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THE PATH TO PARADOXICAL MANAGEMENT
| WHAT IMPACTS THE WAY MANAGERS DEAL WITH PARADOX |

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Abstract

Extensive literature has focused on the way organizations cope with paradoxes. The purpose of this research is to assess the different aspects that affect the way managers deal with paradoxes at an individual level. This knowledge provides organizations with the tools to promote paradoxical management, while nurturing their employees to the best of their managing abilities. Twenty-five managers were interviewed, of which thirteen were Dutch and twelve Portuguese. The analysis resulted in five great impactors: professional skills, coping mechanisms, reflexive self-management, experience and reflexivity processes. Cultural differences were found only when considering the role of family as a stress reliever.

Keywords: paradox, culture, paradoxical management, reflexivity

Introduction

When discussing organizational dynamics, paradoxes are a commonly used concept usually to refer to two contrary propositions, which when considered together (rather than separately) seem to become incompatible with one another (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989). From this concept several crucial notions arise such as paradoxical ways of thinking which present themselves as crucial to the understanding and managing of these tensions (Lewis, Andriopoulos, & Smith, 2014). This concept represents the main process in which the acceptance of paradox takes place: identifying the tension, comprehending its contradictory nature, developing new insights and solutions towards that particular tension. Without undergoing these steps one cannot learn to adjust and deal with paradox.

The goal of this research is therefore to understand what the aspects are that impact the above-mentioned process. A gap in the literature was identified in regards to individual managing strategies and coping mechanisms when facing paradoxes. This research seeks to

identify those dimensions between two samples: between Portuguese and Dutch. Comprehending the way in which managers are impacted by paradox and, consequently, the way that this affects their managing skills, allows organizations to identify desired management practices and find the appropriate tools to solve possible difficulties. Also by being aware of the aspects that affect one's behavior, managers are able to take control over their own coping strategies and to better understand their management styles.

In this sense, an overall layout of existing literature on managing paradox will be presented: first by defining paradox, presenting and discussing different responses that past literature proposed towards this concept (including learning and accepting process, confrontational methods and defensive mechanisms). The methodological context is explained, followed by a detailed description of the dimensions identified, as well as of the proposed conceptual model. Lastly both cultures are compared and differences are discussed.

Theoretical Background

Organizational paradoxes are a constant reality in the 21st century workplace. Increasing technological developments, intense competitiveness, evolving and diversified workforces alongside constant fluctuations in economic markets are some of the factors that help intensify paradoxes (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016; Hargrave, & Van de Ven, 2017).

According to Smith and Lewis (2011), the concept of *paradox* can be defined as elements that are both contradictory as well as interrelated, which exist simultaneously and persistently over time. This definition poses paradox as a phenomenon in which pros and cons cannot be weighed, each side is not seen as opposite, and it is considered as something that is not solvable by the choice of one of the extremes. In fact, it states that paradoxes are resistant to time pressures and must be seen as a daily reality which managers must deal with. Several

paradoxes are present in the everyday routine of an organization such as exploitation vs. exploration, increasing profits vs. focusing on CSR, flexibility vs. efficiency – to be able to answer to these tensions managers are faced with a need to approach these problems differently. This brings us to a paradoxical approach in which competing demands are combined and seen as complementary, instead of opposing, in which benefits from both sides are levered and managed equally, while promoting strategic agility (Lewis, Andriopoulos, & Smith, 2014).

Different notions on responses to paradox have been conceptualized, which usually revolve around an idea of acceptance or some sort of confrontation. According to Smith's research in 2014, accepting paradox is mostly a process of recognizing the existence of said tensions and in a way embracing their inherent conflicting dimension. While doing this, subjects comprehend that there is no solution and that moving forward is necessary, while going through a sense-making process. On the other hand, Smith mentions accommodation as a previously proposed practice, in this case managers attempt to address both sides of the tension and seek to find a solution that fits both needs.

Similarly, Lewis (2000) advances three possible ways to manage these tensions: acceptance, confrontation, and transcendence. On one hand research suggests that by accepting contradictions managers avoid conflicts, by becoming comfortable with said reality and acknowledging their constant presence. On the other hand managers may be urged to discuss these tensions and therefore construct a more cooperative notion and understanding. Lastly, these same researchers propose the idea of a paradoxical way of thinking through a process of transcendence, which ultimately allows subjects to change the meaning of a specific situation by viewing paradoxes as complementary.

However, more recently, the different ways to manage paradox have been presented as a means of learning how to accept tensions and cope with them, adopting a paradoxical thinking

in which there is an integration of alternatives and, ultimately, a combination of both (Calabretta, Gemser, & Wijnberg, 2017). In this same study the authors defend that it is through the embracing and acceptance of paradox that managers can attain a paradoxical thinking strategy that allows them to integrate different components into their strategic decision making process.

In addition to these approaches to paradox management, a more psychological standpoint, can be taken on, where a Freudian perspective is evoked. Namely this view states that contradictions create a sense of threat towards the ego, which consequently activates defensive behaviors – in order to avoid embarrassment or danger (Lewis, 2000). Among those behaviors scholars have identified several defense mechanisms in organizations, namely *repression* (blocking negative experiences from memory), *regression* (referring to behaviors and actions that have proven successful and safe in the past), *projection* (transferring conflicting feelings onto something/someone else), *reaction formation* (revealing the opposite feeling than the actual threatening one), and lastly *denial* (refusal to accept reality) (Vince & Broussine, 1996).

Notwithstanding the problem with these approaches, according to Jarzabkowski and Lê (2017), is a focus on the end response that managers may have towards paradoxes. Rather than scholars considering the ultimate response to organizational tensions, the focus should shift onto an ongoing, dynamic process integrated in everyday practices – since these contradictions demand a continuous sense of awareness and an ability to leverage paradoxical benefits. Also, the same authors further state that in view of fully comprehending the response that organizations have when facing paradoxical situations, it is necessary to first understand the meaning that people give them – in other words, the way that paradoxes are constructed will affect the manner in which people choose to answer to and deal with them.

Despite extensive research on paradoxes in organizations, there seems to be little focus on how individual managers deal with paradoxes themselves. Vince and Broussine (1996) consider the relationship between competing demands and the emotional complexity that these actors may face, admitting that everyday organizational tensions heighten the sense of uncertainty and ambiguity in Organizations, which can then lead to high levels of anxiety. Corroborating this statement, research has also referred to sentiments of ignorance, confusion and defensive behaviors when managers are faced with contradictory elements which they cannot conciliate (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Van de Ven, 2013; Lewis, 2000). Similarly, perspectives on paradox have defended that managers must accept these tensions and learning to live with them has become an essential requisite in organizational dynamics (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989). However, the doubt in this topic rapidly arises as to what happens when managers are not able to cope with this reality – it is not certain to assume that all managers have the inherent power to manage paradox. Furthermore, in order to comprehend what it is that makes a manager successful or unsuccessful in this process, it is crucial to clearly understand what are the different dimensions, in a manager's life, that impact this coping process. By detaining a full grasp on the dimensions that impact managers' life with paradox, it is possible to recognize the way in which they interact and, consequently, foresee managerial behavior and judgement.

The current research will then seek to understand individual coping mechanisms that managers refer to when dealing with paradoxes as a contradictory, interrelated, and constant reality. In addition, it will seek to assess two different cultures and whether or not the same dimensions are found as impactors in both. It will then propose a model that answers the following research question: what are the aspects that affect the way in which managers deal with paradox?

Method

The study consists of a convenience sample with a total of 25 subjects from Portugal and the Netherlands. All subjects respect one condition, which is that of occupying – presently or at some point in time – a managing position.

It was considered important to analyze both countries since they have sufficient different social norms and traits. Based on general assumptions between Northern European and Southern European countries, namely in regards to socializing norms, self-conducting behaviors, it is assumed that these differences might be also seen in business settings – particularly between managers and their actions towards paradox.

The Portuguese sample contains 12 subjects: 5 women and 7 men. Subjects' age varied from 26 years old to 56 years old (average age of 42). The least amount of experience mentioned as a manager was half a year and the longest experience was 30 years (average of 11 years). All subjects were currently in a managerial position, except for one who was retired from active work.

The Dutch sample comprises 13 individuals: 2 women and 11 men. Age varied from 26 to 63 (average age of 43), and regarding years of experience the least amount mentioned was 1 year and the longest experience was 30 years (average years of experience of 13.5 years). All subjects were actively working and occupying a managerial position at the time of the interviews.

In the end, this results in a general sample of 7 women and 18 men. With an overall average age of 42.5 and overall average years of experience corresponding to 12.25.

All Dutch interviews were conducted in English, and all Portuguese interviews were, however, conducted in Portuguese, and were translated at the time of transcription. The interviews were composed of six open answer questions (Annex 1), which subjects responded

to after being informed that the purpose of the interview was to assess the different ways that managers deal with paradoxes. The questions aimed to identify coping strategies that the subjects used when in need – starting by inquiring about difficulties they found in the workplace. The concept of paradoxes was introduced to the interviewee by asking them to describe the way in which they would conduct themselves and their managing of other people while in a change process – as a form of making the subject acquainted with the meaning of tensions and contradictions.

After transcribing the interviews – which resulted in a total of 93 pages (see Annex 3 in Annexes document) – the information was organized into categories, according to Grounded Theory by Gioia (2013), in which qualitative data are framed into categories that allow establishing a relationship between concepts, which then answer the initially stated research question: what impacts the way in which managers deal with paradoxes?.

This specific data analysis method includes 4 main steps in which the information is consistently combined into larger and more general dimensions and then positioned in a dynamic model that seeks to clarify the conceptual relationships (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013).

In this study, in a first stage the data were organized into 42 initial categories that were then reduced to 26 and finally to a total number of 21 final first-order categories. Then the categories were organized into second-order categories, according to their commonalities and overall related origins, leading to 10 categories. Lastly, these were then shaped to fit 5 broader dimensions which are the ultimate main impactors regarding the way managers deal with paradoxes (a table with categories and corresponding proof quotes can be found as Annex 2 in the Annexes document). The interaction between all these dimensions is later demonstrated in a model that illustrates the relationships between them.

Ultimately a general assessment, in order to highlight managerial similarities and distinctions, was devised in view of comparing Dutch and Portuguese managers. This assessment was done by contrasting the number of times a certain strategy was chosen as a means to manage paradoxes, by each cultural sample.

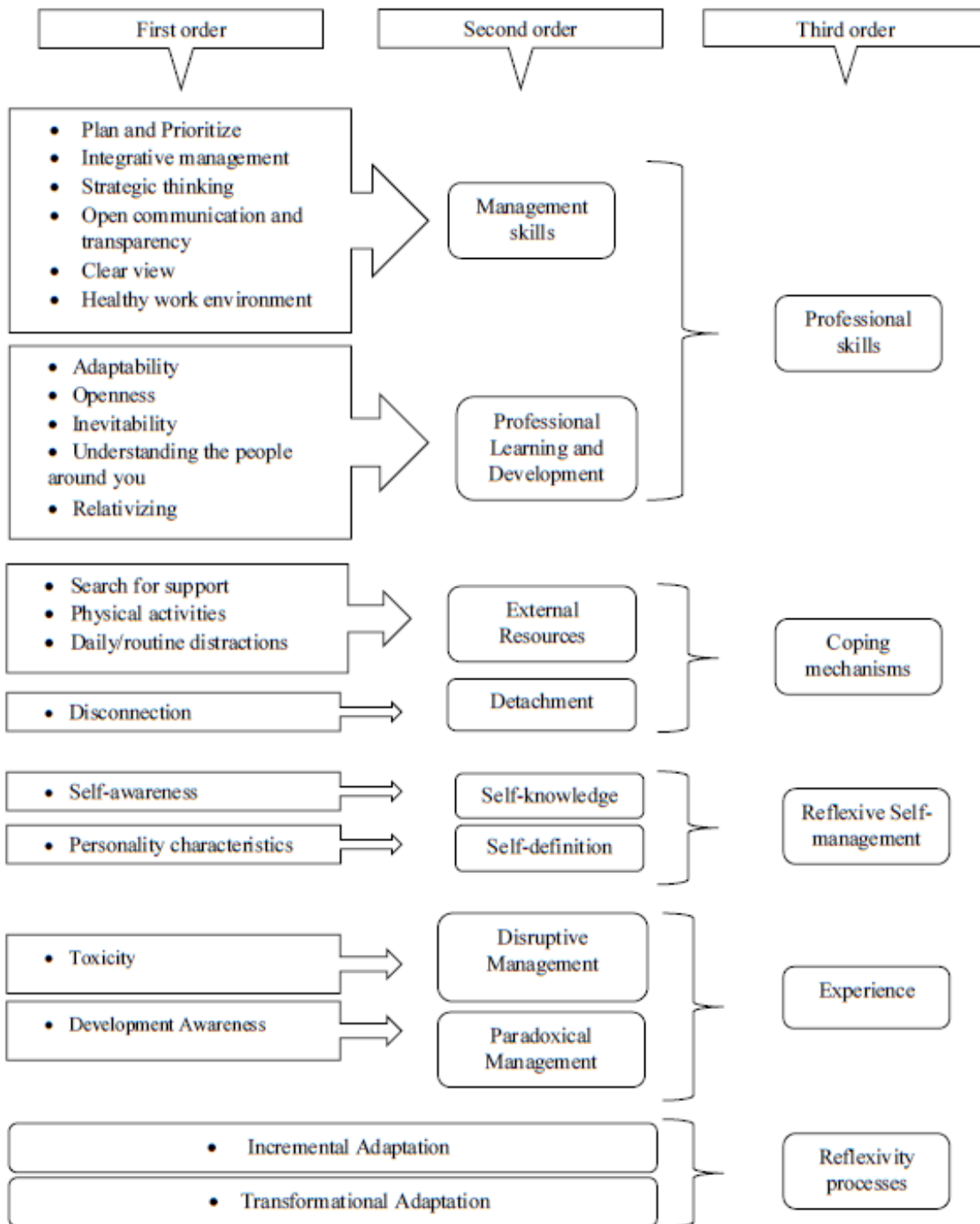
Data Analysis

After a first assessment of the collected data, the information was grouped into small categories based on the similarities of the answers – this process was done while always bearing in mind the ultimate question this study set out to answer. In particular, the information was clustered directly from the subjects' answers, according to the type of strategy that each manager used. The result was 21 first-order categories of the different strategies that people claimed to use and believed to have an impact on their managing style (see Table 1).

After this first layout took place, a second appraisal was required in order to make sense of the raw information considered in the first moment. These second-order categories consist of, on the one hand, major coping mechanisms that subjects mentioned when considering methods to address tensions, the ability to know oneself, and the power to grasp the level of development one has undergone as a manager, different intellectual capabilities that enable individuals to succeed professionally; and on the other hand, two possible scenarios resulting from the interaction of the previously mentioned factors, and their underlying processes.

Finally, last and broader dimensions were conceptualized that ultimately answer the initial question in which professional skills, coping mechanisms, reflexive self-management, experience, and reflexive processes are the main factors that impact the way that managers deal with organizational paradoxes.

Figure 1. Structured Data



Professional Skills

This dimension consists of two second-order categories, namely: Management Skills and Professional Learning and Development.

On one side, the first category involves strategies that subjects referred to as skills that one possesses in order to successfully perform at one's job: create a list of priorities, plan ahead tasks that must be accomplished, ability to keep a clear focus on what needs to be done and how it is going to be achieved, risk reducing decision making, consider consequences and, in the same way, weigh pros and cons when making a decision, and finally the development and establishment of a healthy work environment (this can be accomplished by reducing the sense of competition and standing for managerial impartiality, or in a more practical sense by considering office disposition and design and the way this will affect employee morale).

Also in this first category, two important strategies should be emphasized: those of integrative management and open communication and transparency. Integrative management as a strategy was greatly mentioned by all subjects as a way to manage tensions and organizational contradictions. This concept is presented with the meaning that managers actively seek to integrate those around them into their work – such is illustrated in the below mentioned quotes from two subjects from the Dutch sample. By creating involvement, people will, in a way, be more comprehensive towards them, and in this way become more proactive in change processes for example; understand decisions and therefore not question managers; become empowered so there is a sense of “shared responsibility” (as in, responsibility does not fall exclusively onto managers); create a sense of continuous learning and growth for both, manager and team member. In a way this becomes a strategy in which by helping those around you, it actually helps oneself, as a manager (by balancing workload, by reducing stress levels, by trying to bring people together towards a common understanding).

“Meanwhile it is crucial to explain this to the people around you. What I see a lot are managers who know what to do, they are doing what they are supposed to do, but they don’t explain what it is they are doing. You need to have people that follow you and understand what you are doing, what it is that you are set out to accomplish, so that they can “live” the change as well. Understanding why and how I am doing something, makes them part of the process and makes the people around me see that I believe in my actions.” – Subject D1

“It is very important for the employees to be involved in decisions that are taken and integrated in the different processes that are part of the organization. (...) I always need to go back to my people, talk to them, listen to them, and have them on board with me in solving our problems.” – Subject D8

On the other hand, the concept of open communication and transparency consists of the ability to both establish an open dialogue with peers and team members (as exemplified by Subject D1 below), as well as to have the power to openly discuss strategies and methods to tackle these tensions by facing issues head on – as shown by Subject D12.

“(...) The most important thing is to keep the dialogue flowing (...). And for myself I have to talk to people at my level, explain what I am doing, what problems I am facing, the issues my employees are voicing – keeping the dialogue open with my peers.” – Subject D1

“I think the way I deal with it (paradoxes) is just to name them, be honest and transparent about them, face them and ask bluntly what are we going to do about them.” – Subject D12

On the other side, the second order dimension of professional learning and development takes into account categories that subjects claimed had a level of learning and

evolution, aspects which were not present at a point in time and required some adjustment or openness from managers to embrace. Specifically, the ability to relativize issues and understand that “work is work”; the power to learn to what extent do one’s efforts pay off – in the sense that certain moments require managers to step back and assume it is part of the job, and the inevitability of accepting something because “you have to”; and the capability to learn to work with and from the people you work with as an ongoing process. In addition to these aspects, it is important to mention the openness that one must have to embrace the learning experience that takes place, as can be seen by Subjects P2 and D1 by demonstrating the importance of a conscious will one must possess to take in the most of those moments, in order to develop and evolve as a manager.

“Sometimes it’s not so much about the amount of years you’ve been working, but what you take from it. How you learn, where you do it and with who you do it. Sometimes what you learn in 5 years, you can learn in 2 if you are in the right company with the right people.” – Subject P2

“I chose to learn, and I chose to develop. And that is what makes you able to deal with things better. (...) if you talk, you listen. If you yell you learn nothing, if you talk and listen you find problems, you identify solutions.” – Subject D1

Lastly the dimension of consciously accepting that paradoxes exist as a constant reality and must be dealt with is a major characteristic in this category. Learning that it is inevitable to adjust to new paradigms, that it may be necessary to rethink initial strategies in order to tackle specific problems, that managers must live with paradoxes on a daily basis, are crucial developments to any successful manager.

“You need to learn how to approach differently: you don’t say that that specific way is wrong, but it could be improved, and by working together, you end up helping everyone.” – Subject D8

“I decided that that person in particular should have an individual and customized follow-up process since their expectations had now been completely misplaced and altered. So, I had to adjust my efforts towards that employee particularly due to what had happened.” – Subject P3

“I believe that as a manager, whether it be me or someone else, you have to be willing to accept some level of schizophrenia in their life. You can’t really step away from paradoxes, that isn’t something that you can do in organizations, it is something that you must learn how to live and deal daily with. You need to accept that insanity, at some point, as a part of your life, and as part of who you are as a manager. Accept the constant contradictions that present themselves to you every day in an organization. (...) What I had to interiorize was that my sanity depended on my ability to accept a certain level of insanity.” – Subject P7

In the above quotes it becomes visible the inevitability of learning from paradox in order to become a successful manager – as is the case of Subject D8 – and the daily adjustment that is required in order to respond to different demands, from Subject P3. It is noteworthy to mention Subject P7 as a great illustration of what it might feel internally to understand how to truly learn and cope with simultaneous opposing tensions.

Coping mechanisms

The Coping mechanisms dimension embraces specific methods that managers use to relieve stress and distance themselves from work related issues – in other words, strategies that allow subjects to develop a sense of work-life balance. These strategies were based on the definition proposed by Cramer (1998) in which the difference between coping and defensive mechanisms lies in the fact that the prior are done consciously and effortfully directly towards

the solution of a particular problem situation, in which the subject engages in active measures in order to fix said unbalance.

In this dimension two less broader categories are incorporated: External Resources and Detachment.

Respectively, the first category defines specific strategies that managers engage with in order to either, disconnect and decompress from work related stress, or actively seek third party help in view of relieving stress from oneself. When considering active search for support managers mentioned that when in a contradictory situation asking for direct feedback from their team members, (as reported by Subject P3) as a strategy to help them maintain focus, understand different needs, delineate a plan, served as an aid. Managers also mentioned discussing issues with peers or higher management as a way of attaining a sense of guidance. Similarly, in the case of Subject P12, this support is found in colleagues and work related friends – which highlights the importance of having a social support network at the work place as a stress reliever. Some interviewed managers mentioned that they had, presently, or in the past, felt the need to join mentoring programmes, coaching programmes, and/or workshops to further develop their skills professionally – which is the case illustrated by Subject D7. By joining these activities managers found the possibility to develop themselves as managers, become reassured about their skills and more confident about their work, it also provided them with the tools they felt they needed to solve contradictory demands at their work place.

