay. Nice. Yeah. .

[01:01:07] **Sheldon:** Yeah, I, I went there, uh, maybe five or six years ago.

[01:01:16] **Rony Chaar:** Whoa.

[01:01:17] **Sheldon:** Before everything went a little crazy

[01:01:21] **Rony Chaar:** to, to Beirut or did you also like go around

[01:01:24] **Sheldon:** Yeah, to Beirut and also, um, the north of Beirut as well. Like, uh, one of the coastal towns up like maybe an hour outside, like, yeah.

[01:01:31] It was really. Cool. I had a really good time.

[01:01:35] **Rony Chaar:** Yeah, it's, it's a good time to visit now, cuz you know, the economic crash makes it cheaper for people with foreign currency, so . Exactly.

[01:01:44] **Sheldon:** Exactly. But yeah, I, I remember when we, when we went there, there I was a little not concerned. Concerned, but, um, it was, you know, obviously during.

B. Jo

[00:00:00] **Rony Chaar:** Meeting for the recording to start. I think it started. Okay. So just to do a quick recap of, uh, what my project's about. I am researching the challenges of adopting work management software in decentralized organizational structures. Mm-hmm. . And basically I have a wide definition for work management software, which I'll get to later.

[00:00:31] But my first, um, Objective is to understand the structure of your organization, uh, its characteristics, behaviors, and intentions. So first of all, could you please introduce the organization you work at and, um, uh, could you tell me which stage of growth this organization is in?

[00:00:55] **Jo:** Yes, of course. And so when you say the organizational structure, is that, The different units are organized, like the, you know, very like an all chart giving that idea of the organization or talking about particular workflows, processes.

[00:01:10] What are we, just to make sure that I understand the question,

[00:01:14] **Rony Chaar:** uh, I'm going to start asking specific questions about the organizational structure. Uh, you can define it however way you would like. Um, this could be everything you've mentioned, whatever else you'd like to add. Uh, but yeah, uh, maybe just give an introduction to [redacted] first and, uh, let me know which stage of growth it's in.

[00:01:40] **Jo:** All right. So, um, so [redacted] is, um, the easiest way to explain what we do here is that we are, we'll call ourselves a modern insights. So we essentially operate with, with two tracks. One is, uh, sort of typical SAS model where you buy access to a platform in which you can choose particular use cases within a qualitative research and real quickly validate, for instance, a marketing campaign or test a prototype, et cetera, through a sort of SA based.

[00:02:13] Um, that's the sort of one leg that, that, that [redacted] has. The, the other thing is our solutions teams, which is essentially. It's a more agency slash consulting proposition that, that, that, that we run concurrently or side by side with the SA offering here we do a customized research on behalf of clients into literally any area that you might think.

[00:02:36] Or time, I think qualitative research might be applied. Um, so that could be a thing from developing a new value proposition to mapping competitors, to understanding one's brain perception or to simply test a, a new concept or a, a campaign or marketing. It can be with, with a particular type group. So that's essentially the proposition.

[00:03:01] So helping, uh, companies build, uh, product, services, concepts, et cetera, with their, uh, customers as opposed to, to their customers. Um, in terms of the particular stage that the company is in, um, I'll say that, uh, we're still a relatively young organization, even though that, uh, the, the, the company has existed for, for quite some.

[00:03:28] Um, but I think we're, the, the correct term would be that we're probably in a scale up phase. Um, so we're sort of past sitting in the, in the basement with the, with the, with six people to now having a full blown team of roughly 50, 50 people, um, working in a more, let's say, hierarchical and, and, and structured setup.

[00:03:50] So I think the correct stage of growth would probably be a.

[00:03:55] **Rony Chaar:** Yes. And this would be also past the survival stage, uh, like as you describe it. Would you agree? Yes. Thankfully. Cool. So, uh, yeah, so I, like I said, my first study objective would be to understand this, the structure of your organization. So, uh, the first question would be if, uh, you could please tell me how you would define the structure.

[00:04:21] So it could be the units or departments in the organization or anything else.

[00:04:27] **Jo:** Yeah, I can't remember the exact terms for the different organizational structures. Um, but um, it's, it's a, I think we would say we're probably organized in a relatively traditional fashion. So, um, have, um, a, a sales team, a customer or client success team.

[00:04:44] So essentially people getting or a, getting clients in and a team handling the. Uh, when it comes to the, the sales side of the business, then, uh, besides the sort of commercial, uh, departments, we have the advisory or solutions department, which are essentially unit delivering the, the research to clients, um, that sort of.

[00:05:10] Uh, or maybe marketing is also a part of it. So we also have a marketing department, but, but that sort of encapsulates the client facing, uh, departments that we have. Then we have a product, uh, team, um, that effectively produce, uh, or develops the, the SaaS offering that I mentioned initially. Uh, and then we have a couple of administrative, um, HR finance related functions.

[00:05:35] So one that we call experience, which is essentially. I think we'd like to call it the modern HR department. So effectively not focusing so much on contractual elements and the NCE views, but more making sure that each and every employee in the company, uh, grows and has the right tools and the right experie as an employee as well.

[00:05:54] And then we have a finance and or traditional HR in, in, in its own separate unit in terms of how we're organized. So that's the different functions, uh, each, uh, of these departments. Uh, report directly to the ceo. So there is, uh, effectively no cco. There is no cmo, there is no coo. So every, uh, department hit would effectively report directly into, um, the, uh, to the ceo.

[00:06:27] Um, aside from the administrative functions, which is experience, and in hr, HR slash finance, which actually have a, a c level, uh, leader. Um, so a CFO and a CX chief experience.

[00:06:45] Is that granularly enough? What?

[00:06:48] **Rony Chaar:** Yes. Uh, that's good enough for sure. Thank you. And, um, you touched upon the hierarchy of the organization. Um, so just to clarify, when you say that it's, uh, you know, more hierarchical or structured, would you also say, It's a rigid hierarchy, as in do people need to traverse a certain ladder in order to make decisions, uh, or in order to communicate with the different depart departments, or is it more fluid and flatter in that sense?

[00:07:21] **Jo:** So I'd say that is definitely very flat. It's very decentralized in that sense. Um, so we, and that obviously naturally comes with not having sort of the C level management layer in between the different departments, right? So if we had in fact had a CCO or a coo, then obviously the COO would most likely report into the ceo.

[00:07:44] And hence, uh, the every head of a particular sales department who needed to, to report to that CCO or cio. We don't really have that layer, which naturally means that each and every underlying department needs to be very mobile and, and very sort of allowed to essentially make their own decisions. So, so in that sense, a super, super flat hierarchy, um, in terms of making decisions and uh, um, and running the business.

[00:08:14] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Uh, thanks for clarifying. And, um, I'm also wondering how has the organizational structure evolved throughout the years? So you said that, you know, it's past the survival stage, it's in a scale up stage. Uh, where did it start to, where is it now?

[00:08:33] **Jo:** That's, that's a really good, uh, really good question. And I think, you know, I've, I've been with the company for four and a half years.

[00:08:39] Um, And I'll say that at the time where, where I came into to, to sauna, it was already in sort of this scale up phase, perhaps like going out of the startup phase more into a scale up phase. Um, so, so in my mind it hasn't changed drastically over the years. We've been organized in slightly the same fashion, but I think one of the things that has definitely changed at the time that I've been here is that we actually did start off by having a, a much more rigid, uh, sort of traditional hierarchy.

[00:09:13] So we did have a coo, we had a coo, we had a coo, so we had that C level management team sitting above each and every department. But I think one of the things that we realized in that is, Given the size and the need to be incredibly mobile when you're building a company, having a very sort of rigid hierarchical structure in terms of making decisions, slowed us down.

[00:09:36] So now we've changed the setup into having a much more flat organizational structure where each and every hit of the departments report directly into the ceo. Um, that allows us to be, uh, have a lot more autonomy to make decisions and respectfully, uh, move and pivot a lot. I think that's the, that's the biggest change that I've seen in terms of the, the, the way in which we organize the company.

[00:10:02] **Rony Chaar:** Great. Cool. Thanks. Um, I also, I'm wondering, uh, do you think that the organizational structure. Is working as it is intended to work in theory, or is it different in practice from how it's meant to be for Sono?

[00:10:21] **Jo:** That, that, that depends on what your definition is to what it's, it's meant to be. Right. Um, so what's the, what's the intention of having this particular organizational setup?

[00:10:31] Right. I think, I don't know from a theoretical perspective, there's probably one way in which you would look at this, but I think for, for our purposes, Uh, probably looking very much into having a,

[00:10:47] **Rony Chaar:** a mindset where

[00:10:48] **Jo:** each and every employee in this company is able to, uh, one, take on a tremendous amount of responsibility and to grow with the company, which I think this organization will set up.

[00:11:00] Definitely facilitates. But then I think the second thing that we're also looking to do is to have, um, It is sort of a mindset of continuously innovating upon what we do. Right. Which I think is still, although you're moving from being a startup into more of a scale up, where you would naturally think that this is the time when you then start to organize and you start to be, you know, list experimental and you start to sort of put things into, to processes and structures and, and, and instructors.

[00:11:28] I, I don't think necessarily that that's, That's the model that we're going for. We're trying to have much more, uh, we obviously want more structure, but we want to try to structure the chaos that is effectively innovating. So we still wanna be able to have the ability to try out different stuff, identify new value ads for the clients that we can take in and productize.

[00:11:49] So I think minding that, that is the ambition of the company to still identify new avenues for growth. Still productizing, still innovating. Uh, then I definitely think that the, the organizational structure accommodates that.

[00:12:04] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Uh, you've actually touched upon my next few questions with what you've just said.

[00:12:10] Uh, so I can probably infer what you would say without asking, but I'm going to ask anyway. Um, so how would you describe the level of freedom of choice and autonomy? Uh, at [redacted]. And could you give examples? So you mentioned that uh, people are, uh, free to take on more responsibilities. Could you, uh, give more details on, on that?

[00:12:36] **Jo:** Yes. Um, so just to address the first part of the question, yes, I do think that there is a lot of freedom and autonomy to take on and make your own decisions. Um, in terms of giving a practical example of that, I think I can come up with a ton of examples. I can come up with one that is, uh, um, Particularly to myself.

[00:12:55] I think when, when I started in this company, I came from a sales process optimization type role in a different startup, which was very much a startup, like five people growing into being 30 people. Um, so, so coming and, and, and, and very much taking on that role of ensuring a lot more structure around the sales processes.

[00:13:14] So when I came into the company, it was natural for me to do a similar sort of exercise with part of the sales process and so on. So that is, that was my initial task to come in, take the top funnel team that we have, and, uh, so essentially the ones booking the meetings for the sales individual just to clarify what top funnel is.

[00:13:34] Um, so put a lot of structure around that. It was at that time, very much the wild west of people just doing whatever they wanted. and not really sort of structuring and, and experimenting and figuring out what works and what doesn't. So I naturally started with putting a lot of structure into that. And because we at that time were pivoting from a one serum system into another, it was natural that my part of, of, uh, of that new serum system would be focusing on how do we, how do we, uh, how do we set it up in terms of only the top funnel?

[00:14:07] But as time went along, because I've done this in two other companies prior to coming to to soap, um, I. Was very well equipped to also look at the next part of the funnel. So once I've actually put the system in to be able to control the top funnel, that obviously has a lot of casing effects into the bottom part of that funnel as well.

[00:14:29] So at that time, I really, I went to our C ceo. That was one of the times where we actually had a more hierarchical structure and I asked permission to say, I'm, I'm super keen on just taking on the entire. Because I've done it before, I know how to do it. Uh, and I have a ton of ideas of how we can do it, and I was giving full autonomy to actually do that.

[00:14:48] So that allowed me to implement a full system as opposed to just one part of the sales fund. So I think that was a personal example of, of being able and, and allowed to, um, to, to take on a lot more responsibility than what you were initially given.

[00:15:05] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Thanks, uh, for that example, it really puts it into perspective. And, um, I I also wanna ask about the decision making process. Uh, who handles most of the decision making process, uh, on a departmental level or individual level? Um, could you give some examples around

[00:15:28] **Jo:** that? So it does really depend on the type of decision being made.

[00:15:33] Um, you know, there is, um, there's obviously the more day to day operational decisions, and I think that the majority of those decisions are being made by the, let's say whomever is responsible for that particular area. That doesn't mean the head of the department. That could just as easily be somebody working on producing a, a particular set of slides, building a particular methodology, recruiting a particular target group, building a particular feature in the platform, using a piece of copy for the website, et cetera.

[00:16:10] So anything that, um, that, that might fall under a particular responsibility that an individual sits with. That decision making power is, is at least in, in theory, given to, to the individual employee. When then comes to a problems that might have more of a, uh, a wider impact on the, or maybe it has cascading effects, right?

[00:16:40] So let's say that somebody sits in with one responsibility area that is high, where a different responsibility areas. Right next to it. That is highly contingent upon what is being made in one. Area of the business, right? So once you actually face decisions that will have cascading effects on the rest of the business, then you would typically involve the head of the department.

[00:17:00] Then when it comes to the next layer of decision making, which is effectively anything that will require budget, so hire, you know, new people, making an investment in a particular tool, et cetera, that will typically, that decision making power sits with the ceo, uh, based on the. Um, uh, input from the head of the delivery departments.

[00:17:25] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Uh, do you think the current organizational structure makes it easier to adopt new technologies, or do you think a more or less hierarchical or strict uh, structure would be more conducive to adoption?

[00:17:47] **Jo:** That's a really good question. Um, I think that one would have the natural inclination to just answer that the more hierarchical and, and, and. Rigid structure that you have in company E it would be to implement a particular system, um, because it makes it a lot easier to, uh, understand where the different contingencies, who's using it for what, what's the intended purpose within this area, et cetera.

[00:18:12] So, so having building and limiting a much more structured setup in a system is, is obviously on paper a lot easier. But I think on the other hand, what you're sort of lose in that is you lose, I would assume that you could lose a lot of the input from the people actually using the system on a daily basis.

[00:18:30] Right? Because that's one of the things that is incredibly hard when you're implementing new systems that is actually understanding, yes, it would be very cool if we had this or that, uh, bottom here, or that you could actually integrate this with that, but you don't. Oftentimes you forget to actually an ask the people that are sitting and having to put in this data into the system whether this actually makes sense giving their current workflow.

[00:18:53] So having a much more flat h hierarchy in a company allows you to be much, have a much greater understanding of the different workflows that one would have in a particular unit, and hence make it somewhat easier to, to tailor particular features and functions and tools in the new system to the individual employee.

[00:19:14] So I think it's a, it's a trade off, uh, where you can't really say that one is necessarily easier than the. That makes

[00:19:22] **Rony Chaar:** sense. Thanks. Um, so we're going to jump to the second study objective now, uh, of fewer questions in this one. But basically I would, uh, uh, be asking you questions and, uh, to identify the pains of, uh, your organizational setup and, uh, how it affects the organization.

[00:19:44] Its in. Um, so what's a typical challenge or difficulty that's faced on a regular basis in your organization?

[00:19:55] **Jo:** Um, how specific do you want this to be?

[00:19:59] **Rony Chaar:** Uh, it's up to

[00:20:01] **Jo:** you.