“I personally did a couple of mentoring programmes as well as management trainings, which are very good at helping you find the management techniques you are most comfortable with. I also talk to other more experienced managers a lot, looking for advice and help when I am in a difficult situation. When I have a particular issue I talk

to my senior manager, and they can tell you how they would approach that problem, since they have more experience.” – Subject P7

“Something that usually helps me and I tend to do more and more nowadays is to ask my people what they would do if they were in my place, what would be the strategy they would choose and why. If I do that I am making it so that whatever I decide, they feel a part of. (...) I am making them part of the decision process. It also makes them understand, when I am in a harder situation, and I really only have one possible option to choose, how hard it is and how sometimes my hands really are tied.” – Subject P3

“When I am in one of those moments where I face myself with a paradox or a contradiction, or with my hands tied, I talk to my colleagues. We established a group of friends here at the organization and, honestly, you talk it out. It is crucial that you vent, you need to discuss about it, and you need to ask people for feedback and advice: people help. The rest I’m still learning.” – Subject P12

However other practices were mentioned as another manner to avoid work stress and its consequences, specifically more practical ones such as: physical activities and routine distractions. Several managers referred the practice of physical activities (such as sports, gym, jogging, yoga) and its importance as a way to relieve stress (namely Subject P12 which reported to its effect since he no longer practiced exercise), as a kind of “off switch” in regards to work related problems and changing mind-set. The same can be said about daily routines, such as having a long drive home from work (exemplified by Subject D10), or arriving home and having to take care of one’s small children or watching television.

“The second thing that helps quite a lot is that I don’t live in Leiden (place where subject works). I live in Den Hague, so I have a 30 to 40 minutes’ drive from work to

my home (and vice versa). This allows me to actually create a separation between my work and my family, since it is a real physical barrier.” – Subject D10

“And another thing that truly helps me is to go home and be with my kids. And that is a very big difference from when I started working, today I get home and almost automatically I need to stop and start thinking about who needs a shower, who needs dinner, where are the diapers – it’s almost the perfect “switch off”.” – Subject P2

“I also go on long walks, and that helps me to clear my head at the end of the day, or at end of the week, or when I had something really, really stressful that week.” – Subject P10

“I used to go to the gym and that helped immensely, the fact that I could do something that I enjoyed, a physical activity that actually cleared my mind while I was doing it.” – Subject P12

Reflexive self-management

In this dimension it is relevant to, in the first place, consider the concept of reflexivity as a process of personal reflection about one’s own management style, which will influence a manager’s sense of confidence, level of self-awareness and self-insight as well one’s relationships with others (Cunha, Pacheco, Castanheira, & Rego, 2015). This will consequently impact the way in which one perceives their work and the way they conduct themselves at the work place. This category incorporates two main second order categories which include Self-knowledge and Self-definition.

On one hand the Self-knowledge segment is related to the concept of self-awareness, meaning that when considering important factors while managing paradoxes, subjects believe that knowing who you are as a person and as a manager, namely the importance of being

acquainted with one's shortcomings and strengths (Subject D8), by a process of self-reflection (subject D1) is helpful to this process.

"You need to be aware of what is happening, what you are doing, what will happen. You cannot tell people to change and grow and develop, if you yourself do not do the same, or take the time to reflect on yourself." – Subject D1

"And I obviously questioned myself many times, but the best way of getting things done is to understand what your own difficulties are, what your shortcomings are. If you know what you are good at and what you aren't good at, you can manage yourself and those around you better. If you know don't possess a certain talent, make sure someone around you does." – Subject D8

Similarly, in addition to becoming aware of yourself, it is also important to become self-critical towards your actions. There is an identified need to assess one's own actions and align them with expectations, values and goals, mostly illustrated by Subject P9. However Subject D3 gives a higher attention to this act of self-criticism as a tool to serve others better.

"What does keep me thinking sometimes, at home is, how am I going to provide to someone the necessary tools to make them able to develop themselves to the next level, and I am good enough to coach someone through that process. And this isn't much of doubting myself, as it is to be self-critical." – Subject D3

"Something I usually do is to look back and assess "why didn't it work the first time? What did I do differently? What can I do so that this won't happen again?"." – Subject P9

On the other hand, the Self-definition dimension revolves around aspects that managers attributed to their specific way of being. This means that managers believed the way they manage contradictions can be facilitated or discouraged by what they perceive their personality

traits and particularities to be. Logically if a person is said to have a quite nervous personality, it is to expect that that will be transferred into their professional life as well, and affect the way they are as managers. Proof of this can be seen in Endler's interactional model of anxiety, presented by George (1992) where it is explained that, since states are the result between personality traits and situational aspects, one person will be more likely to have higher feelings of anxiety-state, when in a threatening situation, if their anxiety-trait is consequently high by nature. In other words, if someone would have a specific trait inherent to their personality, under the specific circumstances, that person would be more likely to develop that state.

"I am not really good at delegating, so I try to solve everything by myself – which is mostly not a good strategy." – Subject D9

"Something good about the way I am and the job I do is that I don't take things home with me, it's in my DNA. I have never lost one hour of sleep because I was worrying about what was happening in my job." – Subject D8

"I am personally someone that isn't very "outgoing" in the sense that I keep that type of issues to myself, and I deal with them very internally, in my head. Which isn't particularly positive. Sometimes the fact that I do that makes it more challenging because at the end of the day I build up all the stress inside, and don't let it out – this means that if I have a stressful day I'll keep it all inside." – Subject P11

Experience

This dimension integrates the two possible scenarios that serve as outcomes to the different managerial experiences. After the interaction between all variables, managers end up in one of two possible settings: a positive one, in which they went through a learning process, they have developed, they have integrated new methods into their mechanism repertoire, and ultimately, grew to understand how to manage paradoxes and tensions; and a negative one,

where mostly, due to the fact that they neglected to cope with or address a certain problem, this led them into having negative responses towards paradoxes and contradictions.

In particular, the positive outcome – paradoxical management – is above all things the ability that managers have to transform their years of experience into learning opportunities and development, and most importantly, the power to work alongside organizational paradoxes and manage them positively. These learning processes can be translated in different ways, while still ultimately resulting in knowing how to manage paradox (as seen in Subjects D1, D11 and P10).

“Of course it has changed me, you learn. You learn a lot during your life, your work – I have learned a lot, especially in changing environments, and even more so in environments in which I was leading that exact change. Learning changes you (...). And this is why I deal with things differently than I did 30 years ago, I wasn’t as experienced, I couldn’t learn from things I hadn’t been through. Experience brings you, in a way, trust in yourself, relaxing about things, and a new way of dealing with things in a very different way than you used to before. It allows you to put things into perspective.” – Subject D1

“You need to learn how to deal with the everyday work, and at the same be prepared for the everyday surprises. (...) I believe it is a matter of experience. (...) But if you have enough experience, have the vision in mind and the direction you want to go, it is easier to this job. (...) you need to go through things enough times to be able to live them again without the stress, and the insecurity.” – Subject D11

“Of course, this is something that has brought me a sufficient amount of stress, and at some point in our lives we all take more, or less, stress with us, and sometimes it keeps

us from sleeping at night; but thankfully this is no longer such a daily hassle – things have changed. Experience gives you a bit of leverage and it allows you to manage things differently and allows you to do things with the least amount of stress possible.”

– Subject P10

Furthermore, the negative outcome – disruptive management – portrays the scenario in which managers did not possess the necessary managerial skills and suffered some sort of negative consequence. In this case, there are three very specific cases: Subject D12 suffered a burnout because she neglected to manage stress and work related issues, and did not ask for help when needed; Subject D13 is a case of an anxiety attack due to lack of stress managing; and Subject P3 which reported feeling frustration from her job and admitted to be lacking preparation to do her job due to lack of experience.

“The curious thing is that at the time I didn’t deal with this, so I had a burnout. (...) My major question was why this was happening to me at that time – I believe it was a combination of all the different responsibilities I had, with my own unique personality.”

– Subject D12

“I went on holiday in December, to Spain with my dad, and travelling is usually good for me to release stress and, all of a sudden, one night I had to go to the hospital. It was crazy, my heart was pounding, I think I had an anxiety attack – it was very strange. So when I came back I decided to change my life style a little bit. Now I actually try to clear stress out and keep my head focused on what needs to happen at that time.” –

Subject D13

“Many times, I feel like when I leave work and go home, I am frustrated because I can’t be myself, because I cannot voice what I want or think. (...) that is hard for me – having

to suppress my voice on something. (...) This is probably because I am still very inexperienced, I still have a lot to learn, and I still need to learn how to cope with the rejection of people around me. That is something that I am going to have to learn how to do. (...) Up until now, this has worked, but I am still learning how to do everything. I am sure in 1 year time I will be very different and my answers will be different. I am sure experience is a part of it, and that is the reason why I am struggling now, because I am lacking, and I feel that.” – Subject P3

Reflexivity processes

Finally, this last third order category describes the ultimate processes that allow the previously mentioned reflexivity to take place – each adaptation process described below corresponds to one type of management experience (paradoxical or disruptive).

On one hand, incremental adaptations processes derive from paradoxical management styles, and consist mainly on improving and establishing methods that proved to be successful while managing paradoxes in the past. By repeating them subjects reinforce the existing tendency to learn how to manage and cope with tensions. These strategies involve reflecting on past experiences and finding learning opportunities as suggested by Subject D1, the simple fact of going through an experience as presented by Subjects D11 and P7 or adopting new behaviours that prove to be beneficial as stated by Subject P1.

“I see people who do not develop, people who are not willing to reflect on what they do (...) You cannot tell people to change and grow and develop, if you yourself do not do the same, or take the time to reflect on yourself. I always align my experiences and see what I can learn from them for myself, my personal benefit.” – Subject D1

“Once you deal with problems once, you are able to select your style, the way you want to manage certain situations and just stick with it – but this is only possible if you actually go through it and learn from your experience.” – Subject D11

“As a manager I try to assume a risk assessment view on situations and manage accordingly – and this is not natural to me at all, I had to learn how to do this, learning how to consider other people’s intakes and how my decisions will impact them. (...) You learn how to cope with everything. If you didn’t learn, you did something wrong.” – Subject P1

“I believe it is definitely a process that has some kind of learning curve, as you live through more experiences you learn how to deal with them until the next time they show up, and you get better at finding the best solutions as well.” – Subject P7

On the contrary, transformational adaptation processes would consequently derive from disruptive management cases. Specifically, these processes would be those which allow managers to learn from their mistakes, understand what new behaviors should be adopted and how to tackle old non-beneficial actions. Ultimately by correcting such harmful behavior, ideally, managers would learn how to change and adopt new managerial skills and achieve the positive outcome – in which they understand how to work with paradox. In this case: Subject D12 underwent a therapeutic process where she learnt how to adopt new behaviors, which lead her to better managing practices; Subject D13 chose to adopt a new life style including re-prioritizing work and life, as well as separating work from personal life; and Subject P3 is choosing to embrace a process of reflection and research for better methods, but however, has still to learn how to combine personal and work life which are of great importance in order to become a balanced, successful professional.

“So I had to look inside me and try to understand why I was having that problem at that specific time. I had guidance for some time, we can say I went through “therapy” to guide me through my burnout. (...). Going through this made me learn that I need to take better care of myself, to understand when something isn’t my problem (give people their own work to do, instead of doing it for them), to prioritize, I also became more confident which helped me to tell people that something was of their responsibility and not mine.” – Subject D12

“So when I came back I decided to change my life style a little bit. Now I actually try to clear stress out and keep my head focused on what needs to happen at that time. I had to rearrange my priorities, I changed the way I organized my day and the way I dealt with problems at work (less personal involvement, more understanding that work is only work).” – Subject D13

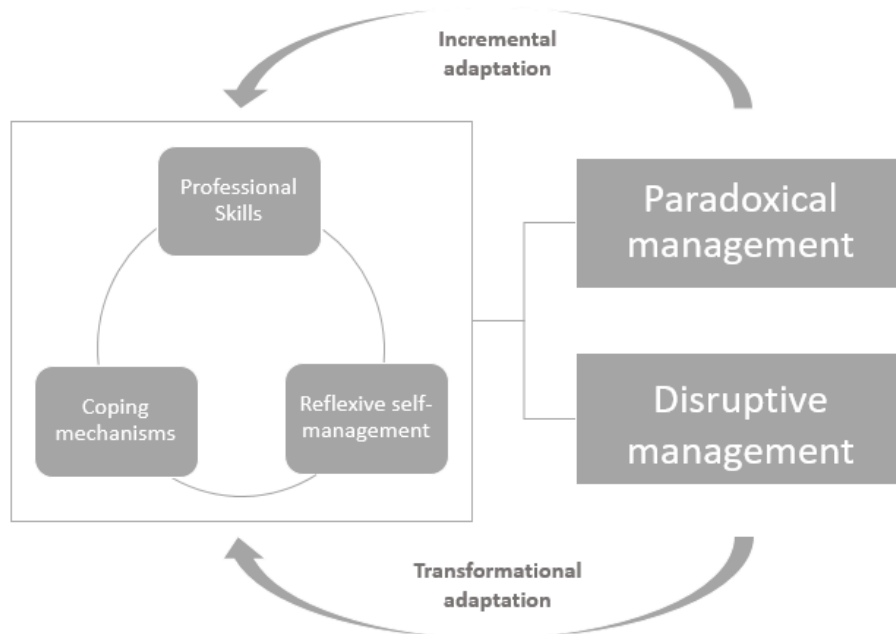
“This is my first experience in a job like this – I have ceased to have a personal life. I am here, I work 8 or 12 hours per day, I do my job, and then I go home and think of new and different team strategies that I can use – because that is also my job. I go home and think of everything I did and what I can do differently or keep doing the same.” – Subject P3

Integrative model

The conceptual model reflects the connections and relationships that were established between concepts and between the overall categories retrieved from the data. There is an interaction between three major dimensions: a manager’s professional skills, his/her coping mechanisms and his ability to reflect upon himself and his actions. This relationship will, thereafter, lead subjects into two possible experiences: paradoxical management or disruptive

management. These two scenarios are characterized by the interactional relationship that exists between the previous factors.

Figure 2 – A way to paradoxical management and its impactors



Consequently, according to the type of experience you have developed – while bearing in mind that the ultimate goal is to learn how to manage paradoxes successfully – managers will adopt specific adaptation processes in order to either increase their performance as flourishing managers, or transform their strategies and re-learn how to approach this phenomenon. Essentially the objective is for one to be able to learn how to embrace paradox and manage it in such a way that is beneficial for both the organization and the individual. This means that in the case of having arrived to a disruptive management scenario, the implementation of transformation adaptation processes will establish a circular notion into the model, since this re-adaptation will influence the three primary dimensions and, ideally, lead the subject into the paradoxical management in the end.

Cultural comparison

According to Chun, Moos, & Cronkite, (2006) when combined with personal systems, contextual information will impact the way in which people cope with events and the way it affects their well-being. Culture is therefore an ecological macro-system that affects behavior in several manners, namely on the way people define themselves, their motivation, their overall reactions and responses to contextual pressures. In more general terms culture leads people into having potentially different reactions, when facing the same concept (Lewis, 2005).

After conducting the data analysis, it became visible that Dutch managers and Portuguese managers stated, mostly, the same strategies to deal with tensions. The majority of the sample reported some sort of integrative management method that helped them to cope with difficulties arising from contradictions; resorting to managerial skills they had mastered in the past, which by applying them again provided them with a sense of control; reflecting on one's own actions and attitudes in order to adjust them to new challenges; actively searching, either for social support to vent about work related stress issues and ask for advice, or professional support in view of gaining lacking necessary skills; and turning to some sort of activity which allowed them to "switch off" from work.

There was however one major behavior only mentioned by the Portuguese sample: the existence of their family as a coping mechanism. When considering recovering strategies and the ability to separate work life from private life, Dutch managers referred to sports as a frequently successful mechanism, and to the simple fact that in order to remain sane you learn how to separate these worlds, because "you have to". In regards to the Portuguese sample, they mentioned not only these aspects but also the importance of their family as a recovering strategy. Subjects mentioned that the fact that when arriving home, one must change their

attention focus onto the caretaking process of their own children, serves as an automatic off button from the business mindset and as a method to unwind from stress.

Despite the fact big distinctions were not found in this cultural comparison it is curious to clarify the family as a means of recovering dimension which the Portuguese sample demonstrated to possess, in opposition to the Dutch sample.

Discussion

Considering the initial question that led to the writing of this study we conclude that the ultimate aspects that impact the way in which managers deal with paradoxes are combined into five major categories: professional skills, coping mechanisms, reflexive self-management, experience and reflexive processes. These dimensions interact in a way that influences the path that managers choose and decide what strategies to implement as well as how to approach organizational dilemmas at the work place.

It is realistic to state, after analyzing the data, that a crucial element that impacts managers is the power to self-manage. According to Manz, and Sims, (1980) self-management is the process that includes the establishment of personal goals, self-instruction towards achieving said goals and self-observation. This last concept, in turn, according to the same authors, involves the systematic gathering of information about one's own behavior, which consequently leads to a process of self-evaluation. An approach of self-management can therefore be linked to the notion of reflexivity mentioned as core to the adaptation processes undergone by each subject. You can therefore state that self-management is an important step to consider for any manager that wishes to walk the path towards paradoxical management.

In addition, it is also possible to conclude that despite the cross-cultural assessment between the Netherlands and Portugal, coping strategies and ultimate factors that impacted the managing styles adopted by professionals was not greatly manifested. It seems that Portuguese

managers tend to view family as a way to relieve stress, whereas Dutch managers did not mention family as a stress reliever, much rather like the reason “why” they should switch off.

When considering paradox research these results serve the purpose to highlight a more human side to Organizations and create awareness towards the impact that this phenomenon has individually on professionals. It is in this sense that a gap in research was filled: attention was given to managers as holistic individuals, and not solely as organizational members. The results point to the integration of different dimensions in a manager’s life as impactors on one aspect of organizational routines – paradox.

Moreover, it is crucial to understand that if managers are not responding to the fullest of their abilities and are struggling with inherent organizational tensions, there will perhaps exist a direct linkage between job satisfaction, turnover, job effectiveness, and ultimately the motivation, success and performance of teams and employees. Organizations can use knowledge of what impacts managers as a means to tackle possible disruptive management cases and guide them into the correct direction, and also as a way to truly understand how to benefit the most from paradoxes.

Additionally, understanding the way in which different cultures view and work with paradoxes is of great importance in such a globalizing world, with ever-growing demands, on a real time basis. It also allows for a greater understanding of other mindsets which facilitates the readjustment and foreseeing of behavior when facing tensions.

Limitations and Future research

As a research paper this study reveals specific limitations which may have constrained the end results.

First, because this study is based on a convenience sample and not on a controlled sample there may have been uncontrolled variables at work. Neither one of the country samples

were controlled. This means that in this case there are groups of subjects from the same companies. This might have an effect on results since the type of personality, employee profile, or managing style could be similar, which consequently leads to similar answers and perceptions on what are and how to manage paradox.

Another aspect to consider as constraining is that of the definition of paradox – during the interviews there was no question regarding what does the subject comprehend as paradox. The idiosyncratic understanding that people have of said concept, may influence the way they perceive it, and consequently, the way they cope with it. However, the intent of this research was to receive an open understanding, free of pre-established conditions, from managers and have them answer to what they believe to be their most felt paradox.

It would be important for future research to try to obtain a more heterogenous sample in regards to gender, and simultaneously try to assess if, when dealing with paradoxes, gender plays a role in the referred coping strategies. In the same way, it would also be curious to assess cultural differences and commonalities between countries with more dramatically distinct cultural norms – perhaps from different continents, (e.g. China and Portugal).

Lastly it would be compelling to consider whether the business area has an impact on the way managers deal with paradox (e.g. a non-profit organization vs a consultancy firm) and whether managers apply different strategies to different felt paradoxes.

Conclusion

“The wisdom extracted from organizational paradoxes can change how we think more than what we think” (Wendt, 1998) – this quote embraces the main idea defended by this paper. When managing paradox one learns how to develop them, how to adapt to them, how to change oneself in view of that, how to respond and how to live alongside them daily. If one chooses to learn a paradoxical way of thinking and to adopt a paradoxical management style, that

acceptance changes how you feel towards paradox, not what you feel – one simply learns how to deal and cope with the way they feel.

The idea that one can learn how to cope brings us back to the concept of experience: the idea that a person is able to adapt and learn from and with paradoxes. This means we should not always expect young managers to have the power to perform as well as more experienced managers. Balancing different organizational demands successfully is therefore a skill that is mostly learned over time, on the job – and as we can conclude from this research – after the correct interaction between different dimensions in a manager's life.