[00:20:05] I, we talking about a, talking about collaboration issues are, I'll be talking about specific, um, Decision making issues like, what are we, what? Just to, to make sure that I'm giving a, a, uh, an example that makes sense.

[00:20:23] **Rony Chaar:** I think both of those, uh, elements, uh, are valid and, uh, whichever one you choose to focus on would, uh, also be saying a lot.

[00:20:32] So, uh, would you, you say that they're, yeah.

[00:20:38] **Jo:** So I think one of the things that you, that you, if I have, just staying on the topic of organizational structures, right? One of the things that you will realize once you have a very flat hierarchy is that you can, the, the ability to pivot and. Do new things, uh, quite easily, right?

[00:20:56] The fact that you can make a decision 10 in the morning, and then you can literally have it going at two o'clock in the afternoon, and then you're like pushing it out into the organization, that ability also comes with a massive amount of responsibility, right? Because the ability to do so doesn't necessarily mean that you should just innovate for the sake of innovating or pivoting for the sake of pivoting.

[00:21:18] So I. One of the challenges that can sometimes happen in Sona is that we, we become too eager to change things if we see something not working. And, uh, when we see something not working, we tend to, uh, quickly try something out for two weeks, and then we conclude that this is not the right cause of ectomy.

[00:21:37] Let's try something else. But perhaps what we needed is to stick with the solutions for a tad bit. To generate a, a much better understanding of why isn't it working right? So during some structured experiments, I'm saying this might actually be the right. Eh, play, but the way in which we're doing the play might just not be right.

[00:21:57] So as opposed to just completely changing and pivoting and saying, no, that was not the right decision, let's try this instead. If you continuously do that, you, you, you don't really learn a lot because you're not taking a things in over an extended amount of time to identify what the holes, areas in optimization, uh, potentially they actually exist in a particular place.

[00:22:15] So I. that can sometimes be a challenge of, of balancing the, the autonomy to, to make decisions with the, with responsibility and, and sticking with something for an extended period of time.

[00:22:29] That

[00:22:29] **Rony Chaar:** makes sense. And uh, would you say that this is the most difficult challenge that the organization has faced so far? Or is there another challenge that you would say was more difficult and how did it affect the department and individual? Uh, in the organization.

[00:22:48] **Jo:** Um, that's a good, that's a, that's a big question, man.

[00:22:52] Um, what's the biggest challenge that this organization has faced? Um, uh, I'm not sure that, I wouldn't say that that's, that's one of the biggest challenges. It's not the biggest challenge. That's, that's for sure. I, I, I wouldn't call it the biggest challenge. Again, it, it, it, it is a trade off. When you, when you have that type of organization where you are allowed to do things, you're allowed to push things through.

[00:23:19] Um, that is also a big strength of the organization. So it's not necessarily a, a challenge per se. It's also an opportunity to, to, to do new stuff. So I think, yes, it has hurt us in the past. Try to many things at once or to quickly pivot into a different direction. But I think on the other hand, it has also been the right decision to, to, to make every once in a while, which just allows us to, to identify some pretty cool new opportunities.

[00:23:46] So it's, it's not necessarily only a challenge, it's also an opportunity, but I think one of the things that you, you typically struggle with when you're building a company is, is something as boring as finding your product market fit. And in that, finding your, I. Which I think has definitely been the biggest challenge in my mind.

[00:24:02] So understanding how do you stay true to the legacy of a product? Cause I think, um, this might be too specifics, but, but when it comes to qualitative research, which is what Soner focuses on, qualitative research is an area of research that is highly labor intensive. So figuring out how do you build a product that historically relies a lot on labor while still making it super scale?

[00:24:28] How do you do that? And how do you do that? But by not restricting the protocol service that you're actually offering, cause that's. General way in which people tend to, uh, scale their businesses is that they'll identify particular areas in which they see a ton of growth, uh, and a ton of potential. And then they'll restrict and, and sort of focus their efforts into this only.

[00:24:50] But I think a lot of the value in so comes from the fact that we can actually do quite a lot that we cover in new. You sort of go out with the proposition of saying that you have to involve your customers in each and every decision that you make, then it becomes incredibly hard to restrict the service into particular areas, right?

[00:25:05] Because that would be contradicting. So, so how do you, how do you manage that? How do you have something that is historically not scalable model where a lot of the value sits and the fact that you can go very broad, you can go very deep on particular topics without necessarily restricting what you can do to scale.

[00:25:22] I think that has been a major challenge and the hardest thing. . And I think that that relates to product market fit because uh, when you, when you go out with a proposition that is incredibly broad, then it's super hard to figure out where do you fit cuz you essentially fit everywhere. Um, so, so focusing in on, on, on either a particular product, uh, has been super difficult.

[00:25:45] But I think what we've realized now is that we. , uh, we shouldn't, um, we shouldn't focus in on a particular product or service. We should focus in on, on, on a operational model that allows us to deliver. So our fit is not necessarily the product and service that we offer. It's more of the. Format and ver yeah, format is probably the right word.

[00:26:08] The format in which you get that product service, that's where the fit lies. Um, so I think coming to, to, to to that realization has taken, uh, yeah, roughly 12 years. So that wasn't easy.

[00:26:22] And I think that was the second part of the question as well. I just forgot.

[00:26:26] **Rony Chaar:** Yeah. Uh, how did it affect individuals, uh, and departments or productivity or anything else in the organization? So

[00:26:35] **Jo:** I think definitely when you're trying stuff out, right? You're trying this and that's not working, then you're suddenly pivoting and then you're going into this direction.

[00:26:43] You can, you can very often come to a point. In a company where you feel like that you're essentially, you're taking one step forward and then you're taking two steps back. Then you're taking one step forward, then you're taking two big steps back, right? That can be super de motivating for a lot of employees being in a company where things move really quickly, right?

[00:26:59] Because you sort of suddenly everything is like an upside down and then you have a massive town hall, and then it's suddenly a completely new thing that we're doing. You sort of, uh, almost get to the point where you start thinking that next month we're gonna be selling socks as opposed to customer insights.

[00:27:14] Uh, cuz cuz that might be a good idea. So, um, understanding that, um, or essentially from a, from a leadership perspective, making sure that you are con, consistently bringing back the changes that you're doing into somewhat of a uniform. Its super, super important to be able for, for people to embed and contextualize that we're not just changing for the sake of changing.

[00:27:39] We're change, we're changing because we've learned this and we need to take that forward with us so as to be utilized going forward. Cuz if you're not doing that, then you are in fact taking, uh, two steps back. But the idea is that you want to take two steps forward, one step back all the time. So you are constantly moving forward.

[00:27:56] So how do you manage. You know, not taking two steps back, one step forward, but two steps forward, one step back.

[00:28:04] **Rony Chaar:** So you actually touched upon my next question just now. Uh, I was going to ask how, uh, you would deal with these challenges and if the organizational structure, which you said is more decentralized and flat, uh, if it, if it has helped you deal with these challenges.

[00:28:24] **Jo:** I, I'd say that it, it does to some degree, help with, with that. Um, but I think again, it becomes a trade off, right? Because when you have a very flat, hierarchical structure, then suddenly it also the responsibility of maintaining a consistent. Narrative in the organization, it becomes super hard cause uh, you're, you're not, because you don't have a very sort of clear answer of communication.

[00:28:52] Then you, you might end up in a situation where you change stuff and you want to maintain a particular narrative. But the way in which. Uh, one head of the department understands the change is different from the other head, and then you're suddenly working in two different directions and not maintaining the same narrative across the organization.

[00:29:08] So from a top leadership position in a company that is very flat with you're changing quite a lot, maintaining a consistent story and vision for the company is critical, uh, in my mind. You can't just be throwing new ideas out all the time because that's what your employees are doing already. So if you're also doing it, then it's just gonna be a, a miss.

[00:29:37] **Rony Chaar:** Thank you. That, that makes sense. And, um, Could you give one example maybe of how the organization was altered, uh, in response to this challenge? Uh, I guess based on what you've said, there's probably a million examples with how it pivoted, but maybe just one, uh, on top of your mind.

[00:29:59] **Jo:** So, so in response to this challenge, Uh,

[00:30:02] **Rony Chaar:** yeah, that's maybe not the correct way to ask, but, uh, could you give an example of how the organization changed when people were coming up with different ideas and there was a lot of, you know, uh, different directions that people wanted to go?

[00:30:23] Yeah.

[00:30:23] **Jo:** Um,

[00:30:28] I'm entire sure that. That, that a change has necessarily happened. Right. I, I think, I don't think that, that we, we haven't tried to address this through a organizational change per se. I think one of the things that has happened is that we don't, uh, we don't longer have a, a, a direct, uh, report between the CEO and the head of the departments, which I think, uh, effectively makes.

[00:30:54] Structure even more flat. But that also means that, that each head of the department has a lot of more frequent interactions with the CEO of the company who are essentially setting the, the direction, right? So, uh, by having more touch bases with the, the CEO as a head of the department, you're also tapping more into.

[00:31:14] What is it that the, the CEO actually wants to do with the, with the company? And hence, what is my role and my, my responsibility in terms of taking that narrative, changing it, adopting it into something that makes sense in, in, in my teams, my department's, everyday life. I think that's, that's at least one way in which we, we haven't necessarily organizationally changed it, but I think it's a, it's a mindset of having the right people, hitting the different departments that actually understands the challenge of, um, communicating a relatively clear and consistent story down to the employees.

[00:31:52] Cool.

[00:31:53] **Rony Chaar:** Sounds good. Uh, so now we will move on to the third study objective, which is identifying the challenges of adopting work management software within this organizational setup. Uh, I'm going to, uh, copy paste the definition I have for work management software, uh, in the chat. So you could take a look for, uh, some clarification and maybe some inspiration.

[00:32:22] And my first question on this would be, uh, if you could recall a time when, uh, you adopted a work management software and why was it adopted? Was it in response to something? And how did the organization go about adopting the.

[00:32:42] **Jo:** Question. Um, yeah, so I think that the easiest way for me to explain this is, is by taking our system, which I assume falls within work management software. It's, uh, it's database management and communication and asset management and other things, account management as well. And so, um, How it was adopted is the questions?

[00:33:11] Yes. Or whether it was not, what was the question again?

[00:33:15] **Rony Chaar:** Yeah, so why was it adopted to begin with? Why this particular software? Right. Okay. And, uh, how did you go about adopting it?

[00:33:23] **Jo:** Right. So, um, it's fucking hard to answer.

[00:33:32] In a concise way. So the reason that we decided to adopt the new system is because we had a lot of legacy in the old system. So, uh, we were using hotspot, which is a very typical system for, um, Um, for early stage startups because you get a free version that you can use for some time and then you have a limit on it.

[00:33:53] So it is very naturally, it came to the point where we had you build in terms of the amount of data that you store in HubSpot. So once you get over a particular threshold, then you'll start to pay for it. Um, so we, we, we hit that market. We needed to figure out, do we want to continue with HubSpot or do we want to buy a different serum?

[00:34:12] I think the decision to go for Salesforce was actually a decision that was made by the board of the company, cuz they apparently really liked, uh, Salesforce and because Salesforce is the biggest RAM system in the world, we thought that was, um, they, they thought that makes sense. So, so it was a very sort of top town, uh, or top management decision that, that a lot of people didn't really have a lot of influence on.

[00:34:37] Um, when we then, um, In terms of then adopting that particular piece of software. And I actually think another reason was because HubSpot couldn't handle the current business model. So we were selling on a sort of a, a token credit basis, which wasn't something that we can handle, could handle in, in HubSpot.

[00:34:56] So we needed a different, more modular system that we can, that we can tailor data to our business model, which Salesforce actually provides. So in terms of then adopting that, um, It was very much a, a, a, a, uh, an exercise of making sure that you, so we had a team, or let me rephrase that. We, we, we put down a team of being five individuals each representing a part of the business.

[00:35:26] And sometimes we had two representatives from the same part of the business. So for instance, back to the example that I gave you in the beginning. So we had myself and uh, uh, one of the account managers, um, coming in to represent the commercial part of the business. I was doing the top funnel. The other guy was doing the bottom funnel.

[00:35:47] We had somebody from marketing coming in to think about the, what they need in terms of invoice bound. We had product coming in, in terms for particular, Data metrics that they wanted. We had finance coming to be able to invoice through the system, et cetera. So we essentially established a small work group that represented each of the functional areas that would have any interaction into the platform.

[00:36:05] Then we had one individual project managing that, taking all that information in and effectively building the, the setup in the system and. Um, yeah, with, uh, cuz you, you typically buy consultants to do that when it's Salesforce. So, um, so that was effectively the work group that was established. And then every time that we built a new module in the CRM system, then we put that out in the sandbox to each of the five individuals that were a part of that process.

[00:36:37] They could then test it and, and, and essentially ask individual. In those departments, whether it made sense, come back with requested features that they want change, which was then incorporated and then we pushed out that particular module. That's how we did that. So very much a co-creation exercise across different units.

[00:36:54] Once we then had the product or the product software, uh, deployed, uh, we then had a bunch of workshops in. For a month and a half where we essentially demoed the different modules that were relevant for different functions. Um, and it has a couple of exercises. So for instance, go in and create a new deal that you then close, allocate this to this particular client, build the client hierarchy, or you know, ask a finance to, to produce an.

[00:37:26] So that's how we effectively try to do it. Um, but I think one of the things that we really feel that is that beyond, uh, doing two months or a month and a half of workshops, we sort of forgot to maintain it. Um, we had one, we have one student worker sitting there maintaining and upholding the data. But in terms of, you know, continuously learning, And, and, and, and change that software as the business is also changing is super, super challenging and something that actually requires quite a lot of resources and time.

[00:37:56] So the fact that we didn't have that, that we didn't have a resource dedicated to changing the software as we were growing and changing things, I think especially back to having a very flat hierarchy where things are changing quite often, then you need somebody to also be there to change this, this the set up and the software as you change the business.

[00:38:14] Um, which we really feel.

[00:38:19] **Rony Chaar:** Uh, so my next question was actually going to be about the challenges of, uh, adopting the software. Uh, so you mentioned that maintenance was an issue. Yes. But, uh, did you face any challenges during the adoption phase itself? Yes.

[00:38:37] **Jo:** You always do. I think, I don't think that anybody who has ever implemented a piece of software in the business would've run into a lot of people saying, that doesn't make sense.

[00:38:46] I don't want to do that. That's gonna be highly time consuming. That doesn't fit into my, my, my way of doing things. So what tends to happen, because you can't take any, each and everyone's perspective into a system, like that's just not feasible. So there is a, a very long change management process that needs to happen and be facilitated by somebody that is perhaps not one individual in charge of the software because, um, what, what we experienced is that we build a particular tool where our BDIs needs to lock their calls.

[00:39:19] They were used to lock in their calls in an Excel spreadsheet. And they each had their own Excel spreadsheet with their own leads, which, um, really is bad for the business because let's say one of the PDs, I don't know, quits or something else, um, then you know that all that data is effectively useless for anybody else then that particular PD app, right?

[00:39:40] So there's a lot of upside and having people work in a relatively uniform way. So there's the change in the ways of working. It's a lot of change management and that can be done by one individual only. Hence, it needs to be with the responsibility of each and every employee's leader to effectively force that, um, um, or not force, but essentially, Teach and, and direct.

[00:40:06] That new, that new the new ways of working are super important. Um, that we faced a lot of challenges with, uh, because not all the, the functional leaders of the department heads actually bought into that because they were much more focused on daily execution. So now I have to also train my employees into working in a new way.

[00:40:26] I don't want that now because it's gonna slow them down. They're gonna be dissatisfied and I need them to just, you know, produce stuff or sell or whatnot. Um, so we faced a lot of challenges with misalignment in terms of whose responsibility is it to actually, um, deploy those new ways of working that, that naturally comes with the new.

[00:40:52] **Rony Chaar:** So, um, I have quite a few more questions about this. Uh, so we might be going forward and then going back, but I wanna ask, did you have expectations of these challenges? Did you expect that, uh, change management is going to be needed in such a robust way before you actually started implementing the adoption?

[00:41:14] Or was it more of a surprise?

[00:41:18] **Jo:** So I think you're always gonna be, um, personally I was, I was surprised about the extent of the problem. I knew that the problem was gonna be there because I've tried to implement the system with a, a company with five employees, and it was even a challenge there. We were five employees using one system, and we didn't even have a system prior to that.

[00:41:35] So it's not like we had to, to, we didn't really have ways of working. Right. So, but boy, I still ran into a lot of trouble with that at that point. So I knew that this was gonna be a much bigger problem because also at that time, the company was 120 employees. So it's, it's, you know, doing it with five people is, is vastly different from doing it with 110 or 120.

[00:41:55] Um, so, Yes, I, I did anticipate that I was, that, that that was gonna be hard. So, but I think, um, people tend to, um, look at the system and say, if it's difficult to use, then it's because it's been implemented in a bad way. That's a natural inclination, but it's not. Nobody is taking a step back and say, perhaps it's my existing ways of working that suck, so I should probably adopt, um, a new way of working that could perhaps be smarter.

[00:42:29] So this idea of also from a management perspective, leaning into a system, not just expecting it to work, understanding that it actually requires some time was one of the things that I put a lot of emphasis on towards the top management at that time was, I effectively told, um, the CEO and the COO at that time that I think you should change.

[00:42:48] I, I actually think that this should be included in people's bonuses. So if you're not locking your your calls correctly, then you're not gonna get a bonus for having booked this amount of meetings. So it's not correctly in the system, then it doesn't count if you don't close the sale in the right way.

[00:43:04] If you don't up upload the documentation, then you don't get a bonus. Cuz that's typically a way in which you literally enforce that. Uh, into, uh, people's everyday life. So that's, that's a suggestion. It never happened. Um, perhaps there's def other ways in which it could be done, but you need particular KPIs and, and in sense mechanisms to force that adoption in, in my, my perspective at least.

[00:43:31] Um, cuz um, it's, it's super hard for people to change their, their habits.

[00:43:39] **Rony Chaar:** Yeah, that makes sense. So, uh, could you say how you think the organizational structure actually did encourage, or maybe it impeded this software adoption?

[00:43:53] **Jo:** I think back to what I, what I said before, right? The fact that you have a lot of autonomy in each of the different units, it does help in terms.

[00:44:02] Um, making sure that everybody is heard during the implementation phase, but once it comes to the actual, um, deployment of a system, then things become super hard to control because they'll have different ways of working each of the different units that isn't necessarily. Uniform and, and control centrally.

[00:44:23] Right? So the more decentralized it is, the the harder it's gonna be to ensure something that is relatively uniform, which is effectively what you're looking for when you're implementing a software. You can never build a software that will accommodate each and every department's needs and ways of working.

[00:44:38] It has to be somewhat uniform. And you are also doing that to skill processes. So, um, having a very flat hierarchy where everybody. It's in control of how they do their own thing. Makes this

[00:44:50] **Rony Chaar:** incredibly difficult.

[00:44:54] That makes sense. Uh, so considering that this organizational structure allows for voices to be heard, uh, could you tell me how did the individuals in your organization perceive the usefulness of Salesforce, uh, as well as how they perceived the ease of use of this

[00:45:17] **Jo:** software? Um, so I, I think, uh, , uh, I think both, uh, were probably teamed relatively low.

[00:45:27] Um, I think the, the, the ease of using the system, I think initially really worked. People were super happy in, but then the, the what, what, back to my point of not maintaining a system, if you don't do that, then suddenly you'll have to start making, uh, sort of the. You're just fixing symptoms of a, of a wider problem, which really is that the system is not set up to accommodate your business model.

[00:45:53] Then you'll start adding different fields because you think you might need it, but you're not really thinking about, okay, so if I do this now, if I don't address this issue and I keep blocking data in this way now and next six months, I'll sit in six months and I'll look at this and I'll say, Why did I do this?

[00:46:11] Because now I have six months of data that I need to backlog for it to actually make sense. So I think definitely when you're moving super fast, you have an inclination to not really think, hit and say in a year or in two years, this is gonna give me and the organization a massive headache and it might just take me.

[00:46:28] Or somebody in the organization a week to solve, but because you want it now, you want it tomorrow, then you don't give that time, uh, to, to foresee that you might run into quite a lot of issues, uh, going forward. So I think that's definitely one of the things that, um, that we ran into as a, as a major, uh, major problem that one hindered the usability of the tool, but also over time decreased the usability of it, uh, because it certainly, it became a shell of a, of a previous.

[00:46:57] Company that you somewhat adopted to the new model, but not fully.

[00:47:03] Does, does that answer the question?

[00:47:05] **Rony Chaar:** Yeah, it makes sense. Um, and was this, uh, reflected through the comments from the individuals and the organization?

[00:47:18] **Jo:** Uh, yes, uh, definitely. Um, I think definitely one, one of the things is the comments, but I also think you, you, you'll quickly realize these things as. As you're trying to forecast your revenue and you can't, you'll just realize that, you know, that's one of the primary features of a CRM system to be able to see how much is in the pipeline, and you can't, you wanna see how many meetings has been booked last week.

[00:47:40] You can't figure it out. Then what happens is people will start producing their own small systems, so they'll start going back to the Excel sheets that you wanted to remove because when you implemented the system, because the system isn't, isn't working, um, You sort of create a, a pretty visual cycle, uh, where you, you're back to square one because you haven't maintained the system.

[00:48:04] So you'll really go through comments and you'll realize it through, uh, you know, just not being able to see what's the, what's the revenue year to date. Pretty bad, the CRM system, if you can't do that. ,

[00:48:18] **Rony Chaar:** yes, , definitely. Um, so. Now I have another study objective, and it's about identifying the current steps taken to mitigate risks of adoption and, uh, challenges that may be faced in the future.

[00:48:35] So, um, this is very, uh, based on what we've discussed now, basically. So did you form any preemptive strategies after, uh, Going through the adoption of Salesforce, uh, because of the challenges that you faced. Um, could you talk about some of these strategies and what risks you might want to mitigate?

[00:49:01] **Jo:** Yeah, so, um, One of the things that you obviously wanna mitigate when you have a new system is the amount of requests coming in, right?

[00:49:09] So quite quickly when people start to adopt a new system, then they realize, oh, wouldn't it be nice if I had a field here where I could indicate that? Or wouldn't it be cool if I had a particular type of record that I could create in the system that looks like this? So you suddenly start to get bombarded with a bunch of different requests from a bunch of different.

[00:49:26] Um, and what, what you essentially wanna do is you want to be able to review those because you want to be able to take in requests and, um, ideas from the people using the system, but you also wanna, uh, control it. Right, because if you start to just add a bunch of fields from each and every department, then suddenly you'll have a a record type that just is filled with a hundred different fields that people have to put in, which is effectively what you try to minimize when you build the system.

[00:49:52] You want it to be as simple as possible while still giving you the output that you need. So one of the things that we did is we had a, we had a very low practical, we had a request form where you can put in a particular request where you had to explain the value of what you wanted and why you wanted it, uh, and then exactly how it should work.

[00:50:09] So very much like making a request to a development team. So you would make an epic where you would explain what you want, and then we'll review, we'll review the different requests, think about potential contingencies and, and the value, and then perhaps implement it or.

[00:50:27] That's one of the things that we try to mitigate to, to a, basically do that to coming in. Does that make sense? That does answer your question.

[00:50:37] **Rony Chaar:** Yes. Uh, could you share some of these values, uh, if you remember any of them that people have asked for? Uh, Values? Yes. You said that. Uh, so you had forms where people can input the things that they would value in terms of adopting new software?

[00:50:57] Is that what I No,

[00:50:58] **Jo:** no, no. So, so that would be, it would be a particular request for, for instance, I want a field here. I want to drop down list of these five values. That I can put in in the system and, and the reason that I want that is because that would make it a lot easier for me to look, whether the inbound leaders coming from Facebook or LinkedIn instance, that could be a request.

[00:51:23] **Rony Chaar:** Okay. That makes sense. So it was more technical requests? Yes. Okay. Um, and have you tried to, uh, have, has, have any of these strategies been actually implemented? Did you try and test these strategies?

[00:51:38] **Jo:** That, that strategy was implemented and worked, but then we decided to not have anybody manage the system

[00:51:50] and then it broke

[00:51:56] **Rony Chaar:** All right. Um, uh, I, because we are short on time, I'm going to jump to my last, uh, study objective and it's about determining ways academia and industry may be able to support the organization and its software adoption endeavors. So how do you think being in Denmark has helped your organization in general and specifically with technology adoption?

[00:52:23] **Jo:** I think obviously, um, being in a, in a relatively well developed country, uh, where people are used to using, uh, technology on a daily basis for literally most of the things that they're doing in their everyday life, obviously makes an adoption process of a particular new tool easier. But I also think it's a matter of, of access to the right resources.

[00:52:45] So typically when you're implementing software, you'll have to use part. Uh, develop software partners that'll help you do different things. And obviously the, the in more developed countries such as Europe, Western Europe, uh, you, you'll have a lot of these offers available leading to more competition, leading to perhaps better services in lower prices.

[00:53:07] So I think the availability of support that you can get to, to succeed with these things are also a enormous and, and super. . I think that's definitely two, two things. So, um, the tech sav of the Danish, uh, the, the Western, um, uh, people and, and, and secondly, the availability of, of potential support options to, uh, for you is, is quite large.

[00:53:34] **Rony Chaar:** Uh, so speaking of resources, um, my next question is what external resources do you use often in order to deliver your products or services or to get work done? Internally?

[00:53:49] **Jo:** Just in general or for implementing software?

[00:53:54] **Rony Chaar:** Uh, in general, just any external resource. , we're using a lot

[00:53:59] **Jo:** of external resources, right?

[00:54:01] So we'll use a consultancy to sometimes help deliver a report. We'll use a consultancy to new particular strategy. We'll use a brand and marketing agencies to create brain stories. We have a outsourced development team sitting in the, somewhere that's not Denmark, that I can remember in Eastern Europe.

[00:54:21] Um uh, and um, So, right. I have 6% power on my laptop just to, uh, let you know. Um, yeah. Um, we'll use, uh,

[00:54:38] we'll use a big freelance network to. Essentially help us with translations, with a moderation, with recruitment, we have an entire vendor base set up to find particular participants for our, our studies. So I have a bunch of different, uh, external vendors. Oh,

[00:55:02] **Rony Chaar:** and uh, what about educational institutions? Do you think they influence your organization and its activities and how?

[00:55:11] **Jo:** I obviously think that any organizational institution, uh, would, would influence any company because you typically have employees that are educated from an educational institution, right? So they'll come in with a particular background of understanding,

[00:55:27] um, a particular foundation that they've gotten from whatever university degree, whatever university that they were coming from. So I think that's definitely, um, They definitely influence it in that sense. And I'd assume that perhaps, you know, if you're sitting in a development role that you might review more journals, etc.

[00:55:47] Articles. I don't think necessarily in a strategy related setup or in a, a consulting type business that you're spending a significant amount of time reviewing academic literature. But you can, and I and I personally do it every once in a while.

[00:56:05] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Um, do you think there is an SME network? Uh, so that's small and medium Enterprise network. Uh, and how has it supported your organization? If it has

[00:56:20] **Jo:** the SME network in, in what sense?

[00:56:23] **Rony Chaar:** Uh, in Denmark or in your region, uh, is there any kind of collaboration? Workshops? Conferences where SMEs can, um, perhaps just get in touch, collaborate, uh, [00:56:39] **Jo:** I know that maybe not.

[00:56:42] So you have an entire ecosystem of startups in Denmark, right? There's a lot of different offerings for, for startups to get, helps go to conferences, meet investors, et cetera. So, you know, take barbecue, you do, uh, Can't remember any of the other conferences, but there's a ton of these conferences that you can actually go to.

[00:57:02] There's Friday bath. Um, I know at one, one of the places in, in Intel, there is always a Friday bar where BC investors and startups meet up for beer. Um, really good place if you want to attract capital through your startups. So there's a lot of these offerings in the d ecosystem for, for startups,

[00:57:22] **Rony Chaar:** and yeah.

[00:57:26] Interesting. And, uh, can you personally think of ways that academia or industry may be able to support the organization further? Something that you miss, maybe that you wish existed?

[00:57:41] **Jo:** Um,

[00:57:48] My natural inclination is to say, no , but that's probably wrong. Um, there is probably something that academia can do. Um, but, but, but I honestly think that, that, that. Because the biggest challenge with implementing software comes to the ways of working of particular individuals. And I think that a lot of people mistake implementing new software for, it's about building the best tool.

[00:58:14] It's like that's not what it's about. It's about implementing it in the right way. It's about making sure that you are, from a management perspective, from a leadership perspective, enforcing and deploying and um, encourag. The, the use of the ways of working that the system accommodates that is critical for implementation because there's always gonna be fields that are annoying to fill out.

[00:58:38] There's always gonna be integrations that don't work. There's always gonna be things that could perhaps be changed and done in a different way, but that's not really what it's about. You're implementing a system to one store data, but you're also implementing a system to ensure much more streamlined processes.

[00:58:51] So thinking about this inside the organizations, inside the. Units inside the everyday thing that happens on the employee's keyboard when they're, for instance, creating a record m system. That's, that's the level of detail that you need to get down to, to be able to do effective implementation of new software.

[00:59:11] And I'm not entirely sure how academia would accommodate that, uh, in health in, in that, um, Because it, it'll vary from business to business to business, from employee to employee, to employees. It's, it's, it's a, it's a leadership and management challenge just as much as it's a, as a, a software development challenge.

[00:59:32] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Uh, yo, Kim, thank you so much for the interview. Welcome. I'm going to stop the recording.

C. Miriam

[00:00:00] **Rony Chaar:** Just waiting for the recording to start. Yes. All right. So, um, hello, Miriam . Thank you for agreeing to do an interview with me. Uh, like I've mentioned, I'm researching, uh, the challenges of adopting work management software in decentralized organizational structures. And, uh, we've spoken about doing this interview because you are a founder of Female Leadership Academy, which is now an organization, uh, of 30 people.

[00:00:43] Mm-hmm. , if I remember correctly. And, uh, yeah. So if you could just as an intro, tell me a bit about, uh, female Leadership Academy and, uh, its history and what you do. Yes.

[00:00:59] **Miriam:** Yeah. Happy to do so. So, I mean, female Leadership Academy was founded approximately three years ago. And, um, I mean, we started quite a few people.