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Annex 1 – Interview script

Gender:

Age:

Years of experience (as manager):

Job description:

1. What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager? How do you deal with these difficulties?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?
2. How do you perceive change in your work place?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations
3. How do you deal with change in the workplace?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

4. How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (in the case where there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively against those measures).
5. How do you react to managerial contradictions? (e.g. having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands while answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).
6. Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

ANNEXES

Includes:

Annex 2 – Data Structure with proof quotes: page 2

Annex 3 – Transcribed interviews: page 13

Annex 2 – Data structure with proof quotes

Proof quotes	1 st order categories	2 nd order categories	3 rd order categories
<p>D1: “Planning allows me to focus on the seriousness of the problems I have in hand and then, later, solve the minor problems I am being alarmed by. Because if I start by the minor problems first I won’t solve anything.”</p> <p>D11: “My job requires that I prioritize my work, so that is what I do – if I didn’t do that I wouldn’t be able to function at home or at my work place.”</p>	Plan and prioritize		
<p>D1: “Meanwhile it is crucial to explain this to the people around you. What I see a lot are managers who know what to do, they are doing what they are supposed to do, but they don’t explain what it is they are doing. You need to have people that follow you and understand what you are doing, what it is that you are set out to accomplish, so that they can “live” the change as well. Understanding why and how I am doing something, makes them part of the process and makes the people around me see that I believe in my actions.”</p> <p>D8: “It is very important for the employees to be involved in decisions that are taken and integrated in the different processes that are part of the organization. (.) I always need to go back to my people, talk to them, listen to them, and have them on board with me in solving our problems.”</p>	Integrative management	Management skills	Professional skills
<p>D13: “I usually assess pros and cons and after I make the decision. Sometimes I go with it even if people say no. Between options you should always think what is</p>	Strategic thinking		

<p>ultimately best for your business and decide according to that.”</p> <p>P4: “And that’s what you need to focus on. The positive, the reason that got you there, what is going to happen, how it is going to succeed. Contradictions exist, but you need to focus a lot. Keep the focus and you can go on with what you are doing.”</p>			
<p>D1: “The most important thing is to keep the dialogue flowing. (...) And for myself I have to talk to people at my level, explain what I am doing, what problems I am facing, the issues my employees are voicing – keeping the dialogue open with my peers.”</p> <p>D12: “I think the way I deal with it is just to name them, be honest and transparent about them, face them and ask bluntly what are we going to do about them.”</p>	<p>Open communication and transparency</p>		
<p>D1: “(...) you need to know where you are going (...) You need to know what’s at risk, what might be the consequences, how large is your risk level and how are you going to manage it and then you have to do: decide.”</p> <p>P9: “I believe that as long as you have valid arguments and a proper way of explaining things to people you can fight the tendency that people have to say “no”. (...) I believe that if you work in a team where everyone has the same clear goals, everyone is aware of their tasks and of what everyone else is doing it promotes a successful environment.”</p>	<p>Clear view</p>		
<p>D7: “Also as a manager I should, and have to be always impartial. (...) It is also about attitude, if you want to be fair and honest it will reflect on your behaviour and on the way you act. If you believe</p>	<p>Healthy work environment</p>		

<p>that being fair isn't important you will then be more susceptible to being biased and being influenced.”</p> <p>P1: “Simple things such as changing the layout of an office can alter dynamics. People assume things from the way the office is changing for example, and they react to that change. We felt that when we changed our office from Lisbon to Oeiras – people reacted to all these small alterations, sometimes with very negative attitudes, so we started to become aware of these aspects.”</p>			
<p>D8: “You need to learn how to approach differently: you don't say that that specific way is wrong, but it could be improved, and by working together, you end up helping everyone.”</p> <p>P3: “I decided that that person in particular should have an individual and customized follow-up process since their expectations had now been completely misplaced and altered. So, I had to adjust my efforts towards that employee particularly due to what had happened.”</p> <p>P7: “I believe that as a manager, whether it be me or someone else, you have to be willing to accept some level of schizophrenia in their life. You can't really step away from paradoxes, that isn't something that you can do in organizations, it is something that you must learn how to live and deal daily with. You need to accept that insanity, at some point, as a part of your life, and as part of who you are as a manager. Accept the constant contradictions that present themselves to you every day in an organization. (...) What I had to interiorize was that my sanity depended on my ability to accept a certain level of insanity.”</p>	<p>Adaptability</p>	<p>Professional Learning and Development</p>	

<p>Joris: “I chose to learn, and I chose to develop. And that is what makes you able to deal with things better (...) if you talk, you listen. If you yell you learn nothing, if you talk and listen you find problems, you identify solutions.”</p> <p>P2: “Sometimes it’s not so much about the amount of years you’ve been working, but what you take from it. How you learn, where you do it and with who you do it. Sometimes what you learn in 5 years, you can learn in 2 if you are in the right company with the right people.”</p>	<p>Openness</p>		
<p>D10: “Change is inevitable, with life and with work. You can try to resist it, of course, but it is inevitable, so you have to go with it, and adapt yourself, every day, to it. (...) There are always problems, tensions are, despite this awareness, omnipresent at all times – but they can be managed. You have to manage them, there is no way around it – you just have to. You have to be creative, you have to be flexible, you just have to deal with them.”</p> <p>P12: “(...) you need to understand that they are never going to be solved – there is no answer.”</p>	<p>Inevitability</p>		
<p>D8: “(...) to be good at your job you need to know the people you work with, listen them, know their reasons to show up every day. You don’t understand them by convincing them, or persuading them, it’s by listening to them. Knowing people’s drives is crucial.”</p> <p>P2: “When it comes to teams it really does depend on the type of profile that specific team has. Some people are more prone to change than others. I currently have 15 people in my team (and for a Marketing team that is considered a large team),</p>	<p>Understanding the people around you</p>		

<p>what I usually do is try to identify the people that are more attracted to change and the people that are more reluctant to it, and I try to bring the ones that like change to my side of things and they can later help me bring the other ones into the process.”</p>			
<p>D1: “(...) you need to be able to relativize it, you have to say that “this is only work”.”</p>	<p>Relativizing</p>		
<p>D7: “I personally did a couple of mentoring programmes as well as management trainings, which are very good at helping you find the management techniques you are most comfortable with. I also talk to other more experienced managers a lot, looking for advice and help when I am in a difficult situation. When I have a particular issue I talk to my senior manager, and they can tell you how they would approach that problem, since they have more experience.”</p> <p>P3: “Something that usually helps me and I tend to do more and more nowadays is to ask my people what they would do if they were in my place, what would be the strategy they would choose and why. If I do that I am making it so that whatever I decide, they feel a part of. (...) I am making them part of the decision process. It also makes them understand, when I am in a harder situation, and I really only have one possible option to choose, how hard it is and how sometimes my hands really are tied.”</p> <p>P12: “When I am in one of those moments where I face myself with a paradox or a contradiction, or with my hands tied, I talk to my colleagues. We established a group of friends here at the organization and, honestly, you talk it out. It is crucial</p>	<p>Search for support</p>	<p>External Resources</p>	<p>Coping mechanisms</p>

<p>that you vent, you need to discuss about it, and you need to ask people for feedback and advice: people help. The rest I'm still learning."</p>			
<p>P10: "I also go on long walks, and that helps me to clear my head at the end of the day, or at end of the week, or when I had something really, really stressful that week." P12: "I used to go to the gym and that helped immensely, the fact that I could do something that I enjoyed, a physical activity that actually cleared my mind while I was doing it."</p>	<p>Physical activities</p>		
<p>D10: "The second thing that helps quite a lot is that I don't live in Leiden (place where subject works). I live in Den Hague, so I have a 30 to 40 minutes' drive from work to my home (and vice versa). This allows me to actually create a separation between my work and my family, since it is a real physical barrier." P2: "And another thing that truly helps me is to go home and be with my kids. And that is a very big difference from when I started working, today I get home and almost automatically I need to stop and start thinking about who needs a shower, who needs dinner, where are the diapers – it's almost the perfect "switch off"."</p>	<p>Routine distractions</p>		
<p>D7: "Of course sometimes there are situations where you can't leave the job at the door and you overthink and overweigh a situation and it just ends up being in the back of your head the whole weekend, for example. But that is also, again, something that you get over time, the ability to separate things and see that work is work and personal life is personal. You have to impose on yourself certain</p>	<p>Disconnection</p>	<p>Detachment</p>	

<p>periods where you don't have work, you aren't allowed to think about work or do anything about it.”</p> <p>P7: “I don't believe it to be possible to actually separate those two realities. In my case they have always been kind of “mashed” in each other. And this obviously cause problems in both sides. (...) At some point I decided that I was going to stop taking work to do at home, but I believe I never really let it go in my head. I was able to discipline the physical part, but not the mental part – to this day.”</p>			
<p>D1: “You need to be aware of what is happening, what you are doing, what will happen. You cannot tell people to change and grow and develop, if you yourself do not do the same, or take the time to reflect on yourself.”</p> <p>D3: “What does keep me thinking sometimes, at home is, how am I going to provide to someone the necessary tools to make them able to develop themselves to the next level, and I am good enough to coach someone through that process. And this isn't much of doubting myself, as it is to be self-critical.”</p> <p>P9: “Something I usually do is to look back and assess “why didn't it work the first time? What did I do differently? What can I do so that this won't happen again?”.”</p>	Self-awareness	Self-knowledge	Reflexive self-management
<p>D9: “I am not really good at delegating, so I try to solve everything by myself – which mostly not a good strategy.”</p> <p>D8: “Something good about the way I am and the job I do is that I don't take things home with me, it's in my DNA. I have never lost one hour of sleep because I was worrying about what was happening in my job.”</p>	Personality characteristics	Self-definition	

<p>P11: “I am personally someone that isn’t very “outgoing” in the sense that I keep that type of issues to myself, and I deal with them very internally, in my head. which isn’t particularly positive. Sometimes the fact that I do that makes it more challenging because at the end of the day I build up all the stress inside, and don’t let it out – this means that if I have a stressful day I’ll keep it all inside.”</p>			
<p>D12: “The curious thing is that at the time I didn’t deal with this, so I had a burnout. (...) My major question was why this was happening to me at that time – I believe it was a combination of all the different responsibilities I had, with my own unique personality.”</p> <p>D13: “I went on holiday in December, to Spain with my dad, and travelling is usually good for me to release stress and all of a sudden, one night I had to go to the hospital. It was crazy, my heart was pounding, I think I had an anxiety attack – it was very strange. So when I came back I decided to change my life style a little bit. Now I actually try to clear stress out and keep my head focused on what needs to happen at that time.”</p> <p>P3: “Many times, I feel like when I leave work and go home, I am frustrated because I can’t be myself, because I cannot voice what I want or think. (...) But that is hard for me – having to suppress my voice on something (...) This is probably because I am still very inexperienced, I still have a lot to learn, and I still need to learn how to cope with the rejection of people around me. That is something that I am going to have to learn how to do. (...) Up until now, this has worked, but I am still learning how to do everything. I am sure in 1 year time I will</p>	<p>Toxicity</p>	<p>Disruptive management</p>	<p>Experience</p>

<p>be very different and my answers will be different. I am sure experience is a part of it, and that is the reason why I am struggling now, because I am lacking, and I feel that.”</p>			
<p>D1: “Of course it has changed me, you learn. You learn a lot during your life, your work – I have learned a lot, especially in changing environments, and even more so in environments in which I was leading that exact change. Learning changes you (...) this is why I deal with things differently than I did 30 years ago, I wasn’t as experienced, I couldn’t learn from things I hadn’t been through. Experience brings you, in a way, trust in yourself, relaxing about things, and a new way of dealing with things in a very different way than you used to before. It allows you to put things into perspective.”</p> <p>Edsel: “You need to learn how to deal with the everyday work, and at the same be prepared for the everyday surprises. (...) I believe it is a matter of experience. (...) But if you have enough experience, have the vision in mind and the direction you want to go, it is easier to this job. (...) you need to go through things enough times to be able to live them again without the stress, and the insecurity.”</p> <p>P10: “Of course, this is something that has brought me a sufficient amount of stress, and at some point in our lives we all take more, or less, stress with us, and sometimes it keeps us from sleeping at night; but thankfully this is no longer such a daily hassle – things have changed. Experience gives you a bit of leverage and it allows you to manage things differently and allows you to do things with the least amount of stress possible. “</p>	<p>Development awareness</p>	<p>Paradoxical management</p>	

<p>D1: “I see people who do not develop, people who are not willing to reflect on what they do (...) You cannot tell people to change and grow and develop, if you yourself do not do the same, or take the time to reflect on yourself. I always align my experiences and see what I can learn from them for myself, my personal benefit.”</p> <p>D11: “Once you deal with problems once, you are able to select your style, the way you want to manage certain situations and just stick with it – but this only possible if you actually go through it and learn from your experience.”</p> <p>P1: “As a manager I try to assume a risk assessment view on situations and manage accordingly – and this is not natural to me at all, I had to learn how to do this, learning how to consider other people’s intakes and how my decisions will impact them. (...) You learn how to cope with everything. If you didn’t learn, you did something wrong.”</p> <p>P7: “I believe it is definitely a process that has some kind of learning curve, as you live through more experiences you learn how to deal with them until the next time they show up, and you get better at finding the best solutions as well.”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Incremental Adaptation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Reflexivity processes</p>
<p>D12: “So I had to look inside me and try to understand why I was having that problem at that specific time. I had guidance for some time, we can say I went through “therapy” to guide me through my burnout. (...). Going through this made me learn that I need to take better care of myself, to understand when something isn’t my problem (give people their own work to do, instead of doing it for them), to prioritize, I also became more confident which helped me to tell</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Transformational Adaptation</p>	

people that something was of their responsibility and not mine.”

D13: “So when I came back I decided to change my life style a little bit. Now I actually try to clear stress out and keep my head focused on what needs to happen at that time. I had to rearrange my priorities, I changed the way I organized my day and the way I dealt with problems at work (less personal involvement, more understanding that work is only work).”

P3: “This is my first experience in a job like this – I have ceased to have a personal life. I am here, I work 8 or 12 hours per day, I do my job, and then I go home and think of new and different team strategies that I can use – because that is also my job. I go home and think of everything I did and what I can do differently or keep doing the same.”

Annex 3 – Transcribed interviews

Dutch sample

Subject D1

Gender: M

Age: 54

Years of experience (as manager): 30

Job description: Regent Manager

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
- What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

The most difficult and most challenging aspect to deal with is getting people to do what you want them to do. And because of this you need to build a relationship with people around you – people have to trust you. The organization I work in now, for a bit over a year, gave me a mission (because I have more experience) to re-establish trust in management.

You need trust, and you need people to believe in what the organization is doing and what management tells them, what I tell them. It is key for them to understand why I am telling them to do something or why I am telling them to change what they are doing or to stop all together.

Also, and this is very important, I don't think, when in a change process, you should call it change. You call it development, the organization develops, you as a manager develop and the people you work with develop. It is important to call it a different thing. You do not change, you can't change - you develop. And that is the heart of it: "do what you say you do, be an example to others all the time and learn from your mistakes".

In my old job when I was a director, for example, we had parking places for costumers, so I never parked there. Even if it was closer to the building I needed to go and work to. And employees expected that because I was one of the bosses that's what I would do. This is a very,

very simple example, but this is what has to be. So again “do what you tell them to do, do the same and build the trust

But ultimately the most complicated and challenging thing, when managing people, is to get them to do what you want them to do.

When it comes to decision making it is a matter of whether I know everything I need to know about a certain event, and do I need to know everything. What is best for a certain context can vary – there is the risk of having too much information to be able to make a good decision.

A crucial point is to know that you don't and shouldn't have to be frightened to make a decision. I am a rather result oriented person, so in my case I make decisions considering the end result. I have to make decisions to get things done. Sometimes decision making is difficult, of course, but you have to do it. So go in without any fear and with the risk in mind that you might not know everything.

Obviously when you start and have no experience it is different, but over the years I think I can say that fear was a very big problem. It is and can be a very negative influence on you and your power to decide.

What do you do when you are scared? How do you manage people then?

The most important thing is to keep a dialogue flowing. Always communicate, always focus on the dialogue. I am now in the middle of a very important and very large reorganization in my company, which isn't successful, it is going badly, we are losing a lot of money, and the only thing I see as positive is to continue to have an open communication channel, keep on talking and preserve the dialogue. We create groups, meetings, with different people to talk about different solutions, perspectives. If you know that a certain group isn't working well, or not doing what you want them to do don't start yelling, don't start e-mailing (never e-mail about important stuff), just talk to the person, to the team, to the people – talk to them! If you talk, you listen. If you yell, you learn nothing, if you talk and listen you find problems, you identify solutions, you discover things you were not aware of. And after you do this you can redirect yourself and do things differently.

So two very important things I have learned are: dialogue, and don't change people – develop them.

➤ How do you perceive change in your work place?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

➤ How do you deal with change in the workplace?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

It's complicated, in this particular case, in this negotiation that we are having in my firm I work at least 12 hours a day and on the weekends, which is part of the job, and it's not forever – it's just now because of this situation. So you need to be able to relativize it, you have to say that "this is only work", you must separate and understand that what you have at home waiting for you is much more important. And personally, what I do at work a lot is ignoring: I need to learn how to ignore a lot of things in order to focus on that specific goal, on what is being asked to me in that moment. For example, in this situation right now, again, if I react to all the e-mails, to all the calls, to all the surprises, if I allow myself to answer to all of that I need to take a step back and prioritize. I need to see what is important, what I need to do for that one thing and what are the steps to take. Planning allows me to focus on the seriousness of the problems I have in hand and then, later, solve the minor problems I am being alarmed by. Because if I start by the minor problems first I won't solve anything.

Meanwhile it is crucial to explain this to the people around you. What I see a lot are managers who know what to do, they are doing what they are supposed to do, but they don't explain what it is they are doing. You need to have people that follow you and understand what you are doing, what it is that you are set out to accomplish, so that they can "live" the change as well. Understanding why and how I am doing something, makes them part of the process and makes the people around me see that I believe in my actions.

Regarding decision making I think it's the same: you need to know where you are going. I'm thinking about a complicated decision that we will be making in a couple of hours at work and it's a very stressful decision, but you know you have to decide. You need to know what's at risk,

what might be the consequences, how large is your risk level and how are you going to manage it and then you have to do: decide. You must consider all variables and decide, or you'll keep losing millions of euros because you can't make a decision.

Also you need to be able to keep finding the fun in what you are doing. Find the humour. It helps you to distance yourself and relativize the situation. You can focus on the moment and laugh at the things that need to be laughed at.

Understanding that change is necessary – it is crucial for survival. Development is the key, again, one does not change, one develops. Understanding the importance of work-life-balance helps you to relativize what you are doing and to keep focus on what is really important. Follow the plan, believe in the plan and you will achieve the goal.

Considering that you believe that separation is the key to dealing with change as a manager and also with the people you work with, it still impacts you, it influences you – has it changed you?

Of course it has changed me, you learn. You learn a lot during your life, your work – I have learned a lot, especially in changing environments, and even more so in environments in which I was leading that exact change. Learning changes you. Of course you don't have 2 lives: a personal one and a professional one. You combine them because your family knows that I might not be home as much now because I am going through this complicated process, but they also understand because it's something that I like to do – you balance it. You understand, over time, that you don't have to dedicate 100% of yourself always. You learn that there are different needs and different answers according to what is being asked of you. You learn that it is you who has to be in control of your life, not the office.

➤ How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

Go on, don't give up. It is very important that I myself believe in the plan we have developed. If I had a group of people that "rebelled" and told me I wasn't doing the right thing, or I was wrong, I have to have faith that what I am doing is right. I must believe in what I am telling them to do. I can't tell people to change and do something if I don't believe in what I am telling them. I can't give up, I go through with the plan and then we go back to the dialogue. I need to

understand why they are opposed to what I propose, the only way of finding that out is by talking to them, and after that is out in the open I tackle that problem, whatever it may be.

In my job as I said I was hired to re-establish trust in management, and it was precisely because someone before me promised too much, knowing they wouldn't be able to deliver, so it failed. And now in my job, when I talk to employees they don't believe anything I tell them, because they think that I will also make promises and fail to deliver. So every day I deal with this negative force. And my job is to fight that negativity and restore the belief in management decisions.

However, sometimes you have to lose people, dialogue goes only until a certain point, but that is definitely the first thing to maintain. You can also rearrange them, change teams, change the task.

And for myself I have to talk to people at my level, explain what I am doing, what problems I am facing, the issues my employees are voicing – keeping the dialogue open with my peers.

➤ How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers – promoting team work - and overseeing them more – promoting individuality –, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

Well flexibility and adjustment is key at all times, just like in change processes. However, and taking one of the examples you presented – if I have a team, I have trust. I do not feel the need to control. If I don't trust, then I control my employees, but then in consequence I don't have a team. In 2016, if I have a team and you are in it, you would not let me tell you what to do, I have to give you the guidelines, tell you the goal, and give you the room to do it, within the company's model.

And in regards to promoting collective efforts versus celebrating individual achievements, I believe there is an overvalue of the “dream team”. I have never really seen it work per se, of course you have teams and management teams but you are still an individual and you achieve and develop mostly by yourself. Of course if you are in a team you can achieve more and you may be stronger, however I think most times this is overemphasized. You need to cooperate of course, but there is a certain extent to it.

➤ Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?

- Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

I don't do things much differently; I am still the same person of course. But that's why I talk about developing, and not change. I see people who do not develop, people who are not willing to reflect on what they do – even on their personal life, not only in business. You need to be aware of what is happening, what you are doing, what will happen. You cannot tell people to change and grow and develop, if you yourself do not do the same, or take the time to reflect on yourself. I always align my experiences and see what I can learn from them for myself, my personal benefit.

And this is why I deal with things differently than I did 30 years ago, I wasn't as experienced, I couldn't learn from things I hadn't been through. Experience brings you, in a way, trust in yourself, relaxing about things, and a new way of dealing with things in a very different way than you used to before. It allows you to put things into perspective.

It is important to remember that you can't say that you have seen at all: because you have not, and there is always something else that may affect you. There are still new problems and new developments that create challenges.

I chose to learn, and I chose to develop. And that is what makes you able to deal with things better.

Subject D2

Gender: M

Age: 62

Years of experience (as manager): 25 years

Job description: Business consultant

➤ What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?

- What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
- What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

As a manager I take on a business consultancy perspective and that may have some influence in the way I see this question. In my experience the hardest thing I find as a manager is not to find competent people to work with you, but to find the exact fit for them – so being sure that the person is doing the job that is best for her, fits her needs and skills and is being developed to the fullest until the moment they retire.