[00:01:12] It was me getting here, getting a few people in. As for Starter, um, we quite rapidly, um, expanded to five 10 people. Um, what we are doing is basically that we are on a mission to increase diversity and top management. And that was also basically because we, we were both, I, I was a student at the time and I was looking into sort of the industry and all the nice corporations and wondered Okay.

[00:01:45] Um, I see a lot of nice positions out there and, and good companies, but I can actually not really mirror myself in, in the top management, um, because many of them were, were basically wide old men. Right. Um, so, so that was sort of the, the, the accelerator and I mean, um, what we are doing, so the product of Female Leadership Academy is that we, we set up a.

[00:02:15] A leadership program. So basically setting up a lot of workshops and getting in a lot of my speakers and then having a lot of participants, uh, joining in. Um, and, um, to do so, uh, we of course need to have, um, different organizational structures. So that also means that we have to have a marketing department.

[00:02:42] We had to build like a financial department because we have to, to consider, okay, what are our revenue streams, um, which I can also deep dive into at a later stage. Um, we've had to set up, um, a partnerships department as well. Um, and, and also, I mean, those organizational structures, they, they have of course developed over time, um, and grown.

[00:03:11] Um, But I mean, yeah, those were the initial stages. Um, we had a big operational department as well who were actually the people taking care of, uh, doing the whole workshops, organizing, coordination with partners, um, making that foundation. Then we have a lot of ambassadors, um, around, um, in, in Denmark, both in, at universities, uh, who are sort of vouching and, and making marketing basically on behalf of the organization.

[00:03:47] And, um, yeah, I mean, um, That's, that was sort of the kickoff. Um, what we then did ever since was then to develop new services. So as, uh, we realized that there was a huge demand, um, for, for these leadership programs. Um, in the start we only accepted, I think 30 people, um, uh, for each of the leadership programs.

[00:04:14] And we received a hundred hundred 50 applications. So we were like, okay, we need to scale this up. Um, so to scale it up externally, we also had to scale it up internally and that. Of course also demanded more people, but also, uh, a bigger need for it. And, uh, software that supported our organization. Um, because the more people you get, uh, the bigger is the demand for coordination, um, internally and, and also, uh, externally.

[00:04:46] So, um, so where we started by using very simple, uh, tools to build the organization with a, uh, vis, uh, homepage. We later change WordPress that we started with the, with Vics I recall. And, um, using Gmail. Where we had sort of, uh, yeah, one email called contact female leadership.com. That also increased the need for getting several emails to external use.

[00:05:27] Um, we also had a Slack channel, um, which we actually still have because we found that to be super, like, good for internal communication. Um, but I mean, the more we grew and also the more we sort of, uh, acknowledge that we also needed to be, have better like, uh, project management, uh, and alignment internally, we also.

[00:06:00] Got tools like Monday at a later stage, uh, which is a project management tool that we are using to sort of keep track on everything and make sure that everything is streamlined across the different, uh, departments. Um, we have, um, yeah, and that is also because TMA and full, the structures can be a bit messy.

[00:06:22] So, um, if we don't have that, um, more streamlined tool, then uh, then it, it, it misses up basically our sort of internal alignment. Um, so I mean, this

[00:06:34] **Rony Chaar:** is, uh, this is super interesting. You're touching upon all the questions I'm going to ask, uh, which is really nice because that means there's a lot to uncover here.

[00:06:47] Yeah. Um, so I'd like to start to deep diving on each of the different aspects that you've mentioned. and, uh, I will do so by first targeting my first study objective, which is to understand the organizational structure of female Leadership Academy, its characteristics, behaviors, intentions, all of that good stuff.

[00:07:12] So, uh, you've mentioned, uh, how there was different departments set up in F fla. How would you define the structure and could you give me a deeper dive into the different units and departments?

[00:07:26] **Miriam:** Yeah, definitely. So you could say that, uh, if we go sort of from the top to the bottom. So, um, I'm the founder and I'm, um, sort of leading the organization.

[00:07:41] Um, under me. There's, uh, under me, like the next level of the layer is the precedent of, um, the, uh, one of the sort of areas of the organization, which has more to do with the students. Um, I am leading the professional area. Um, So we have sort of those two, um, how can you say, um, overall areas because that is representing our target groups because we are both targeting, um, young professionals, which are people who are in the first five, um, years of their career.

[00:08:23] And then we are told tackling students as well because you want to empower, uh, the leadership te uh, talent early on. And, um, and yeah, so we have a president for the students and I'm leading up the, the professionals and also guiding the student part of the organization. The next layer is then the CXO layer.

[00:08:46] And that our, that means that, that is basically all the leads. So that will be, uh, be head of marketing, head of finance, head of partnerships, head of networks, um, head of consulting. Uh, we have a internal consulting, uh, department and, uh, head of operations, uh, in each of the, uh, different ones. And I mean, some of them, uh, we, we really prefer to work as a joint organization.

[00:09:22] Uh, but of course some of, uh, the functions will overlap with each of the overall departments. So, for example, marketing has to coordinate marketing activities across both students and professionals and to make sure that we come across externally as a united brand. Um, the next layer, uh, beside the c o layer is then the operational layer.

[00:09:49] So that will be all the associates within marketing. Within networks, within finance, within partnerships and et cetera, et cetera. Um, so yeah, that will be the organizational structure. Um, I think, uh, what is super, because you also asked into sort of the culture. Was that correctly? Yeah, so I mean, yeah. So, um, in terms of the culture, I mean, our main purpose of Female Leadership Academy is to empower young women to, to basically, um, figure out what their talents are and what their motivations are and their strengths, and then put that to practice the best way they can to succeed in their professional career as well as in their personal life.

[00:10:42] And, um, and we of course hope that by figuring out what you're passionate about and what you're good at, you can also. Uh, figure out what your sort of leadership style is or what your talents are. And, and in that sense, we are also very much sort of cultivating that within fle. So we are empowering all, all the management board as we call it, within, within the organization to, um, to be good leaders themselves and to empower one another and yeah, to, to be a good sort of, um, ally in terms of making each other shine, but also grow and develop together.

[00:11:30] So I think there is quite, um, good culture in terms of empowerment, uh, and putting in each other into good, like, nice situations, but also to have fun along the way and, um, yeah, to, to have a good time while working on this. Uh, important at the end of.

[00:11:51] **Rony Chaar:** Very cool. Uh, I admire the initiative and the organization, uh, and I'd love to talk about it for a long time.

[00:12:00] But , uh, I'll move on to the next question for the sake of, you know, uh, not going overtime too much. Um, so I'm wondering, uh, how has the organizational structure evolved throughout the years? You also touched upon this, uh, in the introduction. You mentioned you started out with, uh, a few people, 10 people, and now you have different departments.

[00:12:26] Um, so what, what were elements that may have worked great in the past but needed to change as the organization grew?

[00:12:36] **Miriam:** Hmm. Yeah, I mean I think as for startup, it was super like just a startup, so it was me and my, like the few first people who were basically setting everything up from scratch. So everything from Mag Somi channels to the concept to, yeah.

[00:12:59] Um, like sort of doing internal structures as well. Um, in the staff there were less internal structures, actually no internal structures, um, because we were super dependent on the people that we actually brought in them. Also taking the responsibility of, um, taking action and, and that can, can seem a bit fluffy, but it actually.

[00:13:29] Quite good sense because as no one, any of us had not tried to make an organization like this before, right? So it was new for, for all of us. Um, so taking initiative and just doing, uh, was actually what we were relying on and this alignment across. And it was just like, you go try something and then let's see how it flies and then let's take it from there.

[00:13:57] Uh, I think we were super lucky in the start that a lot of our actions actually were quite successful. Uh, the events we hosted, there were so many, like hundreds, hundreds of people, um, who had attended and we had a huge like, um, interest from our surroundings. Um, so I mean, I think in terms of the development.

[00:14:22] we staffed up a lot on the operational level, so for people to take care of the events and um, also the partnerships. I think that was, uh, as first started the, the first priority. But we then also realized, um, and I think, I think up until six we were like, this is, we can do a HAC practice and you know, just talk together internal sort of alignment without really writing anything down.

[00:14:59] Uh, but I think when we came across six, seven, um, people or when we increased, um, we also realized that, okay, we actually need to have some meetings and. Also because Corona had, so we were like, okay, we need to set up some, uh, like teams meetings to be aligned. We need to formalize things. We need to set up these internal structures because we realized that if we did not do that, then it ultimately led to that, uh, one of our people didn't know about this event or didn't know about this information coming from a partner.

[00:15:43] And ultimately it could least lead to us, um, looking not professional. So it, we needed to sort of increase the, the level of coordination, um, and we needed yeah, like systems to do that. Um, as, for example, slack and teams and um, uh, yeah, folder structures and yeah, stuff like that. Makes sense.

[00:16:14] **Rony Chaar:** And, um, who handles most of the decision making, uh, on these changes?

[00:16:20] Uh, and could you give examples?

[00:16:25] **Miriam:** Mm-hmm. . Um, I think it's a good question. Um, I think what was interesting was that, um, because, um, me and the first people I sort of brought into the organization, we were, we were actually super focused on delivering, so we had less focus on sort of the people, if it makes sense.

[00:16:56] And it sounds horrible, but that is how it is when you have promised, you know, big organizations, partners. That you can deliver stuff, then you are, you can tend to focus a lot on that. And it, it was a good learning because it actually came from sort of the bottom part of the organization. So the associates, they were like, okay, but we don't know what's going on.

[00:17:19] Always like you guys do, because me and, and, and the other ones, we were involved in everything. Right. So it was actually not a need from our end, but it was a need from Yeah, the associates. Um, and the ones who didn't know everything, um, because they hadn't been there from the start. Uh, and it makes per perfectly sense, right?

[00:17:46] Um, so, um, so it was a need that was raised and we are like, yeah, this makes sense. Of course we need to have more structures around this and we also need to prioritize it. So, um, I think from, I think a good example, um, Would be that, uh, for example, , we, um, we had to at some point, um, to change our whole setup.

[00:18:15] Um, we had, uh, yeah, uh, planned these six workshops and we needed to make them virtual because of Corona. And at some point, um, We also needed to get some money in. Uh, and it was really difficult. It's quite difficult in the start when you're, when you're an organization that hasn't proved itself yet, uh, besides hosting maybe one or two events, um, to actually convince corporate partners to invest in you.

[00:18:52] Um, because that is ultimately what you need some money to do stuff, right? Um, and at that point we, we had some meetings around it, uh, but for example, uh, the need for actually documenting, uh, things, um, It turned out to be quite important because if you were not at those meetings, then it just led to you not really knowing what was going on.

[00:19:21] So if you had a day off, or if you were sick or whatever, then you would be totally out of, uh, context because, uh, we would not document anything from those meetings. Um, and then we began to do so to sort of be more inclusive and also to, uh, make sure that everyone were, were on the same page. But that was actually also what led to us getting Monday, um, at a later stage because we needed to sort of have that, uh, tool to capture meeting, uh, uh, meeting notes, uh, or meeting minutes.

[00:20:01] Um, and, and to have it in a, in a structured, structured

[00:20:06] **Rony Chaar:** way. Yeah. So, uh, If I understood correctly, the decision making was mostly coming from the top up in the beginning because the focus was on delivering the projects. And then, uh, you've noticed as the company grew that there were many people at the bottom line that didn't really understand where the decisions were coming from.

[00:20:28] So there needed to be this kind of, um, better communication or possibly, uh, listening more to the bottom line on their ideas and then implementing them in the decision making process.

[00:20:41] **Miriam:** Mm, yes, exactly. I mean, um, so you could say that the need came from the bottom part of the organization, uh mm-hmm. , uh mm-hmm.

[00:20:50] Mm-hmm. . Yeah. It, it was a decision that we took from the other part of the, the organization. Yeah. And it, it was to increase the level of transparency and communication and involve them more in what was going on and. Yeah, as you said yourself, make them part of the decision making, uh, processes.

[00:21:10] **Rony Chaar:** Yeah. And how involved are they today, would you say, because it's still a relatively young organization, so you still, you know, have, uh, probably a lot of promises for clients or partners that you need to keep.

[00:21:27] So, uh, how much, uh, decision making can be, uh, delegated to the bottom line versus, you know, coming from top down?

[00:21:39] **Miriam:** Yeah, because I mean, now we are 30, so we have, um, we have of course a structure, whereas, um, me and the CXO team, which are me and all of the leads, we have a monthly meeting. Uh, sometimes, uh, if there are any like.

[00:21:58] Uh, is it like alerts or if there are any good opportunities that we need to, to discuss before the monthly meetings, then we, we do that. But, but we have monthly meetings, um, and then we discuss sort of new topics, but also, uh, potential changes to the organization and how, uh, how the leads work is that they bring on sort of what the team also would like.

[00:22:29] So, um, the team is having that sort of flexibility to raise things to the leads and then the lead will bring it on to the decision making table, if you can say it like that. We also have monthly meetings with the full team, so the, like all the 30 of us. And then they also have, uh, the opportunity to.

[00:22:51] Raise stuff or say if they need any help or if they would like to develop a new concept. I mean, they have a lot of autonomy, uh, within the organization. I mean, you could basically do like, propose everything and if it makes sense, and if it seems like a good idea, then you can just go fly with it. Um, I think we are quite, um, good at providing people with autonomy and like, if they have the energy.

[00:23:22] So it's like you really have, uh, a lot of opportunity to do what you want, but just like, um, yeah, just make a good case for it and argue why, why it would make sense to, to do or why. Um, for example, we had, um, because we were doing, we are doing, I, I, we did a podcast, um, I think it's, uh, A year back and, um, and some of the, the people within the operations team, they really wanted to do a, an English version of it.

[00:23:57] And then they were like, Hey Miriam, can we do a meeting? And I was like, yeah, let's do it. And then they, yeah, brainstormed. Then we had a good session and now they're getting super close to actually putting, uh, putting it out there. So I mean it's, yeah, it's really not super hierarchical, I think, um, overall, but it's just we have to have some structures on the meetings with also resonates with not being too busy or, um, yeah, or too, uh, not ambitious, so to say.

[00:24:34] **Rony Chaar:** Oh, you actually answered my next question directly, so I don't need to ask, but the question was if you could describe the level of freedom of choice and autonomy in the organization and give an example, and you just did. So that's perfect, . Um, so my last question in this study objective is do you think that the current organizational structure makes it easier to adopt new technologies, or do you think that a more or less hierarchical or strict standards are necessary?

[00:25:07] **Miriam:** I think it's a, it's a really good question because I think one of my key learnings. And that was actually with implementing Monday because it was, um, it was a need that we had from the bottom, but it was also, I mean, we had one who had started, started from the bottom. I was That is, but if we are talking in these terms, uh, she started as an associate and then she became team lead and then she became actually co-president in the end.

[00:25:44] Um, and one of her main issues were this sort of lack of, um, of transparency. Um, but it was also because she really wanted to know everything, what people. Or, or did. Um, so she was slightly micromanager sort of mentality and uh, Monday was then implemented because that sort of accelerated that need. Um, even though like it was also a need for, from the bottom, it came from there.

[00:26:17] But she was like, now I'm like grabbing this ball and then I will do this. Uh, because it's also a, it is an, an implementation that that takes time because it's a behavior change as well. Um, but she, um, but she actually, uh, because at some point then everything was around, uh, reporting in Monday and um, we put it up meetings around.

[00:26:50] That every, everyone should report in Monday. Put all the documents in, um, all the files and everything was around sort of creating transparency and making everything available that, um, that, uh, they actually backfired a bit because people got super tired of being, they felt a little bit micromanaged even though that was not the intention.

[00:27:20] Um, and uh, and at some point, um, they also felt that everything was around internal communication and admin work and not about our purpose. So, uh, because the focus was so much focused around our structures, The fund came out of being a part of a and uh, a lot of people is there for the purpose and the fund.

[00:27:47] So if that is taking out of it, then it's, uh, getting quite rigid. Um, I think that was a really good learning because we hadn't tracked that version of Italy before and I think as she, she then stopped or, yeah, so because she moved to New York. Um, and, and then our sort of learning and evaluation of that was to sort of do things more pragmatically.

[00:28:22] So have meetings that make sense, so these monthly meetings and not have meetings all the time where you have to sort of check in and, you know, be super sort of, um, Not ambitious because we are still ambitious, but it was more like, um, in a stressed driven way because it was so much about reporting, uh, how and why and when people did accept and why.

[00:28:54] Um, so, um, yeah, I mean, I think my point with this was just to, to say that if you drive things too harsh and too sort of management ish, uh, and too strict, then it kills sort of the motivation in people. And, and we, we learned that, uh, the hard way, uh, by, by focusing too much on these internal processes and on Monday and this project management tool, whereas I think we are at a better stage now where it's super autonomous and people are feeling super.

[00:29:32] Yeah, flexible in the way they're working and it's so much more pragmatic, uh, like, and adapted to people's schedule, um, which I think is super great. So, uh, what was your initial person? I can remember

[00:29:48] **Rony Chaar:** if, uh, if you think that this organizational structure makes it easier to adopt new technologies, the one that F[redacted]currently has?

[00:29:56] **Miriam:** Yeah, and yeah, and I think my, my point with this sort of historic, uh, inside was to, to sort of illustrate that I think, uh, at the moment we are at a place where we have learned. Sort of, uh, pros and cons, uh, with using different technologies. Um, and in that sense, uh, we also know how to, to implement if, if we were about to implement something new, uh, how we should do it in a good way, which is not too strict or rigid because people are not really motivated by only talking about systems and reporting and processes.

[00:30:42] So I think we are at a good place where we know that we could do it in a more pragmatic manner. . Yeah. Makes

[00:30:49] **Rony Chaar:** sense. Uh, so I'm going to first of all thank you for the, for sharing all this insightful information, uh, really cool experiences. Um, uh, but I'm going to jump to my next, uh, study objective, which is, uh, to , which is mm-hmm.

[00:31:07] uh, to identify the pains of the current setup and how it affects the organization and its individuals. So what would you say is a typical challenge or difficulty that's faced on a regular basis, uh, at F fla?

[00:31:23] **Miriam:** Mm. I think our main challenge is that it's a volunteer organization and that also means that, um, many of our, uh, team members and team leads and associates, and they are.

[00:31:45] Um, also doing other things in their, in their lives, right? So they are probably having a full-time job or they are, uh, studying and having a part-time job. So, um, that complicates sometimes when we have to do a big marketing push or if we have to do events that we are understaffed, um, because suddenly everyone has exam in that period, or, uh, like I consulted, wasn't consulting, so I was in Norway or Sweden or Germany all the time, so I couldn't really need their physically.

[00:32:26] Uh, so a lot of sort of time management issues. Um, I think by, by having such a volunteer. Set up. Um, I think that is our first, like our main pain point that is sort of the resource allocation at times when we are super busy, that that can be difficult to plan from. Um, I think the other pieces that we are, So many, uh, because we are 30 people.

[00:32:57] Um, and, um, we still, sometimes I think it has gotten a lot better because we have Slack, uh, and we just hired an HR person. Um, but sometimes to have sort of streamlined, uh, processes around recruitment. For example, and onboarding and off boarding, um, that has been missing. So, uh, yeah, and that could be super fragmented because the team leads would just do whatever, right?

[00:33:33] So some would do cases and three interviews, although would just be like, oh, you are my friend, you're hired, um, . And that does not really, uh, work. So Yeah. Um, so we, we, we got an HR person being like, okay, uh, streamline, streamline, streamlining basically the, those, uh,

[00:33:55] **Rony Chaar:** super important functions. Yeah.

[00:33:58] **Miriam:** So, um, yeah, I think that that is the second piece that we are quite many and, and the commitment sometimes to, to investigate how we are doing things can be, can be fragmented.

[00:34:13] Makes sense.

[00:34:15] **Rony Chaar:** Um, so you actually touched upon this question by saying that you've hired an HR person to help with this, you know, distortion of how things are done. Um, but uh, if you can think of another challenge, uh, and how the structure may have helped you deal with it, I would also like to hear about that.

[00:34:38] So for example, um, uh, since the organization is volunteer based and because now there's more autonomy and you know, the decision making is influenced by the bottom line, what challenge does that create and how do you deal with it? Mm

[00:34:57] **Miriam:** mm

[00:35:01] So I think, yeah. Which challenge has it created? I think, um,

[00:35:11] I think one of the challenges are that, um,

[00:35:19] sort of, so, uh, sometimes there is a knowledge gap. So, um, for example, there can be, um, from the people who are professionals. I think it's, it's, it's a strange, but it's also weakness because the people who are professionals, they are at a stage where they're more senior. They have experience, they know how to do an acting campaign, how to set up, um, professional, um, partnerships, how to negotiate with big corporations like Bain or KPMG or whatever, whatever.

[00:35:59] Um, but um, Some, uh, some students, and this is actually not, uh, it doesn't really have to do with age necessarily, just have to do with experience. So some some of them have more, they need sort of a bit more experience to sort of catch up with that level of expertise. Um, and I think overall there's a good flow in sort of teaching the younger ones how to do things.

[00:36:29] Um, but, uh, sometimes, uh, especially on the partnership side, it it, it can vary a little bit, uh, in our quality depending on who we have, uh, as, as, yeah, as team members on, uh, on the different services and activities. And I think, yeah, I think that knowledge gap internally sometimes, uh, can. Could I the quality a little bit, um, on this part?

[00:37:04] Um,

[00:37:05] **Rony Chaar:** yeah. How do you deal with the, with the difference in, uh, professional competencies? Mm. So how do you, uh, help, uh, you know, people that may not have as much experience as others? Hmm.

[00:37:23] **Miriam:** Um, what we typically do is that to sort of, um, that the leads are the most experienced one, and then they can guide and coach, uh, the younger ones and the associates and the team.

[00:37:35] And if the leads does not know except or why, then they would always come to me or to, uh, the other, uh, president. Um, Or we would, uh, basically, uh, pull some information out from experts in, in our network. Um, so I think we are trying to sort of, um, coach in that way. And I think also because the organization is quite flat, so I mean, if people have questions about, for example, podcast or whatever, then they just ask across.

[00:38:14] So I think we have a quite good stage of psychological safety that everyone are just bouncing ideas with everyone. Um, but I still think, um, sometimes it, it's also, yeah, it's very much dependent on sort of, of the leads and if they have the time to, to do that coaching, because sometimes they're also busy and then they're like, yeah, just do something ish and.

[00:38:44] And then they're happy with that. So I think it's, uh, I mean, I think we do our best and also the leads to, to coach, but, uh, sometimes time is, is, uh, uh, yeah, constraint, uh, and, and provides limitations because, uh, they don't have the, the availability to, to do the necessary Yeah. Feedback sessions and all that.

[00:39:08] **Rony Chaar:** Makes sense. Um, so now we will be jumping to the technology adoption, uh, part of the interview. Um, my next study objective is to identify the challenges of adopting work management software within, uh, your organizational setup. So I'm going to copy paste into the chat the definition I have for work management software.

[00:39:36] Mm-hmm. , it's a very broad definition, as you will see. Um,

[00:39:46] So it basically denotes any software that can handle word processing, desktop publishing, account management, billing or payroll database management. It basically any software that can help with work tasks, uh, internally, uh, or with communication with external partners, for example. Uh, yeah, so anything like that.

[00:40:12] You already mentioned Monday Slack. Um, so my first question is, uh, if you could recall a time when you adopted the work management software, why the software was adopted, if it was in response to something, you know, and how did you go about adopting it? Uh, you could stick with one of the software you've mentioned already, for example, Monday.

[00:40:38] Um, yeah. So,

[00:40:41] **Miriam:** yeah, I mean, Yeah, I think each of the softwares were adapted for, for different reasons. So Monday, that was because we had, uh, an increased need to streamline things across the organization. So we needed to have finance communicating with marketing, with, um, operations, with, um, networks, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:41:15] We needed, um, marketing to be able to communicate, yeah, with all the other departments and like we needed that sort of cross sectional communication and, um, file sharing. So that was why Monday was deployed. Um, I mean, we had also used Asana. Tried to in install this and that went sideways. Uh, that was not a success.

[00:41:44] Um, yeah. Uh, I think we also, we also do have the, the office, uh, or the Outlook office package with Word and PowerPoint, Excel. Um, and that is because we have a need to Yeah. To write things down in Word, um, to, yeah, to save notes and stuff like that. And PowerPoint for external presentations and excel for our budgeting and finances.

[00:42:17] **Rony Chaar:** And, and how did you go about adopting these different software?

[00:42:23] **Miriam:** Yeah, I think, um, the good thing is, um, I mean, most of the people know. It's about like Word and PowerPoint and Excel and how to use that. So I think that is, um, that works fine. I think, uh, Asana was not a success because,

[00:42:47] **Rony Chaar:** uh,

[00:42:49] **Miriam:** for different re reasons, for example, it was not probably, um, like the, the, I think the process around the implementation was not great.

[00:43:04] Um, the one who did it was not capable enough to sort of do the training and introduce people to, to, to the software. So it let you, no one actually used it. Whereas in Monday we had a huge focus on sort of how to use it, where to put things, how to, uh, Yeah, put, uh, upload stuff in there and how we should as a joint team work in there together.

[00:43:38] And that worked well in terms of understanding, but it made people sick of Monday because , they felt, uh, that it was a reporting tool rather than a, a tool that could actually help them. And I think, I think that is actually the, the piece that, that needs or the learning that when you do these implementations internally, you should always focus on how it helps them and not how you think yourself is the smartest way of using it.

[00:44:12] Right. So I think, um, yeah, and Slack is also, it's super straightforward. Uh, the, the dis like the user experience is super easy to apply, so that was quite easy as well. Um, for people to manage and use and

[00:44:30] **Rony Chaar:** yeah. So what kind of challenges or barriers did you face during the adoption of these different software?

[00:44:39] Maybe not office, uh, since you mentioned that it's typical that people already have this knowledge when they come into the organization, but, uh, you mentioned Asana was not a success, um, meanwhile Monday did. Um, but what were the challenges you faced while adopting these software?

[00:44:58] **Miriam:** Yeah, I think, um, I think for it was the willingness to, to sort of use it and also, um, I think the, I mean, yeah, I think that was it.

[00:45:11] Uh, the, the main driver, I think the second driver was at, um, it was. Difficult for them to understand, like why they should use it. Uh, why now and why, like, yeah, why, basically? So I think, um, I think those two reasons,

[00:45:34] **Rony Chaar:** um,

[00:45:34] **Miriam:** it was not really relevant for them, I think, and it, it was more difficult while Monday, uh, was relevant.

[00:45:43] Uh, it was straightforward, um, at least for, for this crew of people. Um, yeah. But I think the issue or the challenge, main challenge here was to sort of, um, have people making it, like seeing it as a value add, uh, for the daily operational, um, processes. Um, yeah, I think that was the main challenge, uh, because it, it's a new behavior going into another system instead of using.

[00:46:18] Google

[00:46:19] **Rony Chaar:** and Drive.

[00:46:20] **Miriam:** So yeah, that is something that has come over quite some time,

[00:46:26] **Rony Chaar:** I would say. Um, yeah. Why, why do you think there was this, uh, difference in perception regarding Asana and Monday? Because, uh, they are both meant to fulfill the same function, right? Mm.

[00:46:44] **Miriam:** Yeah. Uh, I think it was, um, because from a logical perspective, there's not a big difference, uh, between Asana and Monday.

[00:46:55] Um, I don't think Asana is difficult to use either from like an, a more objective view. I think it was the timing. So we, people were super busy, um, in that period of time. Um, so having. Admin sort of work pushed over their very busy schedule, um, was, uh, something that was not, uh, nice for them. So I think, uh, what we did was to wait a bit and then, uh, or I mean this, um, person tried to pull through over a period of time, but it didn't really like, resonate with the majority.

[00:47:40] Um, so we packed it and then when we did this like sort of actual implementation, we then chose Monday because then it was a different person. And, um, I think the timing was just better, um, in terms of people having actually the capacity to focus on how it works.

[00:48:02] **Rony Chaar:** Um, Yeah. Interesting. And why did you choose to switch to Monday and not, uh, stick to Asana, but, you know, try to implement it in the better timing?

[00:48:14] **Miriam:** Hmm. It was actually not for a particular reason. I mean, the person who wanted to implement it was just super happy about Monday. Uh, and I mean, it fulfilled our sort of needs. Um, so it was just, yeah, and we had a bad experience with Asana, so it was like, let's just not talk about Asana. Let's see if a new, a new brain can sort of, um, bring a better narrative around,

[00:48:53] **Rony Chaar:** uh, the system.

[00:48:54] Yeah. And before, uh, Going in and trying to implement these, uh, softwares. Did you have expectations of the challenges? Mm,

[00:49:11] **Miriam:** no. I think, I mean, because I, I also worked with digital implementations, uh, professionally, so I think, uh, I know about like change management and sort of resistance to, uh, change and digital systems and, and all that.

[00:49:30] So I think I was aware of these, um, sort of pitfalls. I think I didn't see it as an issue because I think, or I think my anticipation was that it's more difficult in larger organizations and because it's quite a young crowd of people, I would just assume that they were. Quite, uh, not happy necessarily, but that they would be more open towards change and also more used to just adapting new software because we do that all the time, uh, as young people.

[00:50:12] Um, but, uh, , yeah. So, yeah, no, I, I didn't, I didn't actually think that it would be such a challenge to be fairly honest, uh, even though I have the theoretical background, but I thought this segment would not apply in the same, uh, yeah, in the same way,

[00:50:33] **Rony Chaar:** which, yeah. Which the average grown up person, uh, would behave.

[00:50:40] Yeah, that's fair actually. I mean, Uh, part of why I'm interested in doing this study is because it's assumed that, you know, smaller, decentralized organizations would have an easier time with adopting software because there aren't that many people. Maybe it's more fluid. There's not so much rigid, you know, check boxes to do, but at the end of the day, the challenges are still there.

[00:51:04] And so it's the good to have this insight and this experience so that, you know, people might be better prepared in, uh, upcoming scenarios.

[00:51:17] **Miriam:** Yeah, it's, it's, I think it's super interesting because, I mean, yeah, I think, I think my, my learning in that regard, Just about timing that if they have so many things that they need to, like, take care of, if their capacity is too sort of filled up, uh, then it's, it's not gonna be successful.