In a consultancy firm you find that there is no stratification, no hierarchy, or less when compared to other areas, it's more of a flat organization. And when you work as a consultant you do it for a long period of time. If you like this area and want to remain in it you will enjoy working in different projects, changing tasks, you aren't always doing the same thing, and projects can take different periods of time to finish. All of these aspects make it a very dynamic process to manage consultancy teams: you need to be sure that the person is doing the right task, that that specific task fits her capabilities and serves a purpose in their development path.

So basically what you are saying is that the hardest thing is dealing with people, in general, over a large period of time – making sure they are developing, their needs are answered and that they succeed in their tasks. And if you deal with the same team, or the same people for a period of 10 years, for example, there will be obstacles, there will be challenges or problems with them because that's what happens. How do you deal with that? How do you deal with facing the same people over that amount of time?

First of all, you must get employees educated on a regular basis, you have to be sure that they don't "stagnate", that they don't stop learning, that they don't actually get bored and feel like they aren't moving forward in their career. We had a lot of people attending Tilburg Business School and getting educated on a more or less permanent basis.

Also we had a principle of job rotation. Which means that if someone had been working for a particular client for a long period of time – which meant that the client was satisfied with the work – we would usually take a step back and change them into a different field and introduce another employee to that case.

➤ How do you perceive change in your work place?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

➤ How do you deal with change in the workplace?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

In a way it's easy, someone that works as a consultant is usually always looking forward to experience and work on new things. So most of our colleagues were enthusiastic about working under different conditions and on new projects. The most challenging aspect for me was to be able to find good business opportunities. And after you do find them how to integrate them and manage them in such a way that is the best for your consultant practice.

Change is constant in this area, but the hardest thing is to keep it sustainable in your business.

➤ How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

Since this area is so dynamic and engaging people are pretty much used to changes and are stimulated by it. But of course we deal with certain reluctances – if a consultant is feeling reluctant to change on any matter it is usually a case of an older employee, that is deeply rooted in his experience and on what he likes to do.

I also think it depends a lot on the type of organization that you are working in. For example, if you work in a manufacturing plant or in a sales organization, processes tend to be the same over time. And when you work on an organization that is project based, every project is new, change is constant and stability is not, and when you are hired by a client he wants to be certain that you move again and disappear. And that's the main difference, I think, between the project organizations (like a consultancy agency) and process based organizations (like the manufacturing plant).

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

In a consultancy since it is a project based field you don't really struggle with answering to new demands versus old needs, giving more or less independence. However, your work in this area can vary from team based to a more individual operated task.

Currently I work individually but before, in my previous position we had a team based operation. So our philosophy was that you are not a good consultant when you work on your own, so you have to, at least, work with a colleague, in order to discuss the customer's problems, and find the best solution possible by discussing it with others.

So you have had the experience of working in both settings: a team based and now an individual based project. Do you believe there is any contradiction in this (in promoting individuality and individual contributions, versus advocating for a team work and collective rewards at the same time)?

Yes of course. I don't personally feel it, as much, anymore since I have been doing this job for quite some time now, but I definitely felt it more when I first started.

Consultancy is a very personal business. If you first do a good job with a client, they will ask for you later again. But if you stay too long with the same client you are no longer capable of surprising him, so he gets used to you. And then you always encounter a paradox: on one hand you want to assure your client, because he likes you and he likes the work you do; and on the other hand you shouldn't do it too long, in order not to get obsolete or bored.

Also on one hand you always feel the urge to be productive (because for a consultant you have to make 12000 hours a year, and if you know a customer well and you know his problems, it's easy to stay with him and keep on working with him); but on the other hand the customer has hired you on a temporary basis, and your project has to end – so finding the ideal moment to stop, step back and say that they have to do it on their own, is hard. Many consultants stick to their customers for too long and then their results and their improvements don't grow as high or aren't as noticeable which leads to the customers stopping them and telling them they are

done. If this happens, it means the consultant was too late and they should have known when to step back.

Have you ever been in that situation? Have you ever been in the position where you should have stepped back and you didn't? Have you ever found it difficult to choose the side you should be on: to keep going or to tell the customer they should go on alone? – how did you find the balance to not affect you personally, or did it?

I always find and found it hard to separate work and private life. When you are working on an important project you start with the problem and then you keep thinking about the solution constantly – it can start to consume you. For me it was always very difficult to separate and define the boundary. And yes, it is always complicated to be in the moment where you tell yourself that you can no longer be a part of a project.

But for me it is obviously hard to leave a project. Nothing is ever completely done. The kind of projects that we work on try to figure something out, making it work and then making the client work with it. We deal a lot with strategic questions, so you think about the type of strategy the client should follow and when the client has decided to implement it, the implementation is great fun! So it's always hard to say "ok, now I leave it to someone else". And also, when you were a part of something that you consider to be a good idea, you feel the need to do it yourself, it's hard to give it to someone else – you want to do it yourself. And it's in that moment that someone has to come in (your boss probably) and tell you to stop and leave it.

After that you need to disconnect from the project. And that is like a detox process for a couple of days, and then you find a new project.

Do you think you are better at it now than you were 10 years ago?

Yes of course. When I first started working as a consultant I did extremely long hours, and after when I took my girlfriend to the cinema, for example, I didn't pay any attention to the movie, I was still thinking about the job. And over the years that has diminished.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Yes. Things I did before when I started are very different from what I do now. You learn how to distance yourself, you know how to deal with problems in a better way over time. Experience is a determinant factor on all of that.

Subject D3

Gender: M

Age: 30

Years of experience (as manager): 1 year

Job description: Debt and capital Team Manager

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

Personally I think my biggest problem is prioritization: we have many different transactions that are running at the same time, we want to provide our clients with the best service that we can possibly give them, but at the same time you need to prioritize between the projects and all the different tasks. We don't have the luxury to waste time so we need to focus our attention on what is really important. So what I do at the beginning of every day is to see what has to be done during that specific day and during that week, and I see what type of deliverables do we have, what and when are my meetings, who does the work and how can I help them do it.

After we consider all of that I think the biggest challenge is to keep listening to people, instead of talking. It's more about coaching the people that do the work, since you are trying to enable them to the best job that they can. They won't get anywhere if they have to do everything by themselves, so I need to help them get started and then let them go on and do the job – and listening to them at the same time.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?

- Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations
- How do you deal with change in the workplace?
- Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

My practice within the firm is transaction based, so we start the day out by knowing that it's probably not going to end the way we expect it to. That makes you better prepared for change and cope better with it than if we worked in a different area. I personally like seeing change as a challenge, and I think that management by inclusion has been my strategy to deal with it when managing people. By including everyone in that process, so letting them know what's going on, with who and why, it makes it easier for people to understand and accept change.

Do you believe that the way you deal with change has been influenced during time? Would you be more affected by it in the beginning of your years working here?

It definitely affected be more back then, yes. In my first transactions, my first projects there were a lot of postponing and that of course disappoints you at first, but over time you get used to it.

How does one deal with that disappointment? Do you allow yourself to stress over it, do you take it home after hours?

I didn't really take it home with me, no. At the time I talked it over with my manager, who was helping me, he basically explained it to me as "this is going to happen, more often than not, don't worry about it, get used to it, it's not your fault, nor their fault – it just happens".

This is also the type of advice that I give my team today, if it's something like this, I always tell them to not take it home with them. Of course sometimes it just doesn't work, if you have conflicting time lines you will need to work on it home at home probably. That is why I always try to sketch out a time line for them, with all the steps they have to take it, specifying the end-date and such. But at the end of the day it is his agenda and it is his choice, so I want to give

them the responsibility to manage their own time, while at the same time maintaining enough margin to adapt as their own if necessary.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

When things don't go the way we had expected them to, nobody really enjoys that situation – so a lot of different feelings come about. At an extreme situation I have seen people leave as a result of bad reactions to change, not in my specific team but from other teams, sometimes just because they don't agree with the strategy that is set in practice. That's one of the biggest problems, I believe, in such a partner structure as we have here, not many people would speak out against something and up it up for a debate. On the other hand, they try to get, in an informal setting, a view on why a specific strategy is being followed, how these new changes will change their job.

Another example that I can think that fits into this scenario is when someone doesn't get the promotion they were expecting, that can start a very big negative wave towards management. In such a case I believe transparency is of great importance! People need to understand why something is happening, why they didn't get that promotion, what do they need to improve. It is important for the employers to understand not to wait until the end of the year to seek out project feedback, but it's also important for us, managers, to give it to them continuously in order for them to understand what they need to improve to get promoted. A tool that I find that helps me a lot is asking my team to, individually, write down a plan on how they see themselves develop through the next years, and if you see that in a year they want to make another promotion, you can tell them at that time what to expect, that it is highly unlikely for that to actually happen.

What about if you actually have something like that happening to you: a confrontation with someone because they didn't get the promotion they wanted. How does that affect you? How do you deal with that?

It is not something that upsets me per se, because if you are being honest, that's how it is – and I think that is the most important thing. What does keep me thinking sometimes, at home is, how am I going to provide to someone the necessary tools to make them able to develop themselves to the next level, and I am good enough to coach someone through that process.

And this isn't much of doubting myself, as it is to be self-critical. Being like that helps me a great deal, I always make plans in my head on how I'm going to be able to achieve a certain goal. It isn't something that stresses me out, it has more to do with the fact that I love my job.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work)

I think a good example of that is when two people are on the same project, so two partners or directors, from different disciplines, and they both give you their view which is in fact contradictory to each other. In a situation like that I tend to keep asking, making them both aware of the contradictions that they each state, and I urge them to discuss amongst themselves, before they talk to us – since I am not going to take a view on the topic. So in my standpoint for this is if they disagree on something they need to get together and fight it over, and that can be very challenging because no one really likes to take the time for this, so I'm just being annoying – but then again, if I stop being annoying I cannot do my job. In the same way that sometimes you need to “manage up”, I need to manage my own boss, make sure he doesn't say anything stupid in the meeting that makes it so that I don't deliver or a job that I can't do. Even though he is my boss, it's not in his job description to tell me what to do, nor is it in mine to just follow and do whatever it is that he tells me to. It's my job to get the job done and it is his job to make sure it stands up to the quality of services that we deliver to the clients. Those things can definitely collide.

And as you can imagine, it's not always but sometimes, something will trigger one of these tensions and it is hard not to take it home, it's hard not to let yourself get affected by it. I do believe however that I don't let it stress me as much as it did before of course.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

I do believe experience is the element that counts the most in that end equation, yes. If you have done it before, if you've seen it, if you have coped with hard situations and had difficult clients,

or managers, or team members, it gets easier. It doesn't affect you that much anymore because you have seen, done it, you know what the outcomes might be, you know how to approach the situation, and that all just gives you a lot of ease of mind.

Subject D4

Gender: M

Age: 37

Years of experience (as manager): 7

Job description: Team Director

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
- What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

I would have to say that the biggest challenges I face are about keeping people satisfied and making sure they feel continuously stimulated and challenged in the work place. I think a very important way to deal with these is to be sure people receive the fair recognition for the work they do, give them the stage when they are successful and let them present their idea, and also let them do the "nice parts" of the job. The hardest thing as a manager is always to deal with people – you have to be flexible with them, you need to understand certain situations and be empathic and after adapt to each scenario. I always try to show support towards every team member.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?
- Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

➤ How do you deal with change in the workplace?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

I believe you have to embrace change. I think change can be good, it keeps you sharp. We usually have 2 meetings with the team per year, to assess if we do things the right way or if we should change things – so we are constantly discussing with each other if we should change or not, if we should keep things the same. In particular, in my department we have to generate our own revenue, so we have a very high client exposure, so if things aren't going the way they should we are open to see how we can do things differently. You have to embrace change for the good, but also be very critical about the way it's done (so you don't take the risk of losing something good).

But of course bad change might also happen and we have to be ready. The first time something changed dramatically was when my manager at the time, when I started working here, left. So I saw myself in a situation where the person I was supposed to learn from was gone, however it also gave me the opportunity to take over his role and step up (which is what happened). When something like that happens, when people decide they have to leave we always try to understand why they want to and we try to see if we can do anything about it. And in that case, if we can do anything about the underlying reason for his desire to leave, we do it! But of course sometimes we have team members that want to leave, and they do so, and all we can do then is try to find someone else to fill in that gap.

How do you personally deal with that tension? How do you find the balance between your own life and self, and the fact that you have an incomplete team and aren't able to answer every need?

By nature, I don't think I'm the type of person that allows themselves to feel a lot of stress at home. However, I do a lot of sports, and that helps me to leave stuff and get away from stressful things. I keep the balance because I am not a workaholic type of person, but yes, doing sports helps me immensely.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

People always have a reason to say no to something, and the best thing you can do is to get to know why exactly that person is saying no and try to solve that issue, instead of pushing the change process. If you want to change something, anything, you have to have everyone from the team on board with you, especially when a small size team scenario – like us here.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work)

Well sometimes you dialogue and sometimes you just have to tell people what to do. I'm a very direct person and I am very approachable, and I also don't really believe in the whole vertical, hierarchical structure, it's not my style – which means I don't like it when there is a very big distance between me and my team members. In that line I try to settle matters with people in a very friendly way, however if there is no time to discuss things I just bluntly tell them what to do. Occasionally that ends up in a bit of a collision but we are a team of 15 guys so we are a bit more practical and we are used to dealing with things like that.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

When I first started this job I was obviously different and reacted differently to things. I think the biggest thing I have learned and changed over time, is the way that I let people do their work. I give my teams way more room, much more flexibility and independence than I did when I first started working.

I truly think that experience has a lot to do with the way you end up working. It influences everything there is to influence in this job. I learned how to embrace change and be very enthusiastic about it, if I hadn't learned that I would react to things very differently and probably in a worse way.

Subject D5

Gender: M

Age: 28

Years of experience (as manager): 2

Job description: Senior consultant in debt advising

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

I recently came back from the UK where I was a manager in debt advisory (job levels differ a bit between countries, within our company). Essentially there was predominantly managing projects rather than managing people. I had a very brief managing experience before going to the UK, mostly managing analysts here doing daily tasks. When I moved to the UK I got more project management skills, and now returning back to the Netherlands I am expecting to really develop my people management capabilities. Something interesting that happened there was that I came back with a more senior role as the one I had when I left, and when I arrived here there were a lot of new guys that had come in, that didn't know me and I come in assuming a more senior position – and I think this was one of my biggest challenges. In my personal experience when I witnessed more senior people being hired I assumed “ok, you are coming in now, as my superior, you are going to show me how things work and what to do”, and that was part of the fear I had when I re-entered the team. And that was definitely one of my biggest challenges: to build the relationship while still assuming the manager role, and to find the balance between satisfying team members and still providing direction.

I think I have now worked with most of the guys both in my team and directors above me and I think it's going well, still have some adjustment to do. It's about finding the triggers for each person, everyone is different, so you have to approach them differently as well. In my experience I would say that if you only have one style of managing, it won't work for everyone so you have to be sensitive to what other people need from you as well.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

- How do you deal with change in the workplace?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

For me I think change is a good thing. When I moved to the UK it served as a challenge, so it forces you into a different perspective. However, when you are a part of a process, when something changes around you it's not always seen as a good thing. For example, if I assume the perspective that the guys from my team were in when I re-entered I can see how that could be seen negatively. When I returned, I tried to act upon that change, I tried to connect with them, mostly on the personal note as well, tried to understand how people felt about what was happening.

I don't think I can call this a stressful situation, it was a very positive one the way I see it, mostly because you learn a lot about yourself during that process. Something good that we do here is that a lot can happen in your progress during a short period of time, so you are always used to being challenged so when something like a promotion like this happens, the shock isn't huge.

A stressful event that I can honestly go back to happened a couple years back, I had been here for 2 years and there was a new hire at the manager level. And we were like 3 or 4 guys in the analyst pool and we didn't really take it all that well. We started thinking "we are working to get to that position, to that level, you haven't been through and aren't going through what we have and are, who are you to tell us what to do?". So you can completely say that in the beginning we didn't really want to admit to that change, but at some point you need to understand that it is what it is and you need to get on board with it. It also didn't help that he had a very directive way of managing and that he created this sense of hierarchy that we were

not used to before. I think our team grew with that, it learned a lot and I, of course, tried to take those lessons with me when now in a manager role.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

Considering that the example you gave me is very similar to the situation that you are currently living with your re-entrance in this team, how would you deal with your team members acting the same way you did some years ago?

I didn't really feel negative forces against me in particular, because I tried not to assume such a directive role from day 1, and be more personal as well as to ask for more input on their part. I assumed a more interactive approach – but I am not sure if that works yet. I feel like if someone were to have adopted that attitude with us before the results would have been better and the relationship itself would have been better. I think your management style depends on the experience that you had before and also my personality doesn't allow me to adopt such a strong and directive style.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work)

I think it's mostly a question of balance. Work here is very team based so that individuality aspect can be very tricky. If we are working as a team and I notice that someone is zoning out, going too much into their thing, I'll try to have follow ups with that person, make sure we are aligned in our efforts and understand what and how we do things here. Personally it doesn't exactly affect me, my personality is more like "it is what it is", there is no point in stressing out about anything, if it's something you just need to deal with, just do it.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Of course! There are people that are “natural” managers” and those types of traits just come naturally to them, they are able to oversee different processes and are very structured people and it all comes naturally to them. But I definitely believe that through experience you can grow in a certain role. Combining both my experiences from the Netherlands and my time in London it taught me to understand certain aspects in team dynamics, and honestly it helped me to understand when change is needed. That’s something I got when I arrived back here, I knew something had to change. Hopefully I will be able to translate something that I learned over time to my new experience here. Experience is everything when you deal with all the different challenges this job brings to you.

Subject D6

Gender: M

Age: 26

Years of experience (as manager): 4 years

Job description: Senior consultant

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
- What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

For me the biggest challenge is always to be absolutely clear on what I want. I think it’s very easy to ask for something in an unclear manner, and for someone else to interpret that in a different way. But at the same time, you can’t be completely prescriptive and to tell people what buttons to press. So, for me I think its hardest to find that balance, and gain that trust with someone you are working with, which I believe you can only achieve after working with someone on a number of different occasions, over a period of time.

I think I always try to invest as much time as possible into the people I am managing, so it's very easy to just give someone something and then not spend the time to say "look if you have any questions, just come back to me". I guess that by investing time in my team, I get to have that trusting relationship and trying to explain and show someone how you want stuff to be done, and by them learning that, we get that relationship. I could probably do better, but that is the way I found to manage with it now.

I don't think I have ever really wondered about the way that I handle my own stress about this matter. Of course I go to the gym, I go for runs, I just started doing yoga. I would say that I am not that stressed of a person at the work place though.

➤ How do you perceive change in your work place?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

➤ How do you deal with change in the workplace?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

Personally, I think I am quite a good person with change, I tend to be receptive to new ideas, taking new stuff on – as long as there is a clear benefit – I think I am quite the adopter of doing stuff. I think my learning point, after spending so many years at this company – is that it is unbelievably hard to move the dial or make a significant impact, because we are a big company and people get used to the processes, people like the things they know, and even if you have the biggest and the greatest idea that will have the greatest impact on everyone, it is still incredibly hard to implement it. I think that change is consistently underrated, and you constantly see good ideas becoming stagnated and dropped. And that is why, and in my experience in this, I think it is super important to be extremely clear on the things that you want to achieve and don't try to be super ambitious. I think you need to be simple, have 1 or 3 very clear objectives and other good stuff will roll off that.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

It is very difficult, I have read another book very recently, about change management, it is called "Turn the ship around", which is about a nuclear war ship and it is performing really badly and in about 2 years it becomes the best performing ship. So, it's about the strategy that the guy uses and his entire philosophy is about empowering of people – and that is something that I am trying to do more and more. So however great you are or your idea is, if it's just you shouting it at people, then it is never going to get really taken on. And there are several of steps you can take, but basically you empower all the junior guys and all the people around you, so you don't have to micromanage it and make people assume a certain responsibility. And the way you do that is by incentivizing people, punishing them, you can do all sorts of different things.

For me, trying to empower people would be the way I would try to bring change about. So if I do that, if I make it a shared process, I won't have people against me. Ask people what they think, how they feel about something, be transparent.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

I mean, I think I always try and be fair, but maybe everyone does. I think there are moments of awkwardness, I have personally not been through one, but I have seen them around me at times. Just like when 2 guys are going for a promotion, for example, and you know which one is going to get it. I'm very big believer in honesty, as early in time as you can. Which means you should try to be as proactive as possible, instead of passive, ignoring the elephant in the room will, more often than not, make things worse. If I were in a situation like that I think I would try to be as clear and as honest as possible, even when it's not the message that people want to hear, they will probably be more receptive to it on the long run.

I haven't lived through such an experience, but I always try to be honest about things and transparent and most of the times it just gets sorted out by itself.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Do you believe that you have changed the way you manage and deal with these matters over time? What has changed since the day you started until now?

I think the way I did things before and the way I do things now has changed 100%. I guess it's just my own learning of people that I have worked with. I see in other people attitudes or actions that I admire, or I believe make sense, so I try to implement them as well, and treat my people the way I was treated by my own managers when I was in their place. It's about a lot of small and silly things sometimes, just the fact that your manager checks in on you in the beginning to see if everything is ok, you end up thinking that is nice, instead of ignoring people and end up having weak or unpleasant relationships with your teams.

I think it mostly comes down to experience. Of course you read a book, and you read an article in the newspaper that influences you, but if you do it in the office later, I think it ends up reinforcing itself. If I read an article that says that I should only check my e-mail and my phone for only 1 hour per day, and I actually do it and I think it works it will remain with me and in my style of work.

I believe that it is mostly experience yes, the way you deal and the way you manage things is for sure a result of what you learn.

Subject D7

Gender: M

Age: 35

Years of experience (as manager): 3

Job description: Debt and Capital Advisor

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?

- What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

I think the biggest challenges are to keep people motivated and engaged, keep teams challenged, so that they feel stimulated enough and to make sure people keep growing continuously.

It's very important that you have an open dialogue with your team members at all time, asking for feedback and directly questioning feelings and if they are comfortable with the way things are going. Open dialogue is also crucial when you want to understand to what extent your team members want to grow in: so, that you know what their expectations are and how you can deal with them, and also sometimes avoid disappointments. A way that I learned how to deal with these problems as well, was to give them responsibility, make them accountable for each individual action and then it doesn't fall all on me. This also helps them to grow and create a sense of individuality, while still being a part of something bigger and contributing to the overall team's goal.

These are problems that I feel as a part of my job, but I wouldn't say it is something that stresses me out, I am usually good at separating things so I don't usually "take things home with me". If there is a problem, if my team isn't engaged, that falls on me, that's my problem and it is something that I am not doing correctly so I have to act on it.

Of course sometimes there are situations where you can't leave the job at the door and you overthink and overweigh a situation and it just ends up being in the back of your head the whole weekend, for example. But that is also, again, something that you get over time, the ability to separate things and see that work is work and personal life is personal. You have to impose on yourself certain periods where you don't have work, you aren't allowed to think about work or do anything about it.

➤ How do you perceive change in your work place?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

➤ How do you deal with change in the workplace?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

For me I try to understand that change is inevitable and inherent to organizations and external market place, so I try to embrace it. And that is something that I try to transmit to others in my team and that we have to be proactive towards it.

➤ How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

I think part of that would be to understand what the barrier is with that person, why is she/he not accepting the new changes. I believe there is usually a negative bias towards change, which has to be broken. After listening what the reasons are from that specific person I try to incorporate their reasoning and their arguments into the process, and I always try to be flexible. I think it is very important in this job to realize that your view is not the only view that is valid, this means you have to listen and try to combine other people's perspectives and opinions – and of course to do that you are going to have people against you and you are going to have to listen to them as well.

People need to know that they are part of the process, that they have an influence in the change process and that we are taking into account their views and feelings.

➤ How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

Taking on the team vs individual example that you suggested, what I try to do is to avoid having a sense of competition within my team. I think that is the paradox: of course, there is a minimal sense of competition inherent to this job because the one that makes the best transactions or does the best works has higher probabilities to impress the seniors the most, and will then receive a better reward. But i think this is normal. Let's assume there are 2 types of

competition: healthy competition and unhealthy competition. What I just described would fall into the healthy category, above everything there is the highest interest of the team and the accomplishment of team goals. As a manager, you also have to act like that, you need to show that the biggest concern is the team and that the team comes before the individual, but then the problem is that individually you need to consider what they need to do to grow, how will they achieve their targets.

I think honest feedback, when something goes wrong, is very important in this scenario. And even though, objectively, there is competition, in my interactions I never give a sense that there is any competition.

In a scenario where there would actually be unhealthy competition going on in my team I believe I would do take more drastic measures. Something that I do already is that I never participate in gossip, and I don't encourage it among my team. You can talk about team members, but not in a negative way. And if you feel like anyone is actually doing that with a harmful intention they should speak out.

Also as a manager I should, and have to be always impartial. It's easy to do when you are talking about two subordinates, but once it involves you or once you have a negative perception of one of the team members you take the risk of being biased, you have to be careful. It is also about attitude, if you want to be fair and honest it will reflect on your behavior and on the way you act. If you believe that being fair isn't important you will then be more susceptible to being biased and being influenced.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Do you believe that you have changed the way you manage and deal with these matters over time? What has changed since the day you started until now?

I believe I have become way more flexible with people, that is something that I was not known to be around others. You learn how to put yourself in other people's positions and seeing things through their standpoint when you go through a job like this.

As I said in the beginning there are situations which do end up affecting you and that is something you learn how not to do only as time goes by. I learned how to prioritize things: private and family life is more important so you have to give it more time and it becomes a higher priority.

It also takes some time to get used to the idea that you have subordinates, that you are telling people what they are doing. It's hard when you suddenly have to show leadership skills, and lead by example, to take everyone's viewpoints into consideration while still doing your job, considering all the different pressures that are inherent to this job. Nowadays I believe I have more control over several of those aspects, I am better at understanding how I motivate and I how engage people than I was a couple years back.

I wouldn't say it "all" comes down to experience, it can never just be that. Experience has a huge part in it but I believe it's also about finding your specific style, finding yourself as a manager and being true to that. I personally did a couple of mentoring programmes as well as management trainings, which are very good at helping you find the management techniques you are most comfortable with. I also talk to other more experienced managers a lot, looking for advice and help when I am in a difficult situation. When I have a particular issue I talk to my senior manager, and they can tell you how they would approach that problem, since they have more experience.

But of course when you do something for the first time it can be difficult, but the second time you do it, it becomes easier and less scary. So yes, there is a lot of different variables in what makes you succeed as a manager, but experience is a very big part of it – it teaches you how to deal with all of the problems you face.

Subject D8

Gender: M

Age: 50

Years of experience (as manager): 30

Job description: Regional firefighter Commander

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
- What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

The biggest problem usually I feel is to get everyone working in the same direction, getting all the noses pointing the same way. I have over 2000 firefighters divided into 70 fire stations, between one station and the other there is about 120km and I have to be sure they are all doing the same thing. They all have to be trained in the same way, execute things in the same way, have the same materials, the same uniforms, and also they should all have the same view about the way we do things and what we stand for. It becomes difficult to deal with everyone, each person is different and has a different thing to say; more broadly if I compare the people I have in the south and the people I have to manage in the north of the Netherlands, they are different, they have different ways of seeing things and ways of reacting. That by itself is difficult to deal with because they all have to work in the same way and with the same resources while being very different between themselves, so that means that communication that comes from me and training programmes, for example, they all have to be adjusted to those differences.

I have established 4 main guidelines which are important to the way that we do things here: 1. You have to be good at what you do, a good professional; 2. You need to be aware of what your uniform represents and that when you are wearing it people see you and it means something; 3. We have to be and we represent a powerful organization, when you call us, we show up; 4. We don't work alone, we work together with other partners. This is the basis of our job, this is what I have to transmit to people every day.

This is obviously a lot to do, it's easily overwhelming, and it's difficult to keep everyone on board with you and your mission. It is very important for the employees to be involved in decisions that are taken and integrated in the different processes that are part of the organization. So what I do usually is to call meetings, around 50 or 60 people and I talk to them as the commander of the force, and they give me the information they need. Different stations, and different regions have different demands towards 1 action that I am trying to implement, so you have to adapt and adjust. I always need to go back to my people, talk to them, listen to them, and have them on board with me in solving our problems.

I believe that if you are a good and trained professional, your boss doesn't have to tell you what to do. So, they can help me help the organization, I go to them and if we have a certain challenge we help each other understand what the different options are.

➤ How do you perceive change in your work place?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

➤ How do you deal with change in the workplace?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

People must get used to the fact that change is a normal thing, and if things are “normal” that's not normal. We have challenges, the world has changed and my people need to be prepared to understand that they have to do other things that they never did in order to save people's lives. In 100 years of existence of the fire fighters in the Netherlands we had the luxury of sitting back, and waiting until the fire started, putting out the fire and go back, and then wait again. That is over. We are in the beginning of the stage to prevent fires from happening, we are in the middle of the cooperation with all partners (hospitals, schools), and after – if nothing else works – we have to put out the fire.

The world is a much more complex place than it was 25 years ago, in the Netherlands for example our architecture is very dense, we have the channels, all the railroads, and we are a high producing country, a lot of chemical industries for instance, and that means we have new challenges that we have to take care of.

Change is not a threat; change is a way of life that we have to learn to live with. Not everything is changing but we do have new demands and new needs to answer to now that we didn't have in the past. For example, I have to give my people different training from the one they received 20 years ago because now they have to be prepared for terrorist attacks. Burnt victims are very different from victims who were in an explosion and I need to prepare them for that. We are

still evolving towards the new challenges: the Netherlands is vulnerable to wild fires, high water rise, but we are not prepared for bridge collapsing for example and we don't have them built well enough considering that possibility.

What about when you assumed this position, as commander and chief, how did you embrace that change? How did people around you react?

I think people were happy about the fact that I was chosen, because I came from outside. At the time, I was working in Amsterdam and I had a lot more experience than my other colleagues. Of course in the first couple of months I had people going like "who are you and what are you doing here?" but now they are very glad I am here.

It was also a very big challenge for me: I didn't know the southern part of Holland very well; I lived in Amsterdam for 27 years; and before I was a firefighter there, in Amsterdam, I was the director of Social Sciences at Leiden University – it's a very big change. All my life I voluntarily made choices for change in order to get more insights and to encounter new challenges as well.

When I first changed from the School of Social Sciences to start being a firefighter that was a very big challenge for me. And I obviously questioned myself many times, but the best way of getting things done is to understand what your own difficulties are, what your shortcomings are. If you know what you are good at and what you aren't good at, you can manage yourself and those around you better. If you know don't possess a certain talent, make sure someone around you does. You need to find complementarity in the people you work with, you complement each other in your talents.

But overall in a change process we need to make sure everyone's voice has been spoken, we heard it and taken it into consideration. It is a very, very cultural thing – if I didn't do it, my job would be over in a matter of months. You need to listen to everybody and try to integrate what is possible and what is not in what you want to do, everyone has to be a part of the process. It's the way we work here in the Netherlands.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

I make them argue about it. I get them together at this table and I make them talk about it. Sometimes it is quite simple: I am the commander, and I get to say which way to go, and they accept that. But also, because they trust me, there is nobody in this whole region that has more experience in crisis management than me. They know I am a professional so they trust me. We usually have to make decisions in 2 worlds: the cold world (which is the normal way we do things) and the hot world (that's when the fire starts). In the last scenario, we have a very, very clear structure line in command and I am the highest, and whatever I say that's what is done. Plus, in a crisis, nobody argues – you act.

But in a cold world situation, everybody argues! Something good about the way I am and the job I do is that I don't take things home with me, it's in my DNA. I have never lost one hour of sleep because I was worrying about what was happening in my job. It's not that I don't get angry about something during the day, but what I do when something like that happens is that I call the people that were responsible. I call to them to my table and am honest, I ask them what happen. People know I am fair, and they trust me but they also know that if they are being called into my office they should be a bit scared as well. There are 2 things that I do: when there is a celebration: I am there; but when things fall apart: I am also there.

At the end of the day, my job is a very symbolic one. A couple of weeks ago, one of my fire fighters took his own life, and it was incredibly important for me to come and show up. That is the most important for the community we have here. I am the commander: they know they can talk to me, I'll help them, I take care of them, I guide them and they can discuss with me whatever, but I am also their chief in command.

Is it hard for you, to be such a symbolic presence? Both professionally and personally.

No, not at all. I think I am very privileged to be in the position that I am in: I love my job; I love the people I am working with. Firefighters are like a family, but it's also a bit like an Italian family: you have the hard way of doing things but you also have the good things. As I said, I am the fire commander but I am also the one that takes care of the people in my force, so you receive a lot of appreciation for the work you do, if you do it the way I do it. It's always about danger, about life and death, personal lives get involved, a lot of these people are married and have children and they see things other people never dream of. And I am the one that assures that my people are doing their job right, getting the appreciation and the attention they need for the things they do, it's about loyalty. That's what it means to have a symbolic job.

Sometimes when I talk to my friends – who are mostly in the board of directors, they are CEO's, working in big companies – I ask them at 2am which one of us, can in 15 minutes, have 200 people waiting for them outside. And they all say that they can't do it, but I can.

It's a completely different motivation, it's a different way of looking at life and it's a different reasoning to come in to work in the morning. You need to know the identity of your people, why they do what they do.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

The biggest challenge in an organization is that 80% of the efforts is going to 20% of the people that don't want to do that – I changed that. Now, 80% of the efforts go to the 80% of the people that are willing to change. I had people working in the force for 35 years, and all of a sudden a new commander shows up and says that they need to change – that doesn't always go down good. It's not that the old way we used to do things is wrong, it's just the fact that we have to improve. But you need to explain why you are doing this, that people understand.

A sort of a paradoxical scenario occurred when I came in as Commander because we needed to start being prepared, not only fighting active and present problems, but also preparing for them and preventing them. So, we had different needs colliding with each other, because there was too much to consider and to work on.

But still people that have been doing things in a certain way for 35 years are not going to react well when someone younger than them comes in and say otherwise. They don't care that you learned how to do something, in a new way, straight out of the Academy, they will answer you by saying that they don't care because the way they have been doing things, still works. You need to learn how to approach it differently: you don't say that that specific way is wrong, but it could be improved, and by working together, you end up helping everyone. I still have 10% to 15% of my firefighters as very conservative people – but it's good as long as they do their job right.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
- Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Do you believe that you have changed the way you manage and deal with these matters over time? What has changed since the day you started until now?

I think I have mostly become better at listening to people, rather than telling them what to do. When I was in my 30s I was an ambitious manager, so “I tell my people what they do” and if I talk long enough, they will do it. But that only works for a short amount of time. What has changed is that you make sure that you really understand what is going on in your organization. Understand why people get out of their bed at night to fight a fire, you need to understand the reasons. To be good at your job you need to know the people you work with, listen them, know their reasons to show up every day. You don’t understand them by convincing them, or persuading them, it’s by listening to them. Knowing people’s drives is crucial.

I now know this because I got older, I got more experienced, and because I rarely make decisions based on hard facts but instead, on gut feeling.

Experience is obviously very important, but gut feeling is more important. They are both very connected to one another, but they are not the same. We have a saying here which is “you are as good as your last fire fight”, if your last one was miserable, that’s what counts. So, experience is important, but the fact that you understand what’s happening, that you can frame it and predict what is going to happen from it, that is much more important. But of course, this is a combination of gut feeling, experience and part of your DNA. Some people have what it takes to lead and manage, show up and do your job, solve situations, some don’t.

Subject D9

Gender: F

Age: 45

Years of experience (as manager): 17

Job description: Strategic advisor

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

I would say my biggest problems would be to have my people do the exact job that fits their skills and needs, keep them focused on the specific issues they must deal with at that time (because in our organization we have many different projects happening at the same time, so my team is often asked to advise on different issues at once), and lastly I would say prioritizing (we have way too much work to do so we get easily distracted and never really finish something if we don't control it).

I usually always keep an open channel of communication between myself and my team, and that helps me deal with scenarios in which my team isn't focused, or when efforts aren't aligned, so if something goes wrong I usually just talk it out and discuss it with my team openly.

I think that when practicing this sort of job you always find it difficult to leave work completely at the work place, so you always end up taking it with you. Not always as a negative aspect, but in my case I find it easier to have more ideas and be creative about solutions when I am relaxed, so I will occasionally find myself at home wondering about different solutions for a problem. It's not always stressful, it can be more playful, but of course when something goes wrong it can become very stressful and it becomes more negative.

When that happens I usually start examining what went wrong, ask other managers for advice and see what they would do if they were in your situation and try to take on a decision to solve that problem.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations
- How do you deal with change in the workplace?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

I personally love change, I live by it, if I am in an organization that has stagnated for a long time I start to get bored. I also believe that change is a good thing, we should change continuously because it is very, very important for a person to adapt to their environment, as well as for an organization to adjust to its environment.

Of course people aren't always open to change, because "business as usual" is comfortable and people don't like being disrupted from their routine. It's not necessarily that people "don't like" change and are rejecting it, but it usually means more work for them since they have to keep doing their work, while still learning how to change their procedures, the way they now do things and try to feel comfortable with it as soon as possible. And sometimes this can lead into a focus problem: you have so many new things to learn and do that people just lose the focus on their actual job and task.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

I feel like when that happens the first and most important reaction to have is to be open. I feel like opinions must be valued, and just because someone in your team has a different opinion on something than you have it doesn't necessarily mean that he is rejecting what you are telling them. Again, I underline the importance of open communication and I believe you should start a direct conversation with the "problem" person and try to understand why it is that person has a different view, so justification for their positioning, I try to learn from that and then try to integrate it in the movement that we are trying to set into action. Obviously, this is only done if we agree that that specific point of view will improve what is happening and can fit with the set out process.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

It's difficult, I am not really good at delegating, so I try to solve everything by myself – which mostly not a good strategy. It goes back to a lot of prioritizing. You need to be aware of all the different things that need your attention, when are they due and what time can you expend on each of them. I would say that here we aren't particularly good at "finishing" things, we tend to pick up new projects and leave old one's behind.

There should, clearly, exist a better balance between these needs and the way we manage to deliver (or sometimes not) our results. We want everything at the same time I think we should, sometimes, slow down a bit and just finish everything.

This way of doing things can make me very restless. I have in my team a couple of people that are very good in "finishing" stuff up and I try to involve them more so that I can give more attention to new needs. That is the strategy that I try to use now and try to help me becoming less restless. But of course, it is something that if you don't work on or try to improve will just occupy space at the back of your head and slowly consume your attention. And that is something that I definitely take home with me, it never stops at 5 or 6 o'clock.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Do you believe that you have changed the way you manage and deal with these matters over time? What has changed since the day you started until now?

When I started working 17 years ago, I worked very much on my gut feeling. Nowadays you can add experience to that: you have seen what works and what doesn't, so you don't only rely on your intuition. I also try to listen more, instead of solving someone else's problem I try to coach them into doing it themselves, so there are things that obviously change. I am still struggling with the delegation but it's better now than before.

Experience plays a huge part in the way you manage, but also what you learn from other managers or from programmes and trainings that you do – but of course that all counts into the experience category.

Subject D10

Gender: M

Age: 52

Years of experience (as manager): 25

Job description: Managing director

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
- What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

I would say I could divide them into contextual factors (so changes in the market) and, on the other hand, employees have changed. And so, my biggest difficulty would be to see if the people I deal with and I work with fit with the organization and its values, as well as making sure my colleagues working at their best capabilities.

Because we work in Crisis Management, we have an advantage which is that we know how to deal with crisis, and stress, so we don't really allow ourselves to freak out. What I believe helps a lot is a mental question, in terms that not everything that happens is a personal problem, and therefore, it shouldn't affect you as such. So, you learn how to separate things, somethings are purely business related problems. This allows you to understand that whatever happens at the office, stays at the office – so you don't take it home with you.

The second thing that helps quite a lot is that I don't live in Leiden (place where subject works). I live in Den Hague, so I have a 30 to 40 minutes' drive from work to my home (and vice versa). This allows me to actually create a separation between my work and my family, since it is a real physical barrier. I also believe sports help me a lot, I am a long-distance runner – which requires that you have your full energy and full focus on the distance.

Also, being the manager director – the owner of the company – allows me to pursue values and goals that I like, achieve them the way that we like to do it. It also allows us to define the work as we want, so we make it challenging and we make it fun, exciting and complex as well. So

we get a lot of energy from our work, which also helps to diminish stress, since it is cut to our specific desires and needs. Basically, being the manager director lets me have a certain amount of flexibility to decide the way we do things, when we do it and what we choose to do – that helps a great deal.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

- How do you deal with change in the workplace?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

Change is inevitable, especially when you consider our business context which is one of crisis management. Our work is not routine work, which means I hardly do the same work every day. We work on a project basis, so every customer is different, every employee is different, and that requires a different managing style and needs a different technique or approach.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

it's not about having positive or negative people with you, it's the fact that you need to do it, it is part of our job. Our task is to be sure that we take everyone on that processes with us (customers and employees). Change is inevitable, with life and with work. You can try to resist it, of course, but it is inevitable, so you have to go with it, and adapt yourself, every day, to it.

Regards customers we do everything in definition of the project and in constant communication with the client. We take them through the whole process and we schedule milestones where we inform them, we exchange feedback and this is the way we make business. We aren't afraid of saying that we should do things differently, because they trust us – so there isn't going to be

high resistance from them towards what we tell them. Of course sometimes it is difficult for us, a certain client can be more demanding or more inflexible, but that is part of the job, you deal with it.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work)

I have currently 20 projects running at the same time, it's part of the everyday life. Of course, that when you start, you begin with 1 project, and then you get 2 projects at the same time. On one hand, it's a matter of getting adapted and on the other hand it's also a complement – because the more projects you get, the more projects people around you think you can handle. You need to understand your span of control and what is in your reach, if it goes outside that reach, you expand your staff and the network of people that help you. As long as you prioritize and understand what it is that you want as a final result you won't get stuck on old demands conflicting on new demands, and so on.

There are always problems, tensions are, despite this awareness, omnipresent at all times – but they can be managed. You have to manage them, there is no way around it – you just have to. You have to be creative, you have to be flexible, you just have to deal with them. It's not like Nixon said when he was informed about the Watergate: “Mr. President, we might have a serious problem.” And he looked in to his agenda and said “it doesn't fit into my agenda this week”. This is not how it works, you have to deal with the tensions and the conflicts that surface every day, and you better do it as soon as possible, as adequately as possible. The challenge is to make a problem a serendipity alternative for the future.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Do you believe that you have changed the way you manage and deal with these matters over time? What has changed since the day you started until now?

I think the most important is when the number of projects go beyond the span of control. I can say that where I have changed the most is to delegate authority to other people. This is difficult because when I started this, I was everything: I was the owner, I was the single employer, I was the house keeper and the cleaner, I was the consultant, whatever. You want to do everything perfect, but as soon as you are going to work with others, you have to delegate and adapt to others – but of course other people also have to adapt to you. But you can do this by clarifying people on why you do what you do, what you expect from them, what your intended results are, how assessments are done. But this is changing, people are changing: I have more people, different people, with different attitudes, younger people vs older people. Younger people are eager and want to work, for example, and older people have seen it all, and have done everything – these are things that require your attention. But this is the essence of our work, we are always adapting, we need to be flexible. Crisis management is exactly about things in conflict, colliding, so you just take it on, and adapt to it, find a solution.