[00:51:41] But if, if they have capacity, then I think they, they're, they're willing to do it and, and it, yeah. And open towards it. But I think timing and capacity are, are key words

[00:51:53] **Rony Chaar:** in this, in this regard. Yeah. And, um, timing is a very interesting aspect here, but I also want to go back to their perception of, uh, the programs that they tried to adopt.

[00:52:10] Mm-hmm. . Uh, besides timing, do you think that the, uh, perceived usefulness of Asana was lower than Monday? Or was it basically the same for both?

[00:52:25] **Miriam:** Mm. I think it's, it's an interesting question because you cannot compare one to one because, uh, some of the people who were there when we tried to implement, implement Asana were not there when the implementation of Monday took place.

[00:52:45] So, um, you cannot compare one to one. But I think, yeah, I think, I think at the time, Asana, um, was on the, on the sort of discussion board. I think some were more founded, more useful than others. So I think it also coming downs to sort of personality types. So do you have a need for structures? Do you have a need for.

[00:53:18] You know, having everything readily available, um, to have this sort of super systematic place where you can find all your files and you can access everyone else's files. Um, if you have this very huge need for structure and sort of transparency, then I think, you know, we had a few types of those and, and they were super happy about, uh, Asana, um, and found that useful.

[00:53:50] But we also had some people who were like, yeah, it's a good idea, but we don't really care. Um, . Yeah. Uh, and I don't think the perception was different. I think the, the usefulness was the same from each of the systems. I think. Um, what just, what was sort of just different was that, um, They were more engaged in, in Monday at the time because they Yeah.

[00:54:23] Could see that it made sense to have, um, more shared folders, which were also updated and all that. Because one of the elements was also that we had a lot of old files and it was difficult for new people to, to understand what was new, what was old, what was, uh, sort of the current practice. Um, and that need was bigger, uh, when we tried to install Monday because we were more people also because we had grown in that period of time.

[00:55:00] So I think, I don't think that, okay. To sum up, I don't think there was. Like the overall perception that Monday was better than Asana was. Like, I think that would have probably been the same, but I think they found at the time Monday more useful because they had the capacity and there was also a need in that period of time to to sort of, yeah, to update stuff and, and yeah, get that sort of streamlining.

[00:55:32] **Rony Chaar:** Yeah. You also mentioned that you believe that, uh, both programs had kind of the same objective usability, so they were both, you know, as easy or as difficult as each other to kind of adopt and learn. Do you think that this, uh, is also reflected by the associates that were working at F[redacted]or was there a difference in how people perceived the objective use of usability of each of these programs?

[00:56:05] **Miriam:** So if there was like, um, difference across sort of seniority,

[00:56:11] **Rony Chaar:** uh, not necessarily seniority, just a difference of opinion regarding how easy it will be to actually use, uh, these two different programs. Of course, the person who was super excited about Monday was probably like, oh, it's the easiest thing ever.

[00:56:26] And there might be people that, uh, you know, agreed or disagreed, but was this, uh, super, you know, different across the board or more even?

[00:56:36] **Miriam:** Mm. I don't think that, um, that there were any who were like, this is really difficult to use because Monday is quite straightforward. Um, and I think if , we would know because people are quite, I mean, people really speak their mind, uh, which is.

[00:57:03] Brilliant. Um, so I think we would know if it was a crap tool or if they didn't understand it or if there were like anything else. I mean, I think, no, I actually think it was quite straightforward for most of them. I mean, the only, uh, things that were like raised was like, okay, but where can I then find that and where is the contract, where are the contracts?

[00:57:29] Where are the, like where are the different things? And I think that was only in the start when they sort of learned where the folders, where the different sections were and the different folders. So I think, yeah, no, I actually think it was, it was quite fine across, um, the levels and also for the associates.

[00:57:52] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Uh, I can see that we've been in a meeting for an hour now. Uh, would you mind if we go a bit over time, because I do still have two study objectives. Yes. But I will try to speed it up. Um, cool. So my next study objective is to identify, uh, steps taken, if any, to mitigate risks of adoption, uh, in the future.

[00:58:19] Uh, so I, I don't have any strict questions in this, uh, section. It's very, uh, determined by what we've spoken about already. So, um, based on your experiences with trying to adopt different software, uh, have you adopted any preemptive strategies for the future, uh, that would help you adopt, uh, avoid risks that you've faced?

[00:58:46] **Miriam:** Hmm. Yeah. Yeah, I think, um, I think. some of the learnings, and you can also call it a strategy if you would like that. But is that to have sort of a good training plan? That is one of them. And because we also did that with the Monday, and um, that is just always good practice to have like, uh, some workshops, uh, saying like how you should use it, how it makes value, follow up on it, and sort of try to build that behavioral change into the system.

[00:59:25] Um, so training both, um, before and, and after installing it. Um, I think, um, setting it up correctly. So the functional design of it is also quite relevant. Um, If we talk about the, the functionalities that it's set up in a way that it makes sense to, to the people who are using it. Um, what we did was that we actually, we sort of did the framework, but then we actually asked them to set it up themselves.

[01:00:02] And that, uh, worked, I think it worked quite nicely because then they could unfold their needs within the system. Uh, and it was not dictated by anyone else, so it was to sort of, yeah, make it value adding for, for their processes, uh, the best way possible. Um, um, so the functionalities that, that they match is the second one.

[01:00:31] And then I think, um, yeah. The third one would be to, when you. , yeah. Set up a, a system or if you want to do an implementation, uh, for some reason, then make sure that it's aligned with the historic , um, historic, uh, how can you say, not disruptions, but I think for example, I think if we have tried to install Asana once again, I actually think it could have been.

[01:01:08] It could have ended up chaotic because people, some of the people have been there for the first Asana failed implementation would've been like, why are we trying to do this again? Because they would have been have, you know, uh, negative emotions around the system. Um, so I think it's, it's good to take sort of the history of the organization into perspective to, to plan accordingly, but also taking the current capacity.

[01:01:36] So, um, make sure that you time it in, in, in a period of time where they actually have the capacity to, to learn and, and yeah, understand, uh, and yeah, take in new, uh, how can you say behavioral, um, changes into their, um, current

[01:02:01] **Rony Chaar:** processes. Interesting. Uh, thank you. And, uh, I will move on to my last study objective.

[01:02:12] Um, so it's, uh, about determining ways academia or industry may be able to support organizations like F[redacted]and their software adoption endeavors. So, uh, how do you think, first of all, being in Denmark has helped the organization in general and specifically with technology adoption?

[01:02:36] **Miriam:** Mm. So I think it's also mentioned briefly that, uh, because it's, I mean, people in Italy are tops 35, um, and I think, I think overall between 20 and 35.

[01:02:53] And that also means that people are. Rather young. Right? And they know about technology. Um, I would also say in some sense, privileged, uh, in the way that they have an education, they have had phones, many of them since they were young and, you know, they know computers and have grown up with them and all that.

[01:03:18] Um, so I think they're quite easy to teach, uh, like new systems. But again, you can be, I mean, surprised, uh, in some sense. Um, but I mean, I think if, if they're willing to learn, then they're fully capable. So I think it's more about willingness and the mindset around if they want to or not. And if they have sort of, yeah.

[01:03:51] Um, That positive thinking around that they want to learn something new because I think, uh, most, most of our system nowadays are also quite simple because we know that humans just want simplicity in, in the user experience and it has to be easy to use and all this. So I think it's, it's quite straightforward from, for most of the people in the Nordics and especially also the, the younger ones.

[01:04:21] Um, so it's more about like willingness to actually explore it and be curious about it, which is, which is the challenge. Yeah.

[01:04:31] **Rony Chaar:** Cool. Yeah. Makes sense. Um, , I also want to ask about, uh, what external resources do you often use in order to deliver your products, services, or to just get work done internally?

[01:04:50] **Miriam:** What, uh, sorry, what resources?

[01:04:53] **Rony Chaar:** Yes, external resources. So outside of the organization to learn about, uh, in order to get work done or to help deliver, uh, proj uh, products or services. Um, I think you briefly mentioned, uh, external help, um, but I, I don't remember in which capacity exactly. So if you could also explain that.

[01:05:24] **Miriam:** Yeah. I think, I mean, to deliver our services, because I would say it is sort of a consulting services, what we do because it's leadership programs. So what we do is that we, of course, because knowledge is our product essentially, um, I mean we use quite a lot from. Current sort of news. Um, so, um, that is both nationally but also internationally.

[01:05:56] So that can be everything from Howard Business Review. It can be everything from Burson, which is the Danish, uh, business magazine, um, the internet, whatever is sort of happening at the moment, um, for our marketing and sort of that distribution, uh, or the trends that are in society. We also take that into our program.

[01:06:18] So for example, um, resilience and, uh, quiet, quitting, uh, you know, some of these tendencies that we see, uh, we take that and, and build sort of something out of that. So I would say general news, both internally and, and, and internationally. And then also, Uh, we have speakers coming in, uh, both, um, yeah. Um, from the business, uh, industry.

[01:06:49] Um, yeah, other consultancies, um, partner organizations, McKinsey, b Bain, we have like a lot of external speakers to provide, um, good insights and, and yeah, and knowledge as well. Um, what do we have else? Yeah, I think, I think news that, um, and then I would say general, uh, education, um, because many of the, it sounds a bit weird, but many of the people in, in Italy, myself included, is also educated within psychology.

[01:07:33] So having that fundamental understanding of human behavior is something that we. Apply in different settings within our leadership program. Cool. I'm not sure. Did that answer your question?

[01:07:49] **Rony Chaar:** Yeah. Yes.

[01:07:54] Yes. Don't worry. It did. And you also answered, uh, uh, the next question actually, because I was going to ask how educational institutions, uh, influence the organization. So knowing that, you know, people studied psychology, which influences probably the culture also, and, uh, communication. But, uh, yes. I also specifically wanted to ask, uh, how you utilize these resources.

[01:08:21] So when you get this knowledge, how do you use it?

[01:08:25] **Miriam:** Mm, yeah. Um, I think what we try to empower a lot, uh, in Italy is. That our team is quite diverse. I mean, we have people from all over. And even though, um, I just said like we are all quite young, I think that is something which is, uh, less diverse, that we are within sort of the same age group, uh, of 20 to 35.

[01:08:50] But I mean, people are from like different universities. I think almost all Danish universities are represented, uh, everything from cs, ku, um, journalist, the journalist school, um, uh, we have a hospital university at the university. Uh, like all, all different universities and educational backgrounds, both within.

[01:09:21] Um, more creative fuels and uh, to very financial fuels to, yeah. Uh, more, yeah, more people, uh, related topics. Um, so I think, uh, we are trying to sort of utilize that, uh, knowledge space because we are aware that different, um, talents but also different knowledge bases are good for different roles. So, for example, the people we have in marketing, they are super great with so many and communication, and our journalists, um, and the people we have in finance are having a more, like, are studying more financial background.

[01:10:09] Um, Yeah, I think we are trying to sort of, uh, utilize the strengths from, from each person. And again, what we then get from the outside is something that we are converting into our products. So, for example, if we have external speakers from, let's say McKenzie or whatever, um, then we are doing our best to sort of use it in our products.

[01:10:38] So, for example, at an event, um, they could, they often give some tips, let's say three advices or whatever. Um, what we then do is that we have, for example, now initiated a process of writing a book where we will collect all the knowledge from many of these brilliant speakers. Um, to like, uh, you know, eight, eight, uh, best tips for young, uh, people who are entering the workforce.

[01:11:12] Uh, I think that is a really good, um, example of that. It's, um, also, for example, we learned at some point that, um, there are not, not, uh, a lot of, uh, women represented in media. Um, and now we are building a role model database where it's super easy to find, uh, women who are experts within different fields for journalists.

[01:11:41] Um, I think, I mean, I think we are, you know, you, it's not su it's not that we have a general approach on how we utilize the knowledge. It's more like we capture some tendencies or knowledge and then we convert it into a solution. Um, or something that we think makes sense or it could be of demand. So, um, I mean it's the same with the podcast.

[01:12:06] Uh, we, we, we learned that it was super value adding for people or young women in, in particular to learn about, um, fake failures actually. So learn about from super high level C-suite people, um, get their learnings and so we made a podcast. So instead of having one event where this super cool person who is CEO of let's Microsoft for example, um, is only talking to these 200 women, then we could do a podcast and then we could distribute it equally to a lot of women and men for that matter.

[01:12:49] So I think we're always trying to figure out how we can work smarter and. And create more impact with the knowledge that, that we gain. Um, but it's quite iterative, so it's always like building on and, and getting Yeah. Smarter every day and, uh, improving already existing products, uh, all the time.

[01:13:14] **Rony Chaar:** Yeah,

[01:13:17] it's super interesting. Um, so, uh, this is my last question. Um, can you think of ways, uh, academia or industry may be able to support your organization further?

[01:13:31] **Miriam:** Mm, I actually think we need a tech person. We need it like strong, like solid people within that because we really want to sort of expand internationally and you can do that by having a good platform for it.

[01:13:52] Um, and you can like do it in, that's like being super rigid but in two ways. Either you can do it internally or externally, and we don't have the internal, um, knowledge actually within that field. I just said we were diverse and we have a consultant internally who is good at, you know, updating our WordPress and our WordPress, um, and, you know, doing sort of the day to day operations.

[01:14:21] But one thing is being able to do that. And another thing is to build a community online that is more tech savvy, um, skills that is needed. Um, And I think we would need that to, to expand further. So I think, um, yeah, and we don't have it internally and then you have to buy it and, um, and that is quite expensive.

[01:14:48] So, uh, I think that is actually our sort of next project, um, next year to get the money in to fund, uh, like a more sustainable digital expansion.

[01:15:05] **Rony Chaar:** Yeah.

[01:15:08] Miriam, thank you so much for this interview. I'm sorry we went, uh, quite a bit overtime .

[01:15:15] **Miriam:** Yeah, but I think it's because I'm talking too much. I mean, I'm just, I just love talking about it. Italy . That's great.

[01:15:23] **Rony Chaar:** Uh, and I loved hearing about it and, uh, I, I almost didn't want to stop you, but just for the sake of, you know, uh, keeping the interview within the timeframe, um, yes.

[01:15:36] Uh, it's super cool. So I'll stop the recording now.

D. Sally

Rony Chaar: So first of all, thank you for agreeing to interview with me just to do a quick recap. I am looking into the challenges of adopting work management software in decentralized organizational structures. And basically, I'm interviewing people from small and medium enterprises. Were involved in this in the process of adopting. A work management software. So please tell me a bit about the company. You've worked that.

Sally Öztürk: Yeah, so prior to my current company. I worked at [redacted] Capital so it's a It's a, it's a bc private equity and a company that basically supports and invest in several startups. So that was the central setup. So we had the. So I was basically, I was hired to to work in the central team and my role was to, to manage up to five people within my team. And also, I worked a lot with different startups that we were investing in.

Rony Chaar: Cool. And would you say that [redacted] is passed its survival stage. so,

Sally Öztürk: Yes.

Sally Öztürk: 100%. Yes.

Rony Chaar: Great. So the first set of questions, I'm going to ask are all about understanding the Either decentralized or centralized structural setup of [redacted]. The organization's characteristics intentions etc. So in your own words could you define the organizational structure of [redacted]?