Experience is definitely part of this job. I will use a metaphor to explain clearly what I mean: it's like having a baby, your first child. You don't know anything about it. People tell you different stories about it, but you have to go through it yourself. You have to go through it and get acquainted with it, adapted to your child. You have 9 months to adjust and start getting yourself in that mindset and then, when the baby is there, you get accustomed to the child, sometimes you make mistakes – but you learn from them. It's an iterative process, an incremental process, step by step – that's how it works.

There is no management school, no leadership school – not the real effective ones, that actually teach what to do. Training comes from being in the job, it's not taught. You can't learn how to play football by watching Lionel Messi playing on television. You can see what he does, but if you don't get up and kick a ball, you won't get anywhere.

I believe in self-management of people, I can only guide people, I can't take them to where I want them to be. I guide them, the same way I guide my children – I provide them with the basic aspects that allow them to flourish, teach them what is good and what is bad, but I can't prevent them from being good or from being bad.

Subject D11

Gender: M

Age: 63

Years of experience (as manager): 20

Job description: Member of the Board of Directors of Parnassia Group

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

The biggest problem when managing people is to make them change and have them on board with the change process. It is very time consuming and very effortless, it is also very difficult to find people that will support you through that process.

Sometimes, as member of the Board of Directors, it is necessary for you to take work home with you and actually work from home. Because your responsibilities are higher your work doesn't finish and stop at 6 o'clock.

My job requires that I prioritize my work, so that is what I do – if I didn't do that I wouldn't be able to function at home or at my work place.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations
- How do you deal with change in the workplace?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

We have around 10 thousand employees here in this company. At first, if you want to change things, you have to talk to all the workers, managers and directors of the companies. Our group consists of 9 companies, and I am in the board of that overall group. It is crucial that you explain why you believe it is necessary to change. And after everyone understands the why of what is going to happen, you can start with the changes and everyone I aware of what they need to do in order to change.

If you approach change through a top-down view, you will not succeed. Communication and transparency is the key!

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

It really depends on the situation. When you are changing something 20% of the people will not change anything; the best thing you can do is to leave them and hope, that during the process of change, they will make up their minds. But it is time consuming to give attention to 20% of people who are unwilling to be on board, so what you need to do is focus your full focus and energy on the remaining 80% of your people.

I am, first of all, a psychiatrist, so I am very successful at separating things and not letting them affect me to a certain extent – it's my job. I think it's mostly a question of training. You learn how to deal with things and you have to do them that way.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

In my job, people think that you can be prepared and everything is clear and set into place, and communicated, but that only counts for 30% of the things I do. Most of them are unpredictable, so you have to go with the flow and at the same time be prepared for what you know is sure to happen. You need to learn how to deal with the everyday work, and at the same be prepared for the everyday surprises.

There isn't really "a way" to deal with them per se, you have to deal with them, so you do. I believe it is a matter of experience. I think if you start as a manager, with a team, on the day

to day business, assuming a position where you should be an example to others, it is very hard for a person. In the beginning, having all those responsibilities and those different things to manage, is difficult or someone. But if you have enough experience, have the vision in mind and the direction you want to go, it is easier to this job.

I compare myself to a helicopter pilot: I'm overseeing everything, putting out fires, controlling everything from above and being sure that everything is going the way I want them to go.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Do you believe that you have changed the way you manage and deal with these matters over time? What has changed since the day you started until now?

I believe that one of the things you have to learn is to listen and to listen through the stories and demands of others. If your perspective is to let the other succeed and flourish – which is a bit what we do as managers – you must listen, it is crucial. Listening and asking the good questions, I think that is the biggest thing you learn how to do, and I am no exception, I have learned how to develop those skills over the years – mostly because of my work as a psychiatrist, but also as a manager, those are different scenarios and different things.

In my opinion it all comes down to experience. There is no question about it, you need to go through things enough times to be able to live them again without the stress, and the insecurity. Once you deal with problems once, you are able to select your style, the way you want to manage certain situations and just stick with it – but this only possible if you actually go through it and learn from your experience.

Subject D12

Gender: F

Age: 50

Years of experience (as manager): 8 years

Job description: Development manager/ team coach

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

What for me was the most difficult was to be the “sandwich” between the higher managers – the board of directors – and the team. You end up feeling a bit “sandwiched” in since you have to both, please the board of directors and take care of your people – for me this was the most challenging part of the role.

The curious thing is that at the time I didn't deal with this, so I had a burnout. What I needed was someone that in the board of directors felt responsible for the work I did. I had a very complex work environment because we were working with 3 organizations, and I had 1 person in the board who was supposed to be my partner but he didn't do anything. I had to ask him for things constantly, he left me on my own, I needed a bridge and he wasn't on the other side. Something that helped me through this was that I stand for my people, so I am with them all the steps of the way. What is difficult however, and I find that still today in my new job, is that people believe that “managers will solve things”. This means you have to give them enough confidence and coach them into having their own responsibility. Currently in our organization there is no management anymore: there is the board of directors and the teams. Teams now must be self-managed, and there are development managers that coach the team into embracing their own responsibility. This is a particular new challenge because since we had an old organization with traditional managers, we find that a lot of the people have a sort of learned helplessness, so we need to change their behaviour.

Now I can manage to separate things in my life into work and private life, but back then I couldn't for sure. I believe that the biggest difference between now and then is that before I had a lot of different responsibilities, whilst now I only considerably less – which is difficult to deal with. Before I used to be the type of manager that wanted to do everything and please everyone. I adopted too much of a helping mood – which is part of my personality. So I had to look inside me and try to understand why I was having that problem at that specific time. I had

guidance for some time, we can say I went through “therapy” to guide me through my burnout. My major question was why this was happening to me at that time – I believe it was a combination of all the different responsibilities I had, with my own unique personality.

Going through this made me learn that I need to take better care of myself, to understand when something isn't my problem (give people their own work to do, instead of doing it for them), to prioritize, I also became more confident which helped me to tell people that something was of their responsibility and not mine.

Of course, when you first come back to work you are a bit shaky and you aren't really confident or feeling strong, but once you understand and see that your new way of doing things actually works: you grow incredibly, your confidence goes through the roof.

➤ How do you perceive change in your work place?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

➤ How do you deal with change in the workplace?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

When my organization now, everyone has to change. There is no more management so people must learn, they have to get used to work as a team, take on different responsibilities, assume different roles, try out new tasks. They are helped by advisors but a lot of things they now have to do themselves. So I am now coaching this transition and what you see is that you have to be aware of old behaviour, even high management sometimes reveals old behaviours and attitudes that we aren't promoting anymore. So, our role now is mostly to be aware and to be sure that old behaviour doesn't translate into current actions.

This means we have to be role models, we have to be the good example for people, which consequently means that we need to constantly reflect on ourselves and understand if we are

really reflecting new behaviour that other people can and should follow. This is also what we ask from our teams, that they reflect on themselves and take the time to assess their actions and see what it is that I bring to the organization, how do I want to develop myself, am I accepting tasks that use my best skills.

Also, I like doing new things, I like change and I have always had this attitude of “just do it”, stop thinking about it and doing it. But this is something I believe to be part of my personality, so it comes easier to me. This makes it easier for me now to be a coach, I think that, as a manager, I am not so much the traditional directive style, as I am more the coaching type.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

Well when that happens we have a talk, I try to answer questions and to find the reason why they don't want to do it. There is usually an underlying reason for something like that, either they are scared, they feel insecure, they are having problems with another colleague, they don't feel safe in the organization. So, I try to make those reasons surface so that it is possible to discuss them, and change people's minds and make them rethink a certain situation. Obviously sometimes you have people that still after this encounter, they remain inflexible and don't change their positions, and when that happens we need to have a different approach and maybe that person just doesn't fit with our values and shouldn't stay in the organization anymore.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

I think the way I deal with it is just to name them, be honest and transparent about them, face them and ask bluntly what are we going to do about them. What I feel is that our directors, who also deal with our financiers, say that usually those two worlds collide, since we, as an organization, are trying to become more of a cyan coloured organization (from “Reinventing organizations”, by Frederique Lalou), while they are still much more red – which means that they are very much traditional in the way they encounter work and tasks, very strict and very hierarchical. I would say that is the biggest conflict I feel in our organization; however, it is

not something that I am personally involved with. But I believe that transparency and calm are the best way to approach these situations.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

I think it comes down to experience, undoubtedly, but also to the way in which you learn: are you someone that likes to learn, enjoys trying new things or are you not. Within my old team of managers what everyone heard when they communicated the change was: “ok, my job is going to end”. When that happened, people reacted in many different ways: I said “ok, let’s see where there is a new opportunity” and this coaching position came along and it was something that I like more and is more related to my personal interests and who I am as a person; but there were also managers that felt something like “oh they aren’t appreciating me, and they don’t appreciate my work, so I’m being cut out”. These are very different reactions, so I believe this is related to the way you are as a person, your personality, how self-confident are you, how you deal with criticism.

I believe that it is part experience and part personality traits.

Subject D13

Gender: M

Age: 27

Years of experience (as manager): 4

Job description: Managing Director

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

We have different number of people working at different times. When we are busier we have up to 15 people, currently, we are in our low season, so besides me, there are 2 people in the office.

I would say that my answer differs when I have more people working for me, but right now I think it's the fact that I always want to be "ahead" of them – keep them working, keep them going on and keep the spirit going on. Sometimes that can be hard to deal with: to constantly be on top of people and kind of "anticipating" their next move and telling them where to go with that.

Of course I take that stress with me after I leave, I can't really separate it. We start every day at 9am and I always try to be there around 8:30am. It is important to show people that you are working harder, if you don't they can get less motivated or they can actually start talking about it and feeling that "the boss isn't showing up, he is getting lazy; Why should I be here early if he isn't." Simple things like that make the difference.

In regards to doing anything to deal with my stress per se, something happened. I went on holiday in December, to Spain with my dad, and travelling is usually good for me to release stress and all of a sudden, one night I had to go to the hospital. It was crazy, my heart was pounding, I think I had an anxiety attack – it was very strange. So when I came back I decided to change my life style a little bit. Now I actually try to clear stress out and keep my head focused on what needs to happen at that time. I had to rearrange my priorities, I changed the way I organized my day and the way I dealt with problems at work (less personal involvement, more understanding that work is only work).

- How do you perceive change in your work place?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations
- How do you deal with change in the workplace?
 - Toward yourself

- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

Exactly two months ago things in the company changed, because I changed so we have been undergoing a couple of alterations lately. I think it is crucial for people to understand why things are changing or what exactly is going to happen. I try to talk to them and get them involved in the process, in the way that I am thinking and make them a part of the major things in the business. I try to explain everything, and talk everything out: if I am in a bad humour that day I try to explain why and make sure everyone understands it.

I think innovation is a very important thing, and personally I also believe that – since I am the one promoting this precise change at the moment. We also have a new girl working on her thesis with us right now, and she is younger and new, and she is always coming up with new ideas and new ways of seeing things or jus new solutions for the same problems, so I really like that. As long as we keep our vison and mission in mind, I am able to adjust to anything.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures)

At the end I am the decision maker, so if anything big happens and there is a big argument about something I am still going to do what I believe what is best for the company. Of course I enjoy talking about it and discussing decisions and solutions is always a positive thing, but my say is mostly final. I usually assess pros and cons and after I make the decision. Sometimes I go with it even if people say no.

But again, it involves a lot of talking, being open and considering other people's arguments into consideration always.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

I think I stress and worry about it at first. But at the same time if it has to happen, you just need to deal with it. Between options you should always think what is ultimately best for your business and decide according to that.

Again, always keep communication open and transparent with everyone so that you make sure everyone understands and is on board with any decision.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Do you believe that you have changed the way you manage and deal with these matters over time? What has changed since the day you started until now?

In the beginning I think I was way too soft. I wanted to make everyone happy and keep them satisfied and I learned that is not always the way, sometimes you have to be a bit harder and a bit more to the point. I think that is how I am now. I never used to want to tell people they were wrong so I was always trying to find the best way to give them positive criticism, but sometimes you need the negative also – I think it is really difficult to find the balance between them.

I think it all comes down to experience, yes. I don't think you have to be a "manager" per se to be a good manager, but to do it right it is important you learn how to do it with the people, on the field. I think empathy is critical for a good manager, so it isn't all from experience – even though it helps a lot. I believe it's a combination of both – but experience is absolutely a big part of a manager's success.

Portuguese Sample

Subject P1

Gender: M

Age: 40

Years of experience (as manager): 15

Job description: Managing Director

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?

- What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
- What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

So firstly a very important thing to understand is that I, with 3 other friends, created NetSonda. So we started this project after realizing that there is a market opportunity for our business to develop. We started in the year 2000 and for 7 years it was very hard to say we were a “success” per se, since the internet was developing immensely and we were leading the market (in this very small market, at the time).

So in 2007 my partner and I had to hire our first employee – and that was our first problem. People is definitely the most challenging thing to deal with as a manager. We were, at the time, 3 people, and I started to understand that I would rather have a less competent person, somebody with less skills, than to have someone who thinks of themselves as a superstar, which doesn't have the emotional fit with us and the rest of the organization, and also isn't aligned with the rest of our goals and strategy. And it was only after 1 month that I decided that that 1 guy we had just hired, had to go.

It's the same with decision making – I don't have time to waste. You have to think about what you are going to decide, but at the end of the day, you have to decide – no questions asked.

So I did something risky and I hired one of my brothers, and one of his friends – straight out of college, very young, no experience. And they are both still here, after all these years. We are now 20 people working here and most of them were hired after college. I rather have people that fit with us and I take the time to teach them, then people that do not belong.

In decision making you can say I am very democratic person, until the moment I actually have to call the shots – at that time I am a dictator. The hardest thing is to get people that understand what decisions really mean and when a decision is to be made, you have to stick with it. And those are the people I look for to work with.

So going back to the biggest problem of all as a manager: people. It is very complicated to deal with the people you work with every day. We developed a core of people here, that has remained always the same, and makes the company endure. A different set of people came together, specifically during 2009 and 2014 to fill out specific needs we had. We all came together as a team very well and we had one person that created a very well structured bridge

between these 2 groups: the core and the “changing” one. When you are dealing with people you learn how to manage them, how to promote a good environment, how to transmit what your message actually is. I advocate several measures, which I apply to make people happier – to make it easier to manage them. During the summer we give Friday afternoons off to everyone, and we usually play music as well, I close the company if we have a holiday coming up or if we can spare giving them some days off for Christmas, for example, I make sure that everyone is usually home by 6pm (only exceptionally if we have more work we stay longer). People need to enjoy their lives alongside their work.

I have had enough experience – in my personal and in my professional life – to know that there has to be a balance. I prioritize my family and I always find time, I have to make time for them. And that helps me when I deal with all of these struggles and challenges I find in the work place.

➤ How do you perceive change in your work place?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

➤ How do you deal with change in the workplace?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

I like change, personally, it doesn't scare me. But I like having the knowledge: knowing why we are changing, what's going to happen if we do change for example. Whatever change process it is, smaller or not, the way I manage, and I like to manage, is to understand the impact that it's going to have.

The smallest things have an impact on people, and I see that here with my team and also when I am talking to clients and answering their questions. Simple things such as changing the layout

of an office can alter dynamics. People assume things from the way the office is changing for example, and they react to that change. We felt that when we changed our office from Lisbon to Oeiras – people reacted to all these small alterations, sometimes with very negative attitudes, so we started to become aware of these aspects.

Also when in the case of bigger changes – like firing people, or hiring new people – you have to consider every variable, I have to explain why we are choosing to do what we are doing, why we need more and different skills, why will a specific dynamic might have to change. It's very important for people to understand what is happening, we need to explain everything that is not expected, change has to be explained and perceived as fair. If not, employees will not feel as they are an active part of the company.

Everything from the smallest change to more elaborate and bigger decisions I try to understand the impact it's going to have. As a manager I try to assume a risk assessment view on situations and manage accordingly – and this is not natural to me at all, I had to learn how to do this, learning how to consider other people's intakes and how my decisions will impact them.

- *How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against these measures).*

As I said before I am a very democratic person, and all of our decisions, and planning is a democratic process but you must be firm. In the end of the day, I give my people here all the opportunities to talk, to express themselves, to question and to participate, but when we make a decision, when the case is considered closed, then whatever we decided is final. What we all agreed as the best decision is what's going to be taken into account.

We explain everything here very clearly to everyone, so we don't have to consider future opposite forces and tensions. People react badly when they don't know what is happening. I take everyone's input into account and then we go on. That is the mind-set we work with. That is our spirit and the way we get the job done. Democracy until a certain extent, and after that: dictatorship.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

Here in the company I made a decision to call this year: the year of Solidarity. I felt we had lost it a bit during the last year. It is worth nothing to me if 1 employee achieves their personal, individual goals if the company as a whole fails to do the same. It might seem incredibly unfair if someone that has outstanding results ends up gaining nothing with that, but there are 2 sides to this: people have to be solidary with others.

A concrete example of this was a case, a couple years ago, where we hired a new team manager to lead a total of 8 people. Firstly, this was the case of a woman that had worked as a freelancer for a long time (so working solo), and had previously worked at Danone always by herself, with at maximum 1 intern. Also, she was a single mom with 1 daughter, which meant that she would get here late sometimes, had to leave early, would miss work if her daughter got sick, and so on. What happened was that the team was seeing this as a sign that she wasn't there for them, she wasn't invested and wasn't part of the team. There was no solidarity, no understanding.

And when we realized this we wanted to bring back that spirit into our company, which we used to have but had apparently disappeared. This lack of sentiment was seen in a very practical case: we are a market studies company, so we need to conduct several questionnaires and send them to our clients so that they can give us (ideally) a brief feedback, and it's good to go and to apply. What I noticed was that the number of interactions there was between us and the clients – in order to validate the work we were doing for them – had increased. After this we understood that people were working much more independently than ever before, employees had stopped asking colleagues for help and validation or advice, because they didn't feel that solidarity from before, they didn't feel like there was an environment to do this.

Increasing solidarity within the company is very important for 2 essential reasons: firstly, people feel validated, so they feel that their work means something and they are successful in their tasks; and also, our clients feel like we are effective, like we know what we are doing and that we are good in what we set out to do.

Of course we need to work individually and achieve our goals, but we need to work more as a team. Promote our team dynamics and always celebrate team accomplishments.

We need to balance it out, and it can become tricky sometimes. We often identify individual needs that certain employees should have developed and, in some cases, receive some training – but this will ultimately benefit the overall success. We seek to improve individual skills in a sort of selfish way – we want them to be better so that the company does better. Managers have to consider the idea of complementarity, it's a puzzle of skills fitted into a group of people.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Absolutely! There is no doubt about it – what I know now and what I knew then has no comparison. Maybe because we started our own business helped me to have a better idea of our development and the amount that I actually learned and how we changed. You learn how to cope with everything. If you didn't learn, you did something wrong.

Subject P2

Gender: M

Age: 39

Years of experience (as manager): 15

Job description: Marketing director

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

I would say the hardest thing is to keep the focus in place: people want to do a bit of everything, which most times just results in focusing on the wrong thing and neglecting the most important things – this is consequently directly related to efficiency. I think in Portugal's case we are way

better than what we used to be, but we still have a lot of room to improve. We need to focus on the goal, what it is that we want to achieve, and then we need to focus on the way we are going to get to our goal – and this is what I believe to be the hardest thing as a manager. That implies that I need to oversee people a lot. That is tiring, that stresses me out sometimes.

I worked between Amsterdam and Lisbon for about 4 years and something that I learned to do with the Dutch people is not to work at home. So I don't, I don't take work home with me. I try to be efficient enough during the day, at the office, that I don't have to take it home with me – I hate doing that. Of course, some moments are high stress peaks and in those moments, you can't help it and you end up being at home thinking about the number of things that you still need to do and when you are going to do them. What also doesn't help, and I think it's a very Portuguese thing, is when you are truly in love with the job that you have it becomes highly difficult to truly separate things and stop thinking or doing what you do.

I think its undeniable that when I started I didn't know how to manage stress half as well as I do now. I used to take work home with me probably on a regular basis, there was no separation.

Nowadays what I usually do to unwind from all the stress is normally 2 things. Firstly, I do sports, at the end of the day for example, I go surf, I play tennis, I go run with my friends. And another thing that truly helps me is to go home and be with my kids. And that is a very big difference from when I started working, today I get home and almost automatically I need to stop and start thinking about who needs a shower, who needs dinner, where are the diapers – it's almost the perfect “switch off”.

➤ How do you perceive change in your work place?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

➤ How do you deal with change in the workplace?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

This is something that really speaks out to who I am as a person. I love change. After 2 years of doing the same thing I am completely bored, and I genuinely feel the need to change. I really do enjoy it, and I see it as a challenge and that is something that I always try to find when I am faced with a new situation: “where and how is this going to be a challenge for me”. But this is me.

When it comes to teams it really does depend on the type of profile that specific team has. Some people are more prone to change than others. I currently have 15 people in my team (and for a Marketing team that is considered a large team), what I usually do is try to identify the people that are more attracted to change and the people that are more reluctant to it, and I try to bring the ones that like change to my side of things and they can later help me bring the other ones into the process.

I really try to understand the benefits of that specific change for myself, but also for the sake of my team members because I can explain to them openly how can this change help them, how it's going to affect them. My style of management is very one-to-one, very transparent and very honest, so that is what I try to implement change with the people I work with. Even when they don't accept it, because they understand why I am doing it becomes easier for them to deal with it.

- *How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).*

At first I obviously stress, it's not good when you have someone standing up against you in any situation. When that happens I always try to understand why that person is saying no, and perhaps they may even have good and solid arguments for it and just have a different view which might help. I listen to them and if they have good and solid arguments I change my mind – I have no problem with that. In the case that the arguments aren't solid and they don't change my mind, I remain with my decision and they just have to go with it because I say so. If it's half of a team telling me that something isn't going well, then maybe I have to stop and actually reconsider, but if it's only that one person that is just saying no for the sake of it, I can't harm an entire team and strategy because of it.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

I think that the focus question that I spoke about in the first answer is very important. Regarding the change vs no change paradox, I think if things are working well and going successfully there has to be very strong and very solid reasons why you should change something. People have to think about what they are doing and they have to prioritize, see what is best for their business. I think it is very fact based, which is a great part of a manager's job.

Contradictions have to be dealt with facts, hard facts and their confrontation. You also have to consider alternatives and consequences to situations. Those two are very big when considering the way you are going to deal with paradoxes.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Do you believe that you have changed the way you manage and deal with these matters over time? What has changed since the day you started until now?

In the beginning, I think sometimes I used to stress much more if there was a problem, I used to go home and think about it and I would focus much more my attention on the problem itself. Today I believe I focus much more on solving it – I identify it, I understand it and then I try to solve it and its impact on the long run. Those are two very different mindsets.

I also learned how to think in the impact that decisions you make today, have in the world of tomorrow and in 2 years. I think generations today don't really have that – that sustainable thinking. That is very important and I think I learned that on the job.

I think experience is definitely a big part of it, however learning from your mistakes also is responsible for what you know or not. I also think diversification helps a great deal – having different people working together is a great source of knowledge. Sometimes it's not so much about the amount of years you've been working, but what you take from it. How you learn, where you do it and with who you do it. Sometimes what you learn in 5 years, you can learn in 2 if you are in the right company with the right people.

Subject P3

Gender: F

Age: 26

Years of experience (as manager): 6 months

Job description: Team leader

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
- What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

One of the biggest difficulties that I find, daily, here, is to manage other people's expectations. I have 13 people in my team, and I know that the decisions that I'm going to make are not going to please all of those 13 people – it's impossible. So, for me it becomes very difficult to manage the expectations of the people that don't agree with me. This is probably because I am still very inexperienced, I still have a lot to learn, and I still need to learn how to cope with the rejection of people around me. That is something that I am going to have to learn how to do.

I want to be able to work in a place, with my team, where I am able to make my team members be comfortable and feel safe in the environment that I am managing. If I make any type of decision that I know is making someone unhappy, I will be affected by that. That is not my goal at all, but again, I believe this is due to my inexperience.

About this problem, I have a friend that keeps telling me that I can assume any position I can possibly think of in this job, all I need to do though, is have a really good argument and justification for why I have it. From that moment on all the people around me need to do is accept what I tell them.

Also in the position I am currently in, we serve almost as mediators. This means we need to leave our opinion and our personal views out of the discussion. Many times, I feel like when I leave work and go home, I am frustrated because I can't be myself, because I cannot voice what I want or think. But of course if I do that it means that I am no longer impartial and that

I am siding with one of the arguments – that can possibly make the issue escalate much more than it should. But that is hard for me – having to suppress my voice on something.

Something that usually helps me and I tend to do more and more nowadays is to ask my people what they would do if they were in my place, what would be the strategy they would choose and why. If I do that I am making it so that whatever I decide, they feel a part of. Whatever I decide is going to be seen differently and they will probably receive it much more than if I would just inform them. I am making them part of the decision process. It also makes them understand, when I am in a harder situation, and I really only have one possible option to choose, how hard it is and how sometimes my hands really are tied.

This is my first experience in a job like this – I have ceased to have a personal life. I am here, I work 8 or 12 hours per day, I do my job, and then I go home and think of new and different team strategies that I can use – because that is also my job. I go home and think of everything I did and what I can do differently or keep doing the same. The fear that you have of possibly failing is huge, it's all in. Any decision I make, I always ask my boss (since she is way more experienced than me). Sometimes you can't help but to get a bit overwhelmed by the fear of failing.

So yes, I guess my major coping mechanisms in this job is asking people to put themselves in my shoes, always explain everything that I do in detail, and be sure I have a strong argument for my choices. Making them part of the decisions and asking them for feedback on issues really does help the way I manage my stress here. It's also good because it makes them aware, and most of all, makes them sympathize with the idea that this is all very much new to me, I am still learning the ropes.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations
- How do you deal with change in the workplace?
 - Toward yourself

- When managing people
 - When in decision making situations
- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

I feel like I have to change something from the moment there is the identification of a problem.

A few months ago, I had a meeting with my team and one employee in particular decided to confront me, in front of everyone, with a salary change that I had taken place earlier that day. Before explaining anything further: salary matters are always addressed individually with each employee, never in front of team members; at the time my involvement with these matters was zero – all I did was transmit information that I had been given to me and my job was to pass it on to the person in question. When this happened, I decided that that person in particular should have an individual and customized follow-up process since their expectations had now been completely misplaced and altered. So, I had to adjust my efforts towards that employee particularly due to what had happened.

Another change situation was when I decided that my team wasn't working as a team, when I first started. What happened was that each employee was doing their job and there was zero interaction with other people in the team, there was no articulation whatsoever. What I decided to do was to change people's job tasks in such a way that everybody needed to communicate and work with at least 1 person from the team. This means that my team members had been working for 1 year in a certain way, and now I had come in and told them to change everything.

Because I am so new in this job, and relatively inexperienced, I was incredibly afraid of failing. If my change failed I would have to admit that it had happened and then, go back to the old work model, that I had admitted to be inadequate. To be sure of what I was about to do and to be aware of all risks, what I did was to have individual meetings with each member and ask them for feedback and advice on what would they think or what they would like to do if I were to alter the way people worked.

By doing this I made it possible that, not only people were aware of what I was thinking about doing, and also I had customized my ideas to what they had envisioned and expected as well. I

reduced my risks and I tried to make sure that my plan would work – so I didn't have to admit I failed.

I also already knew that there was one person in my team that was particularly resistant to change (because I knew my team already before becoming their team leader). What happened was that the moment I started to realize I was going to change something I started to focus on her and approaching her, individually, differently. I tried to prepare her to the change process earlier and in a different way than I did with the rest of the members – because I already knew she might have posed a problem.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

Again, I ask for help from everyone around me. When I don't know what to do I ask my manager and I involve my team in the decisions that I have to make. I go over different possibilities and different plans in my head until I come down with the best option and I try to measure the risks, the pros and the cons.

Whatever is the best option, whatever I see is going to be the best solution for the team, the business, I do it. And I stand by it. I am still learning, there is still a lot I don't know, I still stress a lot. My strategy up until now I mostly ask for help and work with my team as much as possible and see where I can go from there.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

I don't have experience right now, I am inexperienced – literally. I believe that currently the way I do my job is more in regards to “if I were in their position, how would I like to be addressed, managed, and guided”. Of course, I can use my past experience as their coordinator to help me and to guide me in this new position, but it is very different. It's like everything I told you before, everything I do I do because I have a solid argument for it. I ask for help from my manager and I ask for help from my own team. Up until now, this has worked,

but I am still learning how to do everything. I am sure in 1 year time I will be very different and my answers will be different.

I am sure experience is a part of it, and that is the reason why I am struggling now, because I am lacking, and I feel that. But I can already tell you that in these months alone, the things that I have learned how to do, were crucial, that is part of my experience already – I have 5 months of experience. Those 5 months are already better and help me more than when I had zero months of experience.

Subject P4

Gender: M

Age: 52

Years of experience (as manager): 13

Job description: Financial Consultant and Manager

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
- What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

As a manager, you are firstly serving the organization and that can be very challenging, making decisions with the available information is hard to deal with at times. And also you have to be sure that you are developing people, at all times, to their best abilities. These two are, for me, I believe, my biggest challenges.

I believe we gain a lot as time goes by, experience helps to deal with the stress that you build up over time. After 20 or 30 years of working, there aren't a lot of things that happen for the first time, so you usually know what to do and how to do it. The experience of the past, helps us go through and think of the solution. You also learn what your limitations are, until where you can go, you become aware that you aren't superman.

I think working with others is very important, asking for advice, and seeking other people helps me reduce stress. You understand that you need to prioritize and plan what you do and it helps you get by.

At the end of the day, however, I take the work home with me. You are responsible for other people, you can't just switch that off, it's not a button. I don't believe you can be in a leading position and not take things home with you after hours. Of course there are other things in life besides work. But that's where organization comes in and you are able to "relax" in your head. You prioritize what you need to do, if not, you go crazy.

➤ How do you perceive change in your work place?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

➤ How do you deal with change in the workplace?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

Personally I am a great fan of change and I don't really like routines. Something that is essential to any good and successful change process is for everyone to know their place, and to know what is expected from them.

Change always happened, it always existed, but what's new about it is the speed at which is happening. I believe something that is very important to do, and helps me quite a lot, is to do that self-check, an assessment about who you are, where you are going and how you are getting there. Change is about being aware, the way I see it.

➤ How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

A couple years back we decided, as a company, that because of our fast growth, in such a fragile economical context, we were going to have to cut on several things: no bonuses, no salary raises, etc. as you can imagine, this affect hundreds of people that work in the hospital, and as you can also imagine, people do not react well to this. At that time, I had to explain people that this was being done in sake of the company's future. It's hard to make people understand something that isn't in front of them, a more abstract reasoning.

When we do that we really must stand by what we represent and what we say. It is fundamental to have your values and your strategy in line and in your aim. People need to understand everything, and they usually have faith in management that tells them they are doing something because of our vision, for example.

Of course, you never have "everyone" on board. We can try, but when we have such a big organization, you can't really be sure that people are aligned with you or not.

At top management, however, it is essential that you have a great amount of trust established in those relationships. Without that you can't work as a team at this level (high management). This type of work demands trust. If that stops its considerably fatal for the organization.

In top management, it is important to have different positions, and opinions – it's healthy. It involves a lot of negotiation, but at the end of the day there has to be a decision made.

- *How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).*

Tense moments in the organization normally mean that something big or something important is about to happen. Right now, we are considering an expansion plan for the Hospital and that means that we need to answer to needs of today while at the same time, answer needs of tomorrow. That gets to be very, very hard to manage. But at the same time, it means that we did a good job. We did a good job and that is the only reason why we are choosing to expand. And that's what you need to focus on. The positive, the reason that got you there, what is going to happen, how it is going to succeed. Contradictions exist, but you need to focus a lot. Keep the focus and you can go on with what you are doing.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
- Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Do you believe that you have changed the way you manage and deal with these matters over time? What has changed since the day you started until now?

Today people ask me things and I decide, I don't even have time to think about it, its intuitive. Based on your experience you learned how to identify what worked and what didn't. When you become more comfortable with the position you also become more "automatic".

Experience is key: you need to go through the changes that time makes you go through and learn from them. The people that surround you are also very important, you learn from advice, from seeing what they do, and from being around them. But experience is the ultimate factor, without it you can't do anything.

Subject P5

Gender: M

Age: 55

Years of experience (as manager): 25

Job description: retired

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
- What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

Above all things the hardest thing to deal with is people's own expectations towards work. Everybody wants to be in that very important and top position, but for that position you always have several applicants – and as a manager you are the one that has to deal and manage that. Managing ambitions can lead to a lot of frustrations, for everyone involved.

In regards to the way that I, personally, deal with that it becomes very simple, since I am a very pragmatic person and I don't usually take stress home with me or let those type of issues affect me personally. There are obviously some exceptions to the rule, for example, important projects that are due in 2 days you just can't, mentally, leave behind after 5 o'clock. But when it comes to personal issues like stress, frustrations and people problems I don't let them affect me as much.

I don't stress easily, so as I said before, I don't think that people management problems like that affect me as much as, perhaps, other people. I always saw promoting a person, or not promoting them, part of the job, whatever comes from that is also part of the job, it's not personal.

➤ How do you perceive change in your work place?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

➤ How do you deal with change in the workplace?

- Toward yourself
- When managing people
- When in decision making situations

I think that in that department I have always been very privileged. For most of years of experience I worked mainly in multinational tech companies so I accompanied from early on most of the new trends in the labour market. These companies were some of the first ones to adopt knowledge management for example, approaches to individual assessment, 360° feedback assessments, and many others all were pioneers in these domains.

Of course, the natural reaction to change is aversion and rejection so what I mean when I say that I was very privileged is exactly because of that. Because I worked in companies such as these I always had plenty of young people to work with, people tend to be more open to change in these contexts, so I never really felt that shock when I spoke about change.

The biggest challenge I had that concerns this problem was in a multinational that I used to work in during the 90's, about the implementation of a quality management programme. At the time, not like today, it used to be a very bureaucratic thing and quite boring, it was in a sense retrograde. The team wasn't really against evolving; they were against the new way that was being imposed on them. You are talking about people that are very tech savvy and they already had some sort of "cloud", a physical one, but following the same concept as the cloud that we know today, the concept was the same. So when management came in telling them that they had to have a physical back up in tapes of all their systems, they felt like they were just going backwards. I think this was the biggest and most challenging change process I had, and in this case, I actually agreed with them, I understood where they were coming from. Truth is we managed and we ended up winning the best quality implementation award.

In one case in particular, we had some radical changes go through a company I was working in at a certain moment and basically the changes that took place lead to our biggest turn-over levels ever. That was very difficult to manage because turnover has huge costs on a company, not only economical, but in the organization, as a whole.

But again, I am a very practical person, I don't cry over what's happening or dwell on it, but it was very stressful.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

You deal with it, you have to manage those people – it's part of the job. No stress, no problems, they either accept it or they don't. if they don't I'm sure other companies would fit their needs better.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

Something that I feel came to change the world of work is the information access. Everybody has access to the same information, at the same time in a free way. That is very different from when I started working, back then you used to be able to see who was the manager in the floor

simply by the amount of information that he had, “who knows what?” basis. Today you don’t really see that, managers are more of a “coach”. Companies sell this idea to the outside world that everything is team effort and group work but really isn’t mostly because of this accessibility to real time information at all times. the fact that I can’t control what, how and when my team knows something changes a lot. It looks like people are working in groups but this makes it individual, it looks like group work but it is a kind of individualized group work.

People interpret information in different ways and there are different variables that influence that relationship, this means that if I give 2 people the same task, they will do it in different ways. It becomes an individual effort and not a group effort.

In the way I work I am strong believer in the saying “higher freedom, higher responsibility”. And that information revolution only reinforced that. I believe that every employee has the freedom to work, in the way that he sees fit, as long as he presents results at the end. So this problem in particular I am even more practical about, I enjoy change and I change with it, but I expect people to do the same and answer accordingly.

I have worked in many different cultures all around the world and what I always do is to adjust to each reality and think about what is best for the business. And that is how I always go in when I enter a new company, it’s the same thing.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Do you believe that you have changed the way you manage and deal with these matters over time? What has changed since the day you started until now?

I would say that something I learned not to do very early on is to understand that there is no point in concerning yourself for 24 hours about a certain problem. When we are in our 20’s we focus too much time on things, at some point we understand that what is bothering us is only going to bother us again when we go back in to the office the next day. Also, you learn that that specific anxiety that is created is only going to make us lose judgement and the ability to actually focus on what needs to be focused on. You don’t learn how to do this at school, you learn how to do this when you are mature enough and you’ve been through it.

Time is very important, experience combined with time. There is a time for everything and you need to be ready to learn something, you have to be mature enough to understand certain things. But of course it goes hand in hand with experience, because it's experience that provides you those learning moments. But sometimes you aren't ready to actually grasp what they mean, and that's when maturity comes in. But you definitely learn yes – it's a learning process, influenced by several variables.

Subject P6

Gender: F

Age: 41

Years of experience (as manager): 7

Job description: Group leader

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

So firstly it's important to understand that I manage HR teams, and that is important because these teams work differently, they have particular characteristics. Today I can say that my biggest challenge is obviously dealing with all the different types of people, in my case I have to deal with people from different cultures and different countries – and that makes things a whole lot more complicated. I am currently working with a 1 team from Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Switzerland. I learned that specific things that we do with the Portuguese team, for example, is unthinkable in French team – it is extremely hard to deal teams that have different cultures.

Another problem I face constantly is that I work with very big teams. Overall I manage a total of 50 people, and I have to consider that each person is its own individual, with unique and

specific traits, and I must deal with each of them according to their needs, and their capabilities.

Dealing with all these differences, all these difficulties can be overwhelming – but this is something you learn how to do over time. You necessarily learn how to not take things home with you because you know that there is a balance that is essential to have, and if you don't separate those worlds you end up ruining the quality of life you have at home – and that can't happen. But obviously it's hard to do, and sometimes I find myself doing exactly that: taking problems home and thinking about them there. Certain things like firing someone or having a disagreement with someone at the work place isn't as easy to let go as it seems.

When I first started working I didn't deal with it as I do now: I used to come work on Monday morning with the stress built up already from Sunday afternoon (which meant I didn't really have weekends), I would foresee the problems and stress in anticipation. Nowadays I try to organize my time differently so that I have certain periods where I allow myself to stress over particular things and then it's done, I don't take stress with me. It also helps a lot that I am a very calm person – so my own personality aids me in this process.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

- How do you deal with change in the workplace?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

We are in Lisbon already due to a very big change in the company, so the concept of change within our groups and in our departments is already very much rooted in who we are. But of course that was the case of expected change – we know it's going to happen. The problem arises with the change that is unexpected, that one is the one that creates the higher amount of stress. For example, cases where an essential element of the team leaves the organization or

when someone is internally transferred. One is never really, per se, ready to deal with a change like that. One of the things that, I believe, makes us more prepared for events like that is the fact that we have very good people working here. Which means that when one person leaves we usually are able to coordinate ourselves and fill in for each other – we aren't "selfish" like that. Once we had a case where 3 people were leaving, at the same time, in 1 single team. This was a huge problem and I what I managed to do was to get everyone to leave in different times, like this the blow isn't felt as much as if everyone left at once.

Change is never easy. Not only we have changes regarding people but we also have changes in processes. This type of changes imply re-learning skills and adjusting to new ways of doing things. In this company, we stand by the idea of "ongoing improvements and growth", that means that all change is usually for the best and seen as a positive thing.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

We usually find two types of people here: people that don't agree "because" and people that don't agree because there is actually something that is standing out negatively. And it's the on the second type of people that we focus on. When this happens both me and the team leaders try to make it possible for that the specific person to speak out. This happened recently here with our Italian team: someone didn't agree with the way we were working within their team, so I spoke to that particular person alongside their team leader and we tried to understand what was behind that attitude. After talking to him I tried to adjust what he was telling me to our own reality here – compromise with people's concerns. So that's what we try to do here: we listen, try to understand its feasibility and attempt to apply it.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work)

It is true that most of our work is team based and our results come from team efforts, but there is a lot of focus on individuality. As group leader I do a joint work with each team leader we do a follow up on the quality of results that each employee presents, we aren't always on top of them, but when we understand there is a specific problem with anyone we talk to them and

we address that problem and we try to understand what is happening. Or in opposition to this when somebody has an outstanding performance we call them and congratulate them, also in a situation like that we try to see if that person isn't being stimulated enough and in that case we discuss with them what other types of projects they would like to pursue or how we can adjust his job to his skills.

Stuff starts to go bad when we forget that a team is made out of individuals. It is crucial to keep our focus on the individual. We have weekly meetings to understand how things are going, individual meetings when necessary – we try to never lose focus on the individual, if we do we become a factory. We also do performance appraisals (twice a year: 1 assessment and 1 follow-up) and the potential assessments (take place once a year). All of these measures allow us to understand the individual people we work and deal with on a daily basis.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Undoubtedly. I believe that with experience you learn how to be calm, and not to explode in front of people as a reaction to something. In my first job experience which was actually in an HR department of a company from the motor vehicle business, I noticed that my first HR manager was a very calm person, that was able to deal with all of the union tensions very appropriately. However, some time later the HR board changed and so did the HR manager – who was by herself a very reactive person always ready to enter a conflict, and during that time period we never had as many strikes before. When I started working, of course, I understood that it would be much easier to just explode with people, but with time a person understands that there is no point in doing that. So you learn how to deal with them, you learn how to overcome them. There are little things that you get stuck on that you just need to let go, or you just let them affect you – and that can create very big problems. It all comes down to practice, to experience. The first time you do something – anything – you'll be nervous, insecure, it might go wrong; the second time it will be better.

Subject P7

Gender: M

Age: 56

Years of experience (as manager): 30

Job description: Non-executive Vice-President of Lusa

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
- What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

I would say there are around 3 big challenges: the first one is to manage the organization, considering results on the short-term while at the same time establishing a path on the long-run (which is, in itself, a paradox); the second one is about managing people's motivation; and the third one I would say is to manage the company while at the same time managing and living my personal life. I wouldn't exactly say these are the most complicated things to deal with as a manager, but they are the things that probably kept me up late at night the most.

In regards to this last one I believe that, even though I have tried before, many times, I don't believe it to be possible to actually separate those two realities. In my case they have always been kind of "mashed" in each other. And this obviously cause problems in both sides.

When it comes to taking work home with you, most of the times the problem isn't really the work itself, it's the fact that your head doesn't stop – the problem is in your head. I would say that for over half of my career I took work home with me, literally work, paper work and such. At some point I decided that I was going to stop taking work to do at home, but I believe I never really let it go in my head. I was able to discipline the physical part, but not the mental part – to this day.