Sally Öztürk: Mm-hmm. Yes. So, we had the central team in [redacted], and there was basically, just the team could define processes or define in some cases, like budgets. And they will definitely like everyone in the team were in a lot involved in terms of decision making process within each startups. so, Yeah, the central team basically had, let's say experts in different areas. So experts within marketing experts, within a product and experts within yeah, design and development etc. So the central team had everyone who could basically just be part of the decision-making process from the beginning. So,

Sally Öztürk: In the sense, it was I would call it centralized.

Sally Öztürk: And but it wasn't like, you know, all the decisions were coming from top down. It was more of like a conversation and because the startups didn't have enough resources to hire experts, so they would basically just come to the [redacted] team and get insights or feedback or even sometimes. Yeah. Just like, you know, hands-on experience and so it was more like a conversation with with different startups. I don't know if this answers your question, it was a bit different in the sense of like it's not a traditional structure, I would say and everything is very Everything, was very flat and you could definitely impact the the different processes. And if you were basically, if you were placed

Sally Öztürk: The central team in the Central [redacted] team.

Rony Chaar: So this is great. I have a follow-up question about this. Well, could you explain what central what you mean by Central team and could you tell me about the different units and apartments in [redacted]?

Sally Öztürk: Yeah, to buy Central Team. I mean, well the team is when the company the [redacted] basically so they invest in startups and basically Buys or purchases some part of different startups, right? So there's a bit of like there's a bit of a process there, meaning that the company like [redacted] had the right to interfere, or maybe they had the right to to kind of

Sally Öztürk: change the decisions or impact the outcomes so they had the the say quite a bit of saying and In terms of, yeah, like half the, the startups would evolve. I don't know if it makes sense. In, for that matter. We actually called it as the central team because most of the decisions were taken within the central team, of course, together with the sea levels in different startups. But then if the central team it, if they take a decision based on like, let's say the marketing budgets for different startups, then there would actually like they would impact the startups decision for like, for how much they would spend within marketing.

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Sally Öztürk: So the, the stand-ups were quite dependent on the central team. Because they also didn't have enough resources. They didn't have enough budgets and they didn't in most cases, they actually didn't even have experience, like running a business or forming different departments, like marketing. And not. So they were quite dependent on the on the Central team. So, there was the, I don't know if it makes sense, but that was the, the structure. This way in the beginning I said it's a bit untraditional but it's it's the same with every other VC, basically, if, you know, if the wherever the money comes from, you kind of have to follow through or you have to be dependent on the, on the company. So that was the structure and the central team had people. As I mentioned before, they had people who were like

Sally Öztürk: Who had really like, you know, years of experience in their fields. So they had the, I would say they had to write to, to kind of shape how the startups could form like, departments like within their organizations, or it was a very fluid structure, actually. So, I was personally, so I was sitting in the marketing And so I was highly involved in like, you know, in different startups. So I was basically, I wasn't actually working with my team so much. I was based in the central team but I had tasks for the startups that we were working with I don't know if it makes sense.

Rony Chaar: Yeah, it does.

Sally Öztürk: That. Yeah. So there was structure. So we had marketing team and then we had the right and I'll just pause my notifications. Yeah. And so we had the marketing team, we had the We had developers. And then we had the, we had finance. And then we had the yeah, then we had the sea level like the co-founders, CEO and whatnot. and and yeah, the tasks were

Sally Öztürk: Divided between, like each of these apartments, kind of like the sea level would be very much interested in, you know, the growth and the budgets and more like high level and decisions. I was very executional like developers as well. So, we would basically just step in and kind of to stuff. But yeah, so there was the there was a structure.

Rony Chaar: Interesting. So my next question is, How has this organizational structure evolved throughout the years were there elements that worked great in the past but needed to change.

Sally Öztürk: Mmm. So first of all, everything was very agile and very lean. And so meaning that we actually, I think it's also because everyone was coming from from tech background in a way. So, we kind of, you know, adapted changes very quickly tested. So, it wasn't very difficult to kind of bring in new platforms to test, for instance, because everyone had that mentality. So it wasn't a long process, you know, like adopting new technologies or platforms and whatnot. So it was very in the sense, it was very agile. So, I would say everything actually, like, if something wasn't working, we could drop like in a matter of week.

Sally Öztürk: Like old days even. So it was very easy to to identify or wasn't working or what was kind of like dragging us down and then change it instantly. So, I think it's also kind of tied to working with startups. it's just you have to be agile and you have to change things very quickly and you have to be like very productive and in the sense of like,

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Sally Öztürk: Yeah. Like you have usually small budgets and then you have to, you know, deliver as a company. As a startup, you have to prove that you have to prove your concept or your product and you have to start growing. So that's that's a very big pressure. So you cannot just, you know, sit back and wait until some something works out. You have to basically like we were really changing things like In yeah, like in days and weeks. So it was a very rare thing that we actually kept. Thing, like the status quo in the company. So everything was very agile. I think it's also because like

Sally Öztürk: Like I was, for instance, working very closely with the sea level, so it was a very flat structure. So you could actually just go and say, Okay, this XYZ isn't working or We have to make things a little more structured. So, before I joined though the I think the team was a bit like unstructured in the sense of so we had some marketing people and and they just had I think Like, I'm very like concerned about, like priorities generally. So before I joined, there was a bit of like and I would say It wasn't so like the priority is very set.

Sally Öztürk: Because they didn't really have a manager and then it was just basically, they were taking tasks as they as they came. And and so that kind of made things a bit difficult in terms of like, you know, they will make for instance, spend time on like small tasks, all the tasks that wouldn't actually matter so much in the long run or even the short term, it was just, you know, someone mentioned that okay. It would be nice to kind of like do this or finish this tasks and what not. So they would actually go ahead and do that without really thinking so much about like does it make sense for the company? Or is it going to actually move the needle? Should we even spend time on that? So it before that matter, it was a bit unstructured.

Sally Öztürk: and that was mainly because of the because of the lack of manager or like someone kind of you know and giving directions but, Yeah. So that was one of the things that we actually drastically changed immediately. And, and yeah, then I would say, like, throughout my time it was, it was kind of like a well-working machine. So everything was moving, really, really fast.

Rony Chaar: So you felt that the decision making before you came in was very scattered and there was no one direction and this kind of happens and flatter structures that you felt like there wasn't need to move towards a more one direction top down approach,…

Sally Öztürk: Hmm.

Rony Chaar: which in this case, you were the manager. So I guess you were directing a lot of what needs to be done first, and how to prioritize these different tasks

Sally Öztürk: Yeah, I mean it's nice to work in a flat structures, but then there is always and wherever you go. Even in my current company, there is always a need and for a person that can actually accept the direction and said priorities, otherwise as you said, it just gets scattered around and people just spend time on things that don't matter. And there's no coordination between teams. So that I think there is one of the biggest challenges for startups. so and that in Denmark, I mean I have only worked that you know structure like flat structures or companies where there was no hierarchy and everything was very flat and it was very it was a big pleasure to work in this setups but no matter what, there is a need for someone to to kind of

Sally Öztürk: Gather the team or even the organization to set you know, long-term and short-term plans. And so that is a must in my company. We yes, when I joined the marketing team, we didn't have this structure and and we started like I think the first thing was to kind of We did like we started working in this weekly sprints I know Sprint is usually used in the product field or design field but we did this weekly spins meaning that we were. We had some long-term plans or directions but in in the case of startups it's always

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Sally Öztürk: Easier to set the long-term plans because you just want to grow the company, you have to do, whatever brings the like grows the company or brings money. So that's the That's very clear that's never gonna change. But then you have to set, you know, like we started setting, you know like tasks on a weekly basis to like or identify task the the word the highest priority and we could easily then drop things that didn't matter. So by doing that I think we actually improved like within the course of a couple of months. And yeah.

Rony Chaar: and this is all very interesting by the way, I just noticed that I'm that work, you know, running out of time because there's a lot of questions and I don't want to take Too long.

Sally Öztürk: One. Sorry, I don't, yeah.

Rony Chaar: So, but to build upon what you're saying. So, How much of the team was influencing the decision, making in your position as manager? So how much influence on the direction that they have individually?

Sally Öztürk: I would say quite a lot. It's like some of the decisions like the the expected growth for different startups. That was that wasn't something you could change, really? Because it comes from like that kind of decisions. Usually come from top down. The sea level designs. Okay, we are expecting you to grow. I don't know. 10% year over year. That's not, I mean you can change it but then you need to really have like a good argument as to why we shouldn't expect 10%. And then you have to kind of like, you know, like list the reasons and then have like very long conversations to change that because that usually comes from yeah, sea level and they, whenever they said this targets, they make research and whatnot. So this kind of Unbudgets

Sally Öztürk: That's something like you can always influence budgets for different platforms. But the overall budget, for instance, like the marketing budget that is that usually comes from C. So that's these two like the growth or whatever is expecting expected from next year and the budgets Yeah, it's unless you are like I mean I I like I could influence but it was usually the case where I could actually influence the budgets for different initiatives. Like, I could say we can spend X y's that amount in. Let's say Google or in this channel and whatnot. But the overall budget that was In most cases that's usually set by the by the sea.

Rony Chaar: Expense. And what about the freedom of choice and autonomy when it comes to how each person is doing their individual jobs, so beyond budgets and the visions and strategy in terms of data, they work Were the people working there able to kind of do it their own way? Or was there a specific way that they needed to learn how to do things?

Sally Öztürk: like yeah, I think everyone had the autonomy and depending on your I would say experience but I think everyone had the, you know, Yeah, everyone had the flexibility. to do their job as they wanted, but there are certain things, of course, you need to, you need to know,

Sally Öztürk: Yeah, I guess it's usually the case that you need to build a bit of trust and like showing that you actually know what you're doing. It's mainly because Like, especially paid, like, if you are working paid, that's, that's usually the, the department that has that has autonomy. But then, they always have to prove that whatever they are doing works. So that they can keep doing their job with the like with more flexibility. I don't know if it makes sense because it's usually the company's money that is in question. So there is usually a lot of involvement from. Yeah, from managers or sea level. But in like in yeah in my previous company we had like Yeah we had all the autonomy we needed to to do our job.

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Rony Chaar: Makes sense. Um, I want to ask about if you think that this structure makes it easier to adopt new technologies or if you think that more structure and more standards or hierarchy would actually make it easier to adopt new technologies,

Sally Öztürk: I think the the yeah, and this structure really allows you to adapt or learn and try new technologies because there is the space and you have the autonomy and you always have budgets to to decide what to test and what to adopt what to change. So these are small details for for, in these kind of structures. Like, in my previous look, nobody would care what kind of platform you started. I mean, you would, of course, share it with the company, but it didn't matter like, you know, if it was Jiro or if it was something else. So it You could really try and test as long as it made it. It made sense. And as long as it actually increased the either, the productivity or

Sally Öztürk: Yeah, the way we did the improved the way we worked so it was I think in this structures, then you don't also have to go and ask like a hundred people. In terms of what they think and what should we adopt when there are so many opinions, it gets very difficult to to you know, Move forward. That's the. I think that's the problem with. Yeah. I mean I don't know if it's too structure. It's also difficult because there is a process for every single decision. And I don't like that and I don't think it makes it easy to. You know, to be agile. You can also you can create your own process. If something isn't working, you should be able to just go ahead and try different things and find the rhythm, Sally Öztürk: So just because there's a process that doesn't mean it works. Well things are changing very quick, so For me and in my previous company, it was yes, the structure was flat but we also had like this, you know, managers who set the direction but in general, I think it was very easy to. Yeah, to adopt new technologies.

Rony Chaar: Cool. We will be digging more into that. But my next set of questions are about identifying the pains of the organizational setup of [redacted]. Um and how it affects the individuals and the company and productivity in general. So what's a typical challenge or difficulty that you faced on a regular basis?

Sally Öztürk: and is it in terms of like the team structure or like in general, like,

Rony Chaar: Anything, it could be. Yeah.

Sally Öztürk: and, I think the

Sally Öztürk: the biggest challenge was I'm just thinking now, like, looking back and The biggest challenge was like, in some of the stuff. It's This. the biggest challenge is the growth like

Sally Öztürk: so if the company like if laser so I was working with with startups very closely and we had targets to hit on a monthly basis and so, if we weren't able to hit the targets, then there would be

Sally Öztürk: You know, the then the sea level like my company [redacted] would get involved a lot. In the process. I don't know if it makes sense, so it's just, there is, I think this is a maybe challenge, I don't know, maybe for every company, but the involvement was

Sally Öztürk: I will say. Quite a lot which I personally, maybe it's, it's a startup, of course. And you need to like, we always work with targets and but there wasn't enough room to, to kind of like, you know,

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Sally Öztürk: Okay, you have the targets but then, in some cases, there are, you know, there are different things influence, the way you work and the way you didn't hit the targets. So there are different. There could be different reasons. It's not just because of the, it's not just because of the relative to your work, but they're external reasons, but it was, I think they were very close in that sense like a bit close-minded. And so it was either you hit the targets or you hit the targets. So there was the there was the biggest challenge and then you would actually have like a lot of people kind of. Yeah being involved in the in the process. I think that was There was the biggest challenge.

Sally Öztürk: and then you don't in this case is the problem was that you don't have only one person communicating towards you, but then you have like basic bunch of people kind of being involved in the process and being involved in the way that like they don't really know what we are working with, they don't know them, the platforms and the details of your work so they don't have an idea and if someone who doesn't have an idea of like what you do gets enrolled then, It's the yeah, it's an unpleasant situation and that would happen. Actually, I would say regularly,

Rony Chaar: Would they be involved in the execution or more like setting goals?

Sally Öztürk: Not in the execution but more on the yeah, more on the bigger picture. Mmm, the execution is always, they never get involved with execution.

Rony Chaar: Makes sense. And how did you deal with these challenges and…

Sally Öztürk: Force base.

Rony Chaar: how has the organizational structure helped you deal with this?

Sally Öztürk: Mmm. So I think that was okay, that was one of the biggest challenges I had and I raised this question. All the issue like a lot of times and

Sally Öztürk: so there was one of one way of dealing with that. So every time we would, you know, have a problem we would face a problem like that. I would actually raise the, the fact like the issue and the fact that they shouldn't be so involved, like in every single decision. Like, if you're not the one who is executing, then you don't want to hear like bunch of people who kind of, you know, everyone has opinions. But the thing is, if you want to move for, if you want to execute, sometimes you just execute without like, you know, knowing if something is gonna work or not, but the point is to execute otherwise you can just sit like weeks and weeks kind of discussing what decision or who's opinion matters the most. So one way was to kind of, yeah, just

Sally Öztürk: The face. Yeah, people who were like getting involved too much and kind of, you know, set the set the boundaries.

Sally Öztürk: And and the, but I can definitely say, like, in the beginning it was, it was really challenging but then after a while, I think, once people, I think it can comes down to like having a bit of structure really like and having, once you have the structure, you also said boundaries, and then people kind of learn when to step in and when not, even if it is like the sea level, it doesn't matter. Everyone has like, I don't know, departments or people like on individual level, you have to set the boundaries but that comes down to kind of identifying what your role is, what your tasks are. And the priorities and just having a bit of structure. So that I had a lot, but I think the main point was to kind of like having a communication with the

Sally Öztürk: Ongoing communication with them.