When it comes to managing people and motivating them I believe that I acquired that knowledge as time went by. A lot of experience, listening more, delegating more had a lot of influence here. Mostly I believe that my position towards people changed: instead of using

people in my advantage, to become more available to them and to be at their service. Making myself available to help the people around me and to constantly challenge them, was the way I found to become better at managing them.

About the first challenge I nominated: the short versus long term goals; I believe that I began to understand how to deal with them over time. Mostly with structured methods, such as strategic planning methods. And this is something that I have been developing all through my career in order to be able to manage these issues.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

- How do you deal with change in the workplace?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

When it comes to myself I have always been a fan of change and I have always made my career around circumstances of change. For me it's more like a second nature, not something that I have to begin, go through and finish.

When it comes to the people you work with I would say that it is crucial that you prepare them for the change. I believe that the cases in which I was more successful in changing was in those where I had a very good planning for the change process. And in the cases that didn't go so well, mostly it was because it was badly prepared.

I think people don't like surprises in general, and they are more available to change when they are called to that same process – they become integrated in that same process.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

Firstly I need to ask that person why he or she is not willing to accept my decisions, discussing pros and cons and sometimes I have already integrated people's opinions because you don't always know everything; however I have fired people, over the period of my career, because they were unable to adhere to the change process.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

I believe that as a manager, whether it be me or someone else, you have to be willing to accept some level of schizophrenia in their life. You can't really step away from paradoxes, that isn't something that you can do in organizations, it is something that you must learn how to live and deal daily with. You need to accept that insanity, at some point, as a part of your life, and as part of who you are as a manager. Accept the constant contradictions that present themselves to you every day in an organization.

In my case, I think I am not the most "orthodox" person that there is, so I have always been prone to that adaptation. The management of contradictions, present and future needs, different skilled people, never came as much of a surprise to me. What I had to interiorize was that my sanity depended on my ability to accept a certain level of insanity.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

I think that there were clearly moments, in the beginning of my career, in which I had many sleepless nights over my work – and that is something that doesn't happen as often now. I believe it is definitely a process that has some kind of learning curve, as you live through more experiences you learn how to deal with them until the next time they show up, and you get better at finding the best solutions as well. I don't think experience is everything, after 30 years of experience there are still things that happen in my work place that still surprise me. But you definitely learn how to deal and manage those situations, and you learn how to live with the uncertainty.

Subject P8

Gender: F

Age: 43

Years of experience (as manager): 4

Job description: Communication Coordinator

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

I would have to say that the biggest challenge as a manager is all the coordination work that has to take place. Having to transmit the same message to every department, be sure that everyone understands the same thing, knows what is expected from them, and what and when to do it. Also be sure that if anything changes or is going to happen, make sure that everyone understands the variables and knows exactly why it is going to happen in a certain way and not another. Making sure people are involved and aware can be complicated.

And after that the problem is when people come up to you and tell you that you shouldn't have chosen that strategy, or chosen that specific option. So besides having to make them part of everything that you do, you then also have to consider their opinions and manage their concerns about your own job.

I think you never really separate your life and leave work stress behind, and that can be easily said about me. Even though I have an intense personal life I still wake up in the middle of the night and think about problems I may have here at work.

I think this is also a very emotional job, which means that the more you give, the more you receive, but also the fact that sometimes, people may need you at odd hours (outside of the 9 to 5 regime), makes it harder to actually switch off.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?

- Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations
- How do you deal with change in the workplace?
- Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

I personally believe I work well with change, I have lived through many change processes and I think that one must be positive towards it. And that is what I try to transmit to my team when I am working with them during change, they should embrace it and see it as a positive thing.

I believe communication is key in such a process and the more people you have with you on this type of thing, the better.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

I believe ultimately that question would be given to the director and I would direct the problem to my superiors, and let them solve it with the person in question. I think negotiation is very important when you talk about a confrontation like this but it's a lot of give and take.

I don't believe this would stress me a great deal, it's part of the job, it's not a personal conflict so I am able to distance myself from it very effectively. I would report it to the proper departments and let them negotiate some sort of deal with that person. And again, if I had to do it I would keep it very professional, negotiate and that's it.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

Something that we do here that I believe helps a great deal with these question is the fact that we do individual assessments. This allows us to understand where we are in our work, what

we have accomplished, where our goals are and I believe this is a great as a self-criticism tool, a reflexion moment where we can think about our weaknesses and strengths. So I feel like I can monitor those tensions by becoming aware of where I am as a manager, and most of all, who I am as a manager. I am able to see what needs are colliding and what is being asked from me by assessing what it is that I am doing.

After that moment I can see if there is a specific stressful aspect I can bring it up with my peers and try to find a solution for it.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Undoubtedly, there is no question that experience is 100% of the way you act. Even when I worked in other positions, not as a manager, that makes me more experienced, and I am able to transport that experience to today and apply things from different moments of my life into the present one.

When you consider that way you deal with a specific stressful moment, and then you compare it to the first time you faced it, it tends to be much better. and that's because you learn, you get better, and you understand that things are related to each other. All the knowledge you acquire over the years – whatever and wherever it may be – it affects the way you work in the now. I can see that 100% in my case.

Subject P9

Gender: F

Age: 29

Years of experience (as manager): 1

Job description: Team leader

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?

- What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
- What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

I think that the hardest thing when being a HR manager is, in fact, dealing and managing people. People are difficult. We have to be constantly aware of the fact that people have different and unique experiences, they each bring different types of baggage and the fact that I might have to deal with the same problem, in different ways with different people. Sometimes it's hard to put things on the table in such a way that everyone understands and interprets it the same way. It has to do with communication and that is a very complicated thing to manage.

In terms of decision making – and I might be feeling this now more than I did before when working for other small firms – we are a very bureaucratic organization, since we are such a big company, and because of that decisions and processes are always on a top-down basis. This complicates things mostly because of the time that it takes for things to be decided, and then sent down the appropriate lines of hierarchy, until it reaches us and we can finally pass it on to our teams.

Some things we know already that you “have to” deal with in a certain way, there is no way around it. But for example, we have weekly team meetings where we lay everything out in the open and we are all aligned with what we have to do, and sometimes if there is any situation where I have to change schedules or I have to fit work tasks differently than expected, I always ask people if anyone is uncomfortable with the way that it is being done. By doing this I get people to say what they really think about a specific case, and also, get them to feel more integrated and part of the work and the processes that we have here at the company.

It also takes a lot of observation work, where you actually get to know what and who you have in your team, you learn how to deal with people and at the same time provide a sort of individual focus on each employee. Of course this has to be integrated in a bigger picture of team work and efforts where the ultimate goal is to deliver a certain service according to our values and standards.

It doesn't always work and it doesn't always go well, sometimes you don't get to say things the way you had them thought out and they just come out completely differently than what is was supposed to. When that happens you have to follow up and be sure that the person got what you meant and took it the best way possible.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

- How do you deal with change in the workplace?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

In the past year we had several alterations here because we have HR processes that are aligned according to national regulations but we also have some cases that follow international regulations. That means that when something changes on an international basis everything has to change at a country level and that can be hard to deal with.

When it comes to my team in particular, I was one of the first people to come in for this project. We started out in March, 2015 and for about 1 year our team was very stable and it worked well – up until about 1 year and a half later, maybe September. What happened then was that people started feeling the urge to change what they were doing, and I started feeling that people were starting to get bothered with it. At that time, some of my members moved from my team to other teams with other projects because they wanted to learn different and more challenging things. The first time somebody left, that was a very complicated moment precisely because it was a person that knew a lot about all of our processes so we had to be sure that the transference of information was dealt with in a very careful and successful way. From that moment on 2 other people have left the team as well – and it was way easier to deal with. You learn how to deal with it: the first time you get scared, but the second and the third time you are less scared and you already know how to manage it.

It's a matter of understanding that you need to take the best out of that situation and you need to tell your team that as well. Of course, that you aren't ever "ready" for something that you weren't expecting. You always get surprised and there are those first shock moments after a big news, but after that you know that you have been through a situation like that before. Something I usually do is to look back and assess "why didn't it work the first time? What did

I do differently? What can I do so that this won't happen again?". Obviously when that happens I find myself taking these problems home with me and thinking about solutions at home. That's something that I believe is characteristic to a manager's work. We always try to tell people "come on, work is work and your private life is private", but that's not an easy thing to do and for us, when we accumulate so many different tasks and responsibilities, you tend to not leave work at the front door of your house.

Personally, I adopted the feedback technique with my team so that I am sure that the information that I wanted to pass on and I wanted to transmit was received the way it was supposed to. When you do this, you know that you can do things and you can set processes into action in a much safer and confident way.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

I believe that as long as you have valid arguments and a proper way of explaining things to people you can fight the tendency that people have to say "no". Sometimes decisions come to us, we aren't the ones that make them, all we have to do is to pass them on – like salary changes for example. I can explain those changes, I can explain why something was decided in certain way and justify it, but I don't have access to that information at all times. When that happens what I feel like I should and have to do is to go up to the decision making level and inquire about a certain decision that I have to be communicate to my team – I have to have those answers.

I think it is incredibly important to involve and engage people in decisions and make sure everyone is aware of reasoning behind the actions. When people feel like they are involved in these processes, they feel and react towards things in a different way. Be sure that I explain why and again, going back to my first answer, adjusting the way I manage people, because everyone is unique and has unique ways of dealing and reacting to the same thing.

It can be hard at the times, when I know that something isn't fair or when I don't agree with something and I am the one that has to tell that particular employee – but sometimes you just have to take it in, and do it, "it is how it is", it's part of the job.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

What I feel here as a major difficulty is that most of the times, what you know today, tomorrow is different. And you see that when we are changing something and we do things a certain way, and then we get a new order, so we need to change it again, in the time frame of a week. That also means that by then, we need to change everything that we have done in the past, you never change just 1 thing, it usually implicates several other aspects. So you end up feeling the old vs new paradigm a lot.

Nowadays everything happens at a crazy fast rhythm: learning processes, organizational change, market contextualization. So it ends up being very difficult, when it comes to time management, to answer all the different needs that you have: the present ones, the future ones or the past ones. I believe that if you work in a team where everyone has the same clear goals, everyone is aware of their tasks and of what everyone else is doing it promotes a successful environment.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

It definitely affects the way you deal with these issues. When you live through something that is successful you remember it and tend to repeat the second time it happens to you again, because you know that you don't want to go through it again and you don't want to put your people through it as well.

I have always had leading positions in my life, but always in extracurricular activities, outside of my job scenario. That means that when I first accepted this job it was the first time I was in an active leading position professionally. Most of the things that I now know, like the fact that I ask for feedback, is mostly because I did coaching. I felt like I didn't have what it took to take on such a position so I found myself a coach. I used to go to him when I had a particular harder day and we would discuss the way in which I had dealt with it and what I could do differently the next time around. That really helps the way we learn how to deal with these problems, but

you definitely learn through experience how to manage these problems and the way you see the challenges you face.

Subject P10

Gender: F

Age: 39

Years of experience (as manager): 2

Job description: HR manager

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

I would say that it is particularly challenging when I have a problem with a specific employee, and I have to find the exact solution that is best for everyone: one that doesn't hurt the employee, as well as the organization. So what becomes a challenge is to find the balance between those demands. We are a small team, which sometimes doesn't help, and those issues are translated mostly in scheduling vacations, days off, sick days, maternity leaves, and so on. And of course people will always be people so you have to consider every personality, who is more reactive, who is not going to manage my decision well, for example.

Of course, this is something that has brought me a sufficient amount of stress, and at some point in our lives we all take more, or less, stress with us, and sometimes it keeps us from sleeping at night; but thankfully this is no longer such a daily hassle – things have changed. Experience gives you a bit of leverage and it allows you to manage things differently and allows you to do things with the least amount of stress possible.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?

- Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations
- How do you deal with change in the workplace?
- Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations

I would personally say that change is always a challenge for me as well. It always brings up some weak points, I tend to become more self-conscious about my weaknesses because I am more exposed. Eventually you move on from that and you have to believe that change is a positive thing.

Dealing with people in a change process, however, can become difficult. We have recently taken on several new procedures and we integrated a couple of new people in our team. Initially people are kind of defensive and that is hard to manage (mostly older people) but it has been turning into something easier to deal with over time.

- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

At a personal level I believe we have to try to relativize it and understand that you can't react to it as an attack, and then you have to try to explain it to the other person. You need to explain to positive side and the real side of that change, so what can be expected realistically. Also in cases of bigger and more structural changes, that is something that comes from above, it's not something that I decide, this means that sometimes my job here becomes easier (since I am just the messenger, it's not my responsibility), but it also becomes harder (due to the fact that I am the messenger, I don't have all the answers that my colleagues want to hear).

I believe most people at the end of the day, end up understanding what is happening and accepting what is being said, however in harder and more sensitive cases we have had to negotiate with employees, and try to get to some point of middle ground and agreeing on something different from the initial statement.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

I believe that contradictions involve a great deal of readjustment and expectations management. In my case as a manager, I have to live with them closely and accept them as part of my day. When it comes to a bigger picture, as a team, we have to accept them. We usually have monthly meetings, with everyone, where we can discuss what it is that we are going to be doing, what is our plan, what have we done, the problems we faced, what can we expect. The fact that we all get together and manage our expectations and are aware of the problems that we all face time, on a real time basis, helps a lot. By doing this, we found a way of becoming aware of each difficulty faced by each employee and support each other through them.

People must adapt to this reality and expect tensions and contradictions in their work – it is inevitable. In the same way I had to learn how to deal with them and accept them, it involves a lot of planning and prioritizing and having a clear view of what needs to be done.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?

- Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Do you believe that you have changed the way you manage and deal with these matters over time? What has changed since the day you started until now?

I believe that with age and experience, you learn how to manage things differently and you get a better understanding of the fact that you need to leave things at the front door sometimes. It's not always work related, sometimes you have certain events in your life that makes you adapt and deal with things differently, it changes the way you see work, or specific problems. Because you are a person in a whole, you don't change the way you live work, just because of work related incidents. You learn in life in general, and that impacts most of the spheres in your life.

Something that I recently started doing, to help me deal with several different things (like the tensions that I feel, the problems that I face daily), is to participate in 2 or 3 days of workshops

that teach you how to deal with HR related problems. I have been to coaching workshops, strategic and improved employee assessment classes, stuff like that. Keeping myself active, learning and adapted to the reality of the world helps me cope and deal with all these different demands.

I also go on long walks, and that helps me to clear my head at the end of the day, or at end of the week, or when I had something really, really stressful that week. Something very obvious but clearly has a great deal of effect on me is the fact that I have a small son at home, he is still a baby, and what happens is that when I get home, even if I want to keep thinking about work and my problems which are work-related, I can't. I need to get home, and dedicate my full attention to him, it may seem silly, but when you have kids, especially small kids at home, it serves as a coping mechanism as well.

I don't think it is all about experience, it definitely has a big part of it, but there are other factors like the people that you work with every day and the impact that they have on you, what you are able to learn from them as well. But I guess you can say that that also falls into the experience realm, so maybe it is all about experience.

Subject P11

Gender: M

Age: 48

Years of experience (as manager): 15

Job description: Administrative and financing department manager

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

I think one of the hardest thing is to make people aware of certain changes that have to take place in the organization. Because people don't like change so they have to be introduced to it

slowly, and this has to be shown to them by showing them who these are going to improve their work and their life. That's the only way people are going to accept change, is if they see the benefits that it brings them.

Something that works in my favour is that it is easy for me to separate work from home. It's not something easy, but I always tried not take physical work home with me. Since day 1 that I have tried not take laptops home with me, answer emails or even open them after hours. Of course, if it's something super urgent and it is urgent to deal with, that is different, but as a norm I try to fight that tendency. For example, when I'm on vacation I try to actually cut all communication with the office, of course again, it depends on the level of responsibility and urgency of the matter, but I tend to be out of reach.

I don't really have a strategy per se, I don't go run or something, but just to read the newspaper or even watch a completely unrelated television programme it helps to switch off. I just need something that makes me think the opposite of work, cut the mental link completely.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations
- How do you deal with change in the workplace?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations
- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

In regards to my own experience I have been through enough change processes, including moving to Lisbon which is quite big. In the first couple of months I always feel a bit insecure, a bit exposed and then I always find a way to adapt – I usually see this pattern in the way that I act. Some processes are harder than others, every change is unique. It really depends on the

type of change that you are talking about, and in case of organizational change its very much influenced by the context, what organization you are in, the people around you and the way that can impact you or not.

When you talk about people resisting to something that you are trying to do, I try not to take it personally but I think I always end up doing that. I don't think you can help but feeling personally involved when someone confronts you with a rejection. I try to maintain a dialogue open and have a healthy environment where I can talk it out with people but at first it always gets to me personally.

You have to rethink what 's happening and after that try to solve it, negotiate it and as I said before, try to show people what is positive about the change, how this is going to improve their life.

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work)

I think these type of things always bring you some sort of discomfort, it makes you get out of your comfort zone and feel insecure. Of course that age and experience is going to have a weight on this and it becomes easier, with time, to deal with these contradictions.

I am personally someone that isn't very "outgoing" in the sense that I keep that type of issues to myself, and I deal with them very internally, in my head. which isn't particularly positive. Sometimes the fact that I do that makes it more challenging because at the end of the day I build up all the stress inside, and don't let it out – this means that if I have a stressful day ill keep it al inside.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

I would say that experience has a huge role in it yes, but psychological strength also does. In my case, for example, I believe it's because of my strength as well. Even if you have experience, if you aren't a mentally strong person you can't do it.

However, without experience you don't get anywhere – it gives you white hair and sleepless nights, that's what it's all about.

I think I used to stress more and panic much easier when I was younger, when I started, but with time you stop doing that and you learn that you can do things without panicking and without losing your mind in the process.

Subject P12

Gender: M

Age: 35

Years of experience (as manager): 4

Job description: Campaign manager

- What would you say are the most difficult challenges to deal with as a manager?
 - What are the most difficult features when dealing with and managing people?
 - What are the most difficult features about decision making?

How do you deal with these difficulties?

Ok so one of the things that is clearly hard in this job is to get everyone on board with you. My work here is based on the idea that I manage campaigns for the 20 departments beneath me, and they have to be the same for all departments, I have to consider each of their demands and then I need them to actually say yes, accept and adhere to what I am telling them to do – this doesn't always work. It's a logistical nightmare and when you add the fact that these departments are full of people, with their own temperaments and opinions, it becomes a terrible nightmare.

What also doesn't help is the fact that I am not good, at all, at separating my personal life from work. I take both paper work and physical work to do at home, as I also can't disconnect from work mentally. This past weekend I was at a birthday party and I was constantly thinking about what emails I had to send out, who I was going to have to talk to in order to solve a specific situation – always thinking about work. I know that a big part of it is my own personality – but

a lot of it has to do with this type of work – we are on the call at all times, we have to be available to answer the phone on a weekend, for example.

When it comes to managing stress I need to understand that I cannot be constantly thinking about this and worrying about work – needless to say I am still learning how to do that. I used to go to the gym and that helped immensely, the fact that I could do something that I enjoyed, a physical activity that actually cleared my mind while I was doing it. Problem was in the summer I had my first child and I had to stop going to the gym: my priorities changed, my schedule changed, my time management became different. I obviously occupy my time now with taking care of the kids, and that also helps to switch off from work, but it's different, it also becomes stressful at times, so there isn't really something that I have found (as good as sports) that helps me to unwind.

- How do you perceive change in your work place?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations
- How do you deal with change in the workplace?
 - Toward yourself
 - When managing people
 - When in decision making situations
- How do you deal with negative forces toward a necessary action? (if there is a necessary change in the organization and staff reacts negatively, against those measures).

My first reaction, honestly, is to become defensive, but I know that can't be like that. Sometimes if I am proposing something and someone is telling me they don't agree I feel like they are attacking the work that I was doing, that I invested in, so I think that's why my first reaction is to get my guard up. After that I think I start rationalizing things and I understand that I have to adapt to what other people are telling me, that they might have a point, and mostly that I am not the sole owner of the truth.

I am learning to understand that change is necessary, I have to give space for change and that change is not always something negative, or a threat.

I believe when it comes to other people, mostly when other people tell you no, there has to be space for discussion. I believe argumentation and justifying one's choices is the best approach to change and confrontation to change. After a situation like that takes place I always try to integrate their opinions in my decision (only if I believe their arguments are valid and it may be of benefit to the process).

- How do you react to managerial contradictions? (having to give more independence to workers and oversee them more, dealing with old demands and answering to new ones, promoting individuality while advocating team work).

I believe tensions like this create frustrations, you need to understand that these are problems that are going to live with you, hand in hand for as long as you are a manager. And at the same time you need to understand that they are never going to be solved – there is no answer. When I am in one of those moments where I face myself with a paradox or a contradiction, or with my hands tied, I talk to my colleagues. We established a group of friends here at the organization and, honestly, you talk it out. It is crucial that you vent, you need to discuss about it, and you need to ask people for feedback and advice: people help. The rest I'm still learning.

- Do you feel like experience affects your coping mechanisms? Do you learn how to deal with contradictions better over time or is there no direct linkage?
 - Do you learn how to deal with contradiction?

Of course it does. There is a lot of things that you learn how to deal with over time, and not only over time, but also because you've been through it before.

I remember when I started here I used to freak out if at the last minute, circumstances changed and I had to redo what I had been planning for the past 3 weeks, or I had to rewind and start from 0 again. Today that doesn't happen, of course I get mad, I'm human, but the reactions that you have or different. You learn that sometimes there is nothing you can do, or that those are just facts of life and "it happens".