Rony Chaar: Okay, interesting. And so After you face these challenges, do you feel like the organization tried to put in more structure? Or did it remain flat and fluid.

Sally Öztürk: Oh, no, definitely. They were very open like in my yeah, it [redacted]. They were very open to criticism or feedback and whenever I or another person raised and, you know, The concern. And then, they would instantly take action. And it didn't mean we've solved everything from one day to another. Of course, it's never the case, but then it's a process.

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Sally Öztürk: And and they were very open to kind of like, taking in all the, you know, all the feedback. So we didn't that you could easily go up to see person like a co-founder and say We are very disturbed with the process and you don't feel uncomfortable and that like that, these things have to change and they would actually take an immediate action. So that that's why I think the flat organizations are nice because you can actually talk to pretty much anyone

Rony Chaar: Makes sense. So now we are moving on to the third study objective, I have. So my next set of questions are going to be about identifying the challenges of adopting work management software within your organizational setup. And I'm going to put the definition of work management software here in the chat so that you can take a look at it. But basically,…

Sally Öztürk: Yeah.

Rony Chaar: it could be anything. Any business software that's used internally?

Sally Öztürk: Hmm.

Rony Chaar: To help with day-to-day tasks.

Sally Öztürk: There. You. Yeah. And should I start?

Rony Chaar: So yes,…

Sally Öztürk: Or what is?

Rony Chaar: right. My first question will be, Can you recall the time when you adopted a work management software? Why was it adopted? And how did you, How did your organization go about? Adopting it?

Sally Öztürk: Mm-hmm. The first thing I did was to to start working at JIRA and so I started working at the company and I think In two months. Yeah, we had we started using General like let's say properly. And the reason, it took some time was also because Yeah. I mean, there wasn't anything similar in place and and some people in my team. They were juniors or not juniors, but actually I had two student assistants and they weren't, you know, Comfortable or they didn't know basic, they have to, to go about it. And so it was a process where Yeah. Like obviously I had to introduce it and I had to

Sally Öztürk: To explain why and what and how. So, I think, in two months we were really like feeling comfortable with join. Everyone was in love with it, I loved working with JIRA and then I think I really think it helps a lot with the yeah, we're just selling a process, so there was one thing and then that I Introduced. But apart from that. Yeah. Obviously in terms of communication with, I don't know, use slack. So that's kind of given. And then we also use, okay, I can't remember the name of the tool but we also use when I started, we were using this tool that would actually it was kind of like a timer.

Sally Öztürk: So, you would set the timer for a specific task that you you had in hand. And then there was the whole point was to see like how much you actually ended up spending on certain tasks. And to optimize that optimize your time and and define if it actually made sense. So we use that. But actually so there wasn't a good experience. We dropped it after after having introduced JIRA, because people don't like, you know, running a time when they, you know, when they work on a task including myself, And so just for the fact that like we had to time our tasks that just changed the whole thing. So it made actually people a bit more unproductive, I would say.

Sally Öztürk: And so we kind of dropped it and then then yeah, Jira was kind of the replacement so we worked. It is. Yeah. Yeah, like on the week the base is like daily bases. Even

Rony Chaar: And how did you go about? Adopting It. So how did it start? And so that it became, you know, the program that you use JIRA.

Sally Öztürk: And so it's because I use during the yeah the in one of my previous companies and so we didn't really like we were happy I joined and then we started having weekly meetings. And the whole idea was to go around like the table. And then just ask everyone, what they priorities were what they were working on whether we have time. And if we needed to kind of like help each other to, you know, to finish the tasks in hand. So there was the whole idea, I know. So just, you know, like just speak the meetings but then it became very you know, if you don't write things down, And if you just don't, Full of true sometimes you know like it happened a couple of weeks that like some people would.

00:35:00
Sally Öztürk: Forget about like some of the tasks that we, we talked about, and then it was just a very, It was a messy process. Like, having the victim meanings were nice. We were taking notes, of course, but then, Yeah, if you don't I don't know if you

don't write things down as a team like if everyone has to be involved, it's not just one person who is taking notes and then reminding people. So there is not like none of us were a secretary. So if everyone had to take like, you know, their own part,

Sally Öztürk: Like seriously and they had to base it was they it was everyone's job to kind of, you know, also communicate what their priorities were and what they were working on like to the whole team and then so we had like a couple of weeks that were like extremely messy and we had like some situations where we couldn't actually hit the deadlines. So we actually like, we use, like we worked with really hard deadlines and and a couple of times we missed that lines and it kind of like fell on me. And and then I think that was the time I introduced introduced Chira.

Sally Öztürk: Then we were basically also setting up deadlines for different tasks and then you can obviously like assign people. So everyone knew went to deliver what and if it wasn't delivered. So then we knew exactly where the process got broken.

Rony Chaar: That makes sense. And it sounds like JIRA worked since you continue to use it. So I guess it did help with these deadlines and But what challenges did you face,…

Sally Öztürk: Yes.

Rony Chaar: while you are adopting JIRA. So When you decided that you will be using this, and the team will be adopting it. What kind of problems did you face?

Sally Öztürk: Yeah, I think the problem was to introduce it to the team. And and they just didn't feel like, you know, writing down their tasks. And So it was like in the beginning, it was very difficult to get them right down. Their tasks or their weekly priorities because they just didn't have the, you know, like the didn't have the passion for it. And they were a bit I don't know it's just like it was a very it was very unstructured when I joined the exhibit so they were basically just doing whatever. And so there was a very big challenge because when you see people not really interested in a tool that you thing is gonna actually make a huge difference that that was, yeah, there was the challenge.

Sally Öztürk: and so, then what we did was to like we continued having weekly meetings, And in those victim meetings, then I would basically just like, before the week meeting, I would ask them to like half an hour or an hour before the meeting. I would ask them to to kind of populate the backlog with their, with their tasks. And if you, if they didn't do it for some reason, then we would actually do it in the meeting. And then we would be basically just go through the whole backlog together. And add tasks or or just exclude some. And then all together we would basically kind of like rate The ideals or the tasks all together. So that was the, I think that was the keys. The moment we started doing it with like, as a whole team.

Sally Öztürk: and they kind of saw the, you know, like how it made their lives easier as well. But it was difficult in the beginning. They just didn't have the yeah. The Internet.

00:40:00
Sally Öztürk: Yes, I actually did because A in that company, like, in one of my previous companies when Judah was introduced, I wasn't the one who introduced that actually, I didn't work with you, I need JIRA, but I knew that it was only product people for some reason. I thought it was only for made for product people. And like for developers and whatnot. So I didn't know we could use it for marketing and then I got introduced to Jira and I remember in my first reaction, I was like, Oh, like it's another task on top of my tasks. Now, I also have to think about like feeling it in updating it, you know, and whatnot. So also to me, it felt like an extra workload.

Sally Öztürk: You know, you already have your tasks and then now on top of it you have to kind of keep updating another tool. So that was my feeling and I actually didn't like it in the beginning. but yeah, after using it for some time I was like Okay this is actually very like you know, helpful

Rony Chaar: So, you mentioned that, Later on after the adoption. After some time people actually started using JIRA and enjoying it but in the beginning they didn't really see it as useful or didn't understand why they need to use it. so, what do you think made that shift happen?

Sally Öztürk: mmm, I think it's mostly about like really It really helps you keep on track with the deadlines. And and when you have that in front of you, then you'll never have the problem because all of us in team, really struggled with the deadlines, keeping up with the deadlines and everyone must confused, because we were also working a lot with different departments. So, us missing a deadline meant that all other departments would actually, you know, suffer the consequences. so, Yeah, like it just happened like, you know, everyone was struggling keeping up with the deadlines. Everyone also had a problem like, who was doing What so that these two were like really big problems. All the we were in the same team. Like you were sitting right next to each other but we still had these problems. So

Sally Öztürk: I think the moment people saw that, you know, it could actually have a lot with the deadlines. And the task kind of coordination. That was the also for me, that was the really like that. Made it a huge difference. With the deadlines, especially with the deadlines. Once you see that, okay? You have to deliver something like, You can actually see everything in JIRA, right? That you have to deliver something. I don't know in a week time. And then you see another task has to be delivered in two weeks time. Then you instantly kind of define. What is your priority? You don't need to think about anything. It's actually yeah, everything is kind of in front of you so that yeah, that was the I think the moment people saw that it is very helpful with the catching up with deadlines

Rony Chaar: That makes sense. And so it was basically just seeing that it works like it works for…

Sally Öztürk: Hmm.

Sally Öztürk: Yeah. Yeah.

Rony Chaar: what you need to do. What about the perception of how easy it is to use or hard? It is to use. Do you think people Thought that it's difficult. And then they, they thought it was okay when they got used to it or was it always seen as easy to use?

Sally Öztürk: I think it was always seen as easy to use. And I think so because like all these people come from tech background like they work with different, I don't know, platforms tools. It's just, everyone is used to kind of like adapting something new and it's also very user friendly in general. But I remember like just kind of introducing the product for once. Not even going in-depth actually just showing like, okay, this is how we are going to work with it. And this is the platform and whatnot. Like I it was very easy. To for everyone to start using it.

Rony Chaar: Okay, cool. Moving on. I have my fourth study objective now and it's About identifying, the steps taken to mitigate risks of adoption. So based on your experience with JIRA and possibly the other softwares you've mentioned.

00:45:00
Rony Chaar: Would do in the future when you're trying to implement the adoption of software that you didn't do before or…

Sally Öztürk: You.

Rony Chaar: something that you think worked. That you would do again, maybe.

Sally Öztürk: Yeah, I'm again I'm personally sticking to JIRA. Because it just makes my life easier and

Sally Öztürk: it just takes time for people to adopt it and I don't know, I know kind of why but I just don't know why it is so difficult for people to To write down their priorities. And so I'm taking like usually also now in my current company I'm taking like slow, baby steps. I don't want to just bring it from. That was a learning actually. I don't want to just bring it from one meeting to another and say, This is what we are going to be using going forward because then I I don't think people like that. I think that has to be like a softer intro to the platform. so, Rony Chaar: How would you do this software software intro?

Sally Öztürk: So right now I'm using dura for myself and so we have two meetings like a week where we talk about the priorities, right? And then I'm updating my JIRA. With the teams priorities. So, whenever we have a meeting, I actually bring up my job to the meeting and then just go through all the all the priorities. So I'm just hoping that.

Sally Öztürk: Once people are kind of used to seeing the platform and, you know, like also people not like everyone in my team kind of knows where the priorities sit. Like, if they want to check up like, what is the priority again? Or What are we working on again and etc? They know where to go but they don't have to necessarily use them like for themselves but it's just they know exactly where to find it. So, this is my kind of like software approach and I'm just thinking once they're feeling a little more comfortable than we can, actually use it all together, but it's just, Yeah, I'm just kind of changing my perspective because I don't want to do it like Yeah, just start using it now. They kind of have to. I don't know. Slowly. Start using it. Or get introduced to.

Rony Chaar: I'd be interested for an update on how To see…

Sally Öztürk: Oh yeah.

Rony Chaar: if you know, people actually adopted after seeing it's usefulness or if more needs to be done.

Sally Öztürk: Yeah.

Rony Chaar: But now we have my last study objective. And it's about determining ways academia and industry may be able to support organizations and their software adoption journeys. So how do you think? First of all, just being in,…

Sally Öztürk: It.

Rony Chaar: Denmark has helped. in general, and specifically with technology adoption,

Sally Öztürk: Hmm. Oh Denmark is one of the best countries actually when it comes to to adopting new technologies. Like it's a country. Everything is digital, right. So, Which I really like. And and in general, I think workwise

Sally Öztürk: Like the companies on the startups like every company actually in Denmark, I think they're very, they're all very digital and And really, like early adopters in my opinion. And so, Yeah, I think it also like changed my perception or like the way I worked the way I do things.

Sally Öztürk: Made it like more, I don't know in every area. I guess, like, more productive even. I would say I use like, to even in my personal life, like, I just want everything to be digital and everything to be like, I don't know. I want to use the tool for anything happening in my yeah, in my life. Very personal and not, not so and I feel like it's just in general. Yeah, like work life and then mark you have to kind of be digital and and Yeah, be very teche. I feel everyone is techie in Denmark and the companies are very yeah, digital as well. So it's um, I don't know if it answers your question, but yeah. So that's

Sally Öztürk: I don't know. I just feel Denmark is very ahead of like a head in terms of, you know, adopting new technologies.

00:50:00
Rony Chaar: Civilization is very high. So, what external resources have you often used in order to meet your deadlines or…

Sally Öztürk: Yeah, true.

Rony Chaar: deliver? What you need to deliver?

Sally Öztürk: and like, what do you mean by external resources, like people wise or

Rony Chaar: and, It could be people, it could be networking, it could be some kind of digital tool, any kind of external resource that's from outside the organization.

Sally Öztürk: Hmm. Okay, I understand. Um,

Sally Öztürk: Okay, let me think we used. We were actually very open to using, you know, be used freelancers a lot. And we were really open to using like you know, just for a couple of hours using like finding someone on work some or whatever and then just you know getting things done so we did that a lot so we use. Yeah, different platforms for that.

Sally Öztürk: And not just the app for different reasons. Like, for developers needs design needs and then content needs. So we we did that a lot actually. So that was one of the, one of the things that we did. I'm not sure if yeah, I think that's pretty much it. Like everything else was Quite internalized.

Rony Chaar: And do you think there could have been more resources? available externally that would have helped the organization so perhaps if you need it, freelancers a bigger network of freelancers or…

Sally Öztürk: Right.

Rony Chaar: It could have been some specific tool or some specific kind of support.

Sally Öztürk: and,

Sally Öztürk: I'm not sure actually. It's very easy to find people. It's, if you're stuck with them, you know, the delivery with the task.

Sally Öztürk: yes, generally like I would say, yeah, very easy to get Done. And so we never really like Yeah, I would say, we never really struggled with the with finding first of all resources and also in terms of tools.

Sally Öztürk: I think we basically had like, Yeah, we had, I don't. Yeah, I think it was pretty like, I think, the only thing we needed externally was again, like some like resources, like people who could actually help us with some like smaller tasks. Yeah freelancers. And but that was very like, very easy to easy to find. Yeah.

Rony Chaar: And was it was it also easy to hire these freelancers in Denmark.

Sally Öztürk: Yeah, super easy. Yeah.

Rony Chaar: Cool. How do educational institutions influence the organization at this activities. Did you ever use academic resources besides human resources?

Sally Öztürk: Not really.

Rony Chaar: Do you think there could have been something useful coming out of these educational institutions?

Sally Öztürk: Maybe, but we've never really used it to be honest. I think it's just Yeah.

Sally Öztürk: Yeah, like the only well I don't know if it can fall under this category but we had a lot of student assistance. and, Like, yeah, but everything is very hands on, right? So I just think like, you know, until you actually get some learning from academia, you basically just go and do it yourself and learn it instantly. Yeah, like we've never yet, probably, I actually don't know what we could get out of it. But yeah, probably.

Rony Chaar: Interesting. Alright, that's these were actually on my questions. It's yeah,…

Sally Öztürk: Perfect right on time. But I have to run for a meeting now

Rony Chaar: I I figured so thank you so much Circle.

Sally Öztürk: Girls, let me know if there's anything else needed. It's why?

Rony Chaar: Thank you and have a good meeting